

Creating Trauma-Informed Distance Learning Environments: Guidance for School Leaders and Practitioners



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This guidance has been produced to support and reassure staff in the delivery of quality distance learning. Schools are best placed to know their own learners. However, emphasis must be on protecting the health and wellbeing of learners, parents and staff. In order to do this, schools must take account of individuals' circumstances when planning learning. During this period of uncertainty families are re-adjusting to a new way of living and need time to adjust. Carefully planned family tasks will allow us the opportunity to support families and increase parental engagement.

By promoting the four capacities, learning should be fun and engaging. It is neither possible nor desirable to replicate the school day, therefore the priority is on the quality of learning rather than the quantity of activities.

In secondary schools, screen time will be, to an extent, determined by learners' timetables, with the understanding that not all assigned tasks require digital engagement.

In ELC/Primary settings screen time must be limited to:

ELC

only used when interactive or live and promoting engagement with other people, e.g. Joe Wicks P.E., Google Meets, recorded interactions from staff, online storytime, ILD input

maximum of 1 hour per day, broken into small chunks

P1 – P3

used for online learning games and activities, interaction with peers through Google Hangouts, learning through Google Meets, BBC Bitesize

maximum of 1.5 hours per day, 6 x 15 minute chunks

P4 – P7

used for online learning games and activities, interaction with peers through Google Hangouts, learning through Google Meets, BBC Bitesize, Microsoft Office applications

maximum of 2 hours per day

Learners should be provided with opportunities to engage daily in Literacy, Numeracy, HWB and Creative Learning. The length of time expected to complete tasks should be proportionate to the age and stage of the learner. Some tasks may extend over a period of days, allowing for flexibility.

The National Association of School Psychologists (USA) defines trauma-informed practices as fostering a feeling of safety, where trustworthiness, collaboration, empowerment and acknowledgement of students' personal, social, cultural and life experiences are present ([ASCD blog](#); 7th April 2020).

Priorities for trauma-informed classrooms in the context of distance learning

The Norm

Covid-19 has impacted on everyone's lives, to varying extents, and has turned "normal life" on its head for us all. One way to help mitigate any trauma felt by pupils, parents and staff is to establish routines – this is important to help support the positive mental health and wellbeing of all. Staff should consider normal routines and familiar practices and how these can be adapted to suit distance learning.

Flexibility

Whilst establishing routines is integral in addressing trauma, it is important to recognise that trauma can invoke "flight or fight" in adults and children. Therefore, it is necessary to build flexibility into our new learning contexts. Account needs to be taken of each learner's domestic situation: who looks after them; their own caring responsibilities; parents home working; financial position; digital access (and quality of access); number of learners in the household etc. Allowing for flexibility in the undertaking and completion of set tasks means teachers are more able to plan when feedback is given – making it more specific and helpful.

Relationships

Relationships are the key to resilience and the foundations of success and achievement in any learning environment. Health and Wellbeing of all requires to be the main focus. Consideration needs to be given as to how schools and staff facilitate connections between staff and learners, learners and learners and learners and the wider community.

Voice and Choice

In times of adversity, trauma and change, it is easy for adults and children to feel powerless and without worth. Learners need to feel empowered, that they have some kind of responsibility for their learning and for making decisions about that learning. This will, in turn, create that feeling of safety, security and self-worth that is required to achieve success.

Throughout, ACC policies and guidelines relating to Online and Distance Learning and Child Protection and Safeguarding must be adhered to.

Senior Leaders

| The Norm | Flexibility | Relationships | Voice and Choice |
|--|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Daily check-ins with all staff by 9.30am ✓ Virtual learning walks ✓ Tracking meetings with teaching staff ✓ Virtual coffee time with staff ✓ Child Protection and Safeguarding procedures in light of Covid-19 ✓ Regular contact with parents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Recorded staff meetings and updates ✓ Staff development time ✓ Staff engagement with interventions and support staff ✓ Knowledge and understanding of staff's personal responsibilities ✓ Give all teaching staff access to all Google Classrooms to ensure cover | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Check-in with vulnerable children through Google Meets/phone calls ✓ Planned and ad hoc engagement with families ✓ Regular check-ins with partner agencies to ensure appropriate and proportionate supports ✓ Maintain contact with Parent Council ✓ Build opportunities for stage/faculty planning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Google Meets with groups of learners ✓ Google surveys to capture views of all stakeholders ✓ Google Meets with groups of staff ✓ Plan opportunities for collaborative staff work re. school improvement and professional learning |

Practitioners

| The Norm | Flexibility | Relationships | Voice and Choice |
|---|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Good Morning check-in at the same time every day ✓ Storytime, ERIC ✓ Playtime/break – Google Hangouts led by PSAs ✓ Exit passes ✓ Visual timetables for those who need it | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No rigidity of timetabling ✓ Synchronous and asynchronous lessons ✓ Focus on Creativity, HWB and Expressive Arts ✓ Kind, specific, helpful feedback through Google Meets ✓ Planned opportunities for learning dialogue | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Regular check-ins by phone, email, Google Hangout/Meets ✓ Personalisation of interactions ✓ Ensure all learners know that they and their contributions are valued ✓ Staff are mindful of everyone’s uniqueness ✓ Google Hangouts facilitated by PSAs, Sfl, SLT ✓ Family tasks and activities (taking account of age and stage of learners) ✓ Whole school topics and themes ✓ Build household routines into learning, to support family relationships ✓ HWB – physical activity, menu planning ✓ Expressive Arts provide shared context for learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Opportunities for learners to plan and organise their learning ✓ Skills based learning ✓ Meta-cognition ✓ Learner choice re. format of completed tasks, e.g. written, recorded, artwork etc. ✓ Learner inspired Big Questions ✓ Open ended learning ✓ Opportunities to share work on school social platforms, e.g. Twitter (with permission of learner) ✓ Opportunities for learners to lead learning in Google Meets |

| Early Years | P1 – P3 | P4 – P7 | S1 – S3 | Senior Phase |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Emphasis is on play based, experiential learning ○ Provide opportunities for routine ○ Consider how learning can be scaffolded to support parents ○ Facilitate opportunities for social interaction through Google Meets ○ Promote life skills through a variety of activities, including some which can be completed independently | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Emphasis is on play based, experiential learning ○ Provide opportunities for routine ○ Promote life skills through a variety of activities, including some which can be completed independently ○ Create opportunities to link Literacy and Numeracy to family learning ○ Create opportunities for group tasks and peer interaction through Google Meets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure there is a balance of synchronous and asynchronous teaching and a range of on-screen and off-screen learning opportunities ○ Provide opportunities for routine ○ Allow flexibility for the completion of tasks ○ Promote life skills through a variety of activities, including some which can be completed independently ○ Create opportunities for group tasks and peer interaction through Google Meets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reflect on key skills for your subject and provide open-ended tasks which will allow learners to develop these further ○ Ensure there is a balance of synchronous and asynchronous teaching and a range of on-screen and off-screen learning opportunities ○ Enable learners to take ownership of the learning through group tasks and provide opportunities to share this learning ○ Create opportunities for peer interaction through Google Meets ○ Create opportunities to help learners prepare for future learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When setting tasks and activities, teachers should be mindful of the demands of the learner’s timetable ○ Use planned opportunities for learning dialogue to help inform differentiation in future learning ○ Ensure there is a balance of synchronous and asynchronous teaching and a range of on-screen and off-screen learning opportunities ○ Plan opportunities to build relationships with individual learners through Google Meets (audio or video) ○ Enable learners to take ownership of the learning through group tasks and student-led tutorials |