



## **Remote Teaching and Learning Plan**

Louise Caraher (School Principal) and Wendi O'Donoghue (School Behaviour Analyst) have formulated this policy to outline how the school will maintain the educational link between school and home in the event of another whole school closure or a partial school closure. In response to this time of uncertainty regarding Covid-19 school closures, we feel it is important to have a dedicated plan in place. We have consulted with our Class Teachers and Special Needs Assistants, along with feedback provided by parents following the emergency school closure in March, and with documents provided by the Department of Education and Skills, in order to formulate a coherent and proactive school-wide response. We recognise that online safety is of huge importance and the aim of this document is to help to protect both school staff and students, while teaching and learning online.

The primary obligation of all schools is to the welfare of the students in their school. This policy, therefore, seeks to ensure that remote learning is safe for all students and that personal and sensitive data is also protected under GDPR legislation. Schools must ensure that learning takes place in an environment that is respectful and fair and meets its statutory obligations. This Remote Teaching and Learning Plan has been formulated in accordance with current Department of Education and Skills circulars and advice and, in particular, relevant sections of:

- DES Guidance on Continuity of Schooling for Primary Schools (May 2020)
- DES Guidance on Continuity of Schooling: *Supporting Primary Students at very High Risk to Covid 19* (August 2020).
- DES Guidance on remote Learning in a Covid-19 context: *Sep-Dec 2020* ( Oct 2020)

*Please note that this is a working document, and is based mainly on the above working documents. As we continue to explore options available to support distance learning for our children, and as advice from the Department of Education and Skills changes, it will be updated.*

We recognise that online collaboration is essential for distance learning and that most families are in favour of increased opportunities to maintain the connection between school and home in the event of a partial or whole school closure. Saplings Special School for Children with Autism and Complex Needs, Kill (hereafter Saplings) aims to use a variety of child friendly, online tools, which assist in providing effective teaching and learning in the remote learning context, while also enabling effective communication between staff, families and students. Due to the needs of our students, we will support online collaboration with concrete materials which will be sent home in the event of a school closure. Saplings will use a variety of online tools across a range of subject areas which will assist parents in supporting their child's learning in the home context.

Advances in technology mean that work can be set remotely and greater access to information/activities on the internet affords a wealth of learning experiences. However, it is very important that all partners are aware that once a learning exchange takes place between a student and teacher, whether at home or school, the same statutory rules apply i.e. the School Policies.

#### **Guidelines for Good Online Communication in Saplings Special School for Children with Autism and Complex Needs, Kill:**

1. Staff, families and students are expected to behave in an appropriate, safe, respectful and kind manner online.
2. It is the duty of parents/guardians to supervise children while they are working online for the purposes of child protection.
3. Staff members will communicate with students and their families via classroom emails, teacher emails and scheduled Zoom calls (scheduled by the class teacher only).
4. Under no circumstances should pictures or recordings be taken of video calls.
5. Electronic forms of communication will be for educational purposes and to allow for communication with families only.
6. Students and staff will communicate using tools which have been approved by the school and of which parents have been notified (Email and Zoom)
7. For Zoom calls, parental permission is implied, as the link to a video call will be communicated via the parent/guardian's email address. Essentially, by virtue of the student logging on to the call, permission is assumed.
8. For security reasons, passwords will be provided to families, where applicable.

9. Saplings cannot accept responsibility for the security of online platforms, in the event that they are compromised, however we have chosen email and Zoom as our platforms of choice due to their respective security measures.

Saplings will use two online platforms for communicating and connecting with families/students as appropriate to their needs. These will be emails and teacher scheduled Zoom calls. Our Remote Teaching and Learning Plan will provide a combination of assigned work, pre-recorded lessons, and live sessions (Zoom) to support our students to engage with remote learning. As our capacity to teach remotely develops, and as we see which are of most benefit to our children, the platforms and frequency of use may be subject to change.

### **1. Emails**

Email will continue to be the primary mode of communication between teachers and parents. Teachers will send pre-assigned work packs on a Sunday evening/ Monday morning to the email address provided by the parent(s) to the school. Some of this work will be based on resources sent home from the school, as appropriate. Parents should provide feedback on how the work is going by email (via pictures, videos or written correspondence) and ask any questions or seek additional support by email also. As per current practice, email correspondence should be used to contact the school's Behaviour Analyst in the first instance, and this may be followed up with a phone call/ emailed paperwork for parents to complete/ emailed strategies and resources etc. Email correspondence is fully compliant with current GDPR rules and allows for excellent record keeping by all parties involved and as such it will be our primary method of communication during periods of remote learning. After work packs are sent on a Sunday evening/ Monday morning, it is envisioned that teachers and our Behaviour Analyst will be available for approximately one hour per day to respond to email queries and/ or feedback from parents. This scheduling will allow them to use the remaining time in their work days to plan work for each child, collaborate with each other and with the Special Needs Assistants in their rooms, to collaborate, liaise and report to the School Principal, to prepare and plan Zoom meetings (see further information below), and complete other required duties.

### **2. Zoom**

Zoom is a video-conferencing platform which will enable staff and students to connect via a live link. Class Teachers will connect with students and Special Needs Assistants regularly using pre-arranged Zoom Meetings scheduled by the teacher. Having both a Class Teacher and a Special Needs Assistant on the call allows the school to meet its requirements in respect of our Child Protection Policy and our Child Safeguarding Statement. The aim will be for one Zoom call lasting 20 to 30 minutes in the first week of remote learning and two Zoom calls lasting 20 to 30 minutes thereafter; however this will depend on the student's

willingness and ability to engage with this type of communication. The purpose of these calls will be for the Class Teacher and Special Needs Assistant to observe the student, check in on progress, provide suggestions on areas where the child is struggling etc. It should be mainly focused on the staff members interacting with the student (with parent(s) supporting the student as necessary), and the primary focus should not become a conversation between parents and staff without student involvement. If a parent/ parents have a lot of questions stemming from a Zoom call, they should follow these up in an email to the Class Teacher.

