



Helping pupils remotely

The past few months were ground-breaking for teachers and principals as they came to terms with the reality of school closure and a need to ensure some continuation of pupil learning. Technology provided the bridge between teacher and pupil and new techie words and phrases became part of the everyday lexicon. National support services provided reams of advice and commercial content providers opened their material for free. It was the new normal!

While teachers were familiar with many elements of technology, the demands for remote teaching and learning pushed schools to places they had never been before. So how did they fare? What practical measures did schools and teachers use?

Sharing practice on Teaching Online Course

PDST Technology in Education created a short online course to support teachers in their endeavours to transition from the traditional to an online classroom.

In the course, we asked teachers to describe how they approached teaching online with their class.

Here were some common approaches shared by participants via discussion forums:

- Weekly plan for work sent to parents via email (Friday, Sunday or Monday).
- Teachers collaborating to provide one plan for each class level.
- Providing a weekly project or theme that could be differentiated for different class levels, e.g. a country or an event in history.
- Providing a weekly list of recommended online resources (popular ones included [Scoilnet](#) and, in particular, [Learning Paths](#), [World Book](#)

Online, [RTÉ Home School Hub](#), [Joe Wicks PE videos](#), [Twinkl](#), [David Walliams' Elevenses](#)).

- Holding regular online staff meetings for planning and sharing of resources and for valuable human connection with colleagues.
- Sending an online survey to parents

Distance learning safety advice and considerations

There are many important considerations for educators to ensure a safe learning experience for pupils and teachers engaging in distance learning or teaching. Along with technical considerations, safeguarding children should form a part of the planning stages of any changes or updates to learning environments.

Considerations when using new technology include privacy, terms of service, age restrictions, data collection, appropriateness of platform, setting clear and realistic expectations for pupils. It is also important for educators to familiarise themselves with their school's Acceptable Use Policy and Child Safeguarding Statement.

Top tips for teachers

- Use only school authorised platforms and services.
- Model good behaviour online.
- Set clear expectations for students when engaging in online learning.
- Ensure students are made aware of what they can do if they encounter something inappropriate or upsetting online.

For more information and safety advice on managing distance learning, visit [Webwise.ie](#)

seeking views on current levels and types of work being sent home after the first week or two. This provided useful feedback to schools, many of which adapted their approaches.

- Connecting tasks to the home environment e.g. planting and growing, shape hunts, baking, household chores, reading, writing diary reflections, listening to birds singing.
- Integrating important messages from the HSE about social distancing and hand hygiene into lessons and projects.
- Encouraging mindfulness practice, with recommendations such as Cosmic Yoga, Headspace and Calm apps.
- Integrating important internet safety messages into lessons - [HTML Heroes](#) from Webwise proved very popular.

Many challenges were also discussed, including:

- Assessing whether the quantity of work assigned was too much or too little.
- Worrying about overwhelming parents with communications.
- Providing offline activities for pupils who do not have access to devices or internet.
- Providing enough support for pupils with special educational needs.
- Differentiation and catering for all levels of ability.

There was a consensus, however, that the sharing of experiences, both positive and negative, has been of value to teachers during this time. If you would like to engage with this course, check it out at <https://bit.ly/TeachOnline>.

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