Blended Learning Policy

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1.0 Introduction

Blended learning is a relatively new concept to the primary education sector, brought to the forefront of practice as a direct consequence of the COVID19 pandemic. Blended Learning is the integration of classroom face-to-face learning with online/remote learning experiences.

Building on the development of our on-line single tenancy provision during the initial lockdown period, the trust intends to capitalise on the potential of new technologies in order to extend the opportunities for learning outside of traditional hours and settings. This strategy will benefit those pupils who are:

- In need of "catch up" due to COVID 19.
- Identified as SEND or requiring additional support.
- Identified within our pre-existing disadvantaged strategy.
- Wishing to extend their learning opportunities beyond the confines of the traditional school day.
- On long term absence due to illness
- Are excluded
- Are shielding or self-isolating due to bubble collapses.
- Are unable to access school due to local or national lockdown restrictions.

Adopting a blended learning approach does not only revolve around the implementation of remote learning. Continuing to develop technological pedagogy will support teaching in class, offering opportunities for pre/post teaching, acquisition of vocabulary, practice, consolidation, problem solving and extension of classroom learning.

2.0 Factors that will guide delivery of blended learning across the trust

2.1 Quality teaching and learning: Evidence tells us that quality first teaching is more important than technology when facilitating any form of learning. Blended learning across the trust will incorporate the key elements of effective teaching. Effective teaching includes deep pedagogical content knowledge and quality instruction. It includes having a strong understanding of the way pupils think about content, scaffolding new content, questioning and clear explanations that build on the pupil's prior learning, effective use of feedback and using assessment to build future learning.

Evidence suggests that it is not important for remote learning to be delivered in real time. It can be delivered in other ways, e.g. by video which pupils can access at a time that suits them. Such flexibility will help to address access issues such as where pupils are sharing a computer or technology with other family members. Flexible access also allows for the revisiting and extension of learning. **The trust will ensure quality first teaching is at the heart of the blended learning offer and is available to all pupils when and wherever they require it.**

2.2 Connections to the school curriculum: There will be clear links between the content of blended learning activities and the wider school curriculum. Blended learning should be an integral part of the planned school curriculum. This is important if blended learning is to build on pupils' prior learning and teachers are to address gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding through face-to-face teaching or remote teaching.

2.3 Equality, equity and inclusion: Evidence reveals that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely than their peers to face barriers to remote learning because they do not have access to technology. Waterton academies will ensure that all pupils have access to technology if they are expected to participate in blended learning online. Academies will consider placing lessons online so that they can be accessed at times that suit the pupil (e.g. if the pupil shares technology with other family members) rather than expecting pupils to always participate in live lessons.

Academies on occasion may adopt approaches to remote learning that do not require technology or internet access (e.g. workbooks). It will be vital to ensure that the approach to remote learning that is chosen is appropriate and equitable and that all learners receive high quality teaching and learning.

Academies must comply with equalities legislation. It is vital that all pupils can access learning and academies will need to remove barriers to participation and/or provide additional targeted support to particular pupils or groups of pupils. Academies will undertake equality impact assessments to identify issues and needs and take action to address those issues and needs. Academies will establish whether particular pupils are facing barriers to accessing

remote learning and/or need additional or specialist support in order to access that learning.

Academies will undertake equity audits to identify gaps in pupils' learning outcomes. Evidence suggests that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds have been less engaged in remote learning during the lockdown. Evidence also indicates that there have been particular