### **Important Note for Parents/ Students Using Online Communication Methods:**

Please note that the health and wellbeing of everyone in our school community is paramount. Circumstances may change for any of us unexpectedly; staff, students or parents, so please keep schooling in perspective do not allow school-related stresses to impinge on your child or your family negatively. You are the primary educator of your child and you can decide how much or how little interaction you would like to have with the school during periods of remote learning. We encourage a little work every weekday for routine, and a break from all school work at the weekends. We will provide work and guidance in the form of weekly work packs, email support and two Zoom calls per week and ask parents and students to do their best and let us know if they would like a reduction in the amount of support provided or if they would like support in a particular area.

### **Rules for Zoom Meetings:**

1. It is the responsibility of parents and guardians to ensure that students are supervised while they work online.
2. The main purpose of a video call is to engage in online learning activities while maintaining a social connection between the school staff and students. Encourage students to listen and enjoy the experience.
3. Be aware that when participating in group video calls, you can be seen and heard unless you are muted or have disabled your camera.
4. You will automatically enter a waiting room when the code for a Zoom call has been entered. Please note that school staff will only accept users into video call if you can be identified by the display name on your zoom account. (i.e. Family Name)
5. Please ensure that your child is on time for a scheduled video, or they may be locked out. Please request to join the Zoom call approximately five minutes before the scheduled start time. This will give school staff time to verify your email address.
6. Where appropriate, make sure to familiarise your child with the software in advance. For video, in particular, show them how to mute/unmute and turn the camera on/off.

7. Pictures or recordings of the video call are not allowed. If pictures and/ or recordings are made, Zoom meetings will be stopped immediately for that family and will not be restarted during the period of remote learning.
8. Remember our school rules - they are still in place, even online.
9. Set up the electronic device being used for the call in a quiet space, with no distractions in the background.
10. Show respect by listening to others while they are speaking and they will do the same.
11. Ensure that you are dressed appropriately for the video call.
12. Be on time - set a reminder if it helps.
13. Enjoy! Don't forget to wave hello to everyone when you join!
14. For detailed information on GDPR and Zoom, please visit <https://zoom.us/privacy>

### Remote Teaching and Learning Protocols for Class Teachers

- Send a work pack to each family in your class for the upcoming week on Sunday night/ Monday morning.
- Set a dedicated hour every day to check emails for uploaded work or questions from parents and provide feedback. Aim to reply to parent emails within 24 hours (Monday to Friday only).
- Remember to only reply to questions on educational issues and to point parents to the school's Behaviour Analyst for any questions of a behavioural nature.
- Aim for one Zoom call in the first week of remote learning and two Zoom calls per week thereafter with families as appropriate/requested.
- Communication may only take place during normal school hours.
- The normal school calendar will apply.
- The following school policies apply and are particularly relevant to remote teaching and learning:
  - ✓ Child Protection Policy
  - ✓ Data Protection Policy

### Remote Teaching and Learning Provision specifically for the following Covid 19 related scenarios

#### **A. Provision for children who are at very high risk to Covid 19:**

The school will engage directly with relevant parents, regarding remote educational provision for children who are deemed to be at **very high risk** to Covid-19 (see HSE Guidelines) where medical certification has been provided to the school.

**B. In the case of all other children who are instructed to self-isolate by their GP or HSE Public Health, educational provision will be provided as follows:**

1. Children who are awaiting Covid 19 test results for themselves or a family member and have been instructed by their GP to isolate at home for a few days. These students will be supported to catch up on their learning on their return to school.
2. Children isolating at home on instruction from their GP due to a confirmed case within their own family/close contact outside of school (14-day isolation period). Teacher will link in with the student via emails of work packs (if parents do not want this, they can reply to the initial email from the parent reporting this).
3. School Class instructed by HSE Public Health to self-isolate. Teacher (once she has returned a negative test) will link in with the students as per the Remote Teaching and Learning Plan as outlined above.
4. Whole school closure as instructed by HSE Public Health (duration of closure will be advised by Public Health). Teachers (who have tested negative for Covid-19) and Special Needs Assistants (who have tested negative for Covid-19) will engage with students (who have tested negative for Covid-19), using a blended approach of pre-recorded lessons, emailed work packs and regular contact on Zoom. Anyone who tests positive (students or staff) will be considered to be off school for medical reasons, until they feel well enough to participate in the Remote Teaching and Learning Plan.

*Please note that the current situation is quite fluid and these circumstances may vary throughout the year.*

**Summary:**

- ✓ Do what you can, within your own personal and familial circumstances.
- ✓ Stay in touch with your Class Teacher via email to update them on how the remote learning is going, what areas you would like support in, or if you would like less materials/ support.
- ✓ There will be no school work set outside of school hours or for planned school closures/ holidays. There will be no interaction from teachers by email or Zoom during these times.
- ✓ Please keep yourself informed of postings on the school website [www.saplinskildare.ie](http://www.saplinskildare.ie) and of emails from the Principal – this is our main mode of communication.
- ✓ We ask parents/guardians, students and teachers to ensure that the above Remote Teaching and Learning Plan and all other relevant school protocols are adhered to at

all times during any periods of remote learning and that all interactions are polite and respectful.

*We thank the school community for adhering to the above guidelines for everyone's safety and welfare.*

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management of Saplings Special School for Children with Autism and Complex Needs, Kill, and is subject to change, in light of any guidance or instruction received from Department of Education and Skills/HSE Public Health.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

(Principal)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

(Chairperson Board of Management)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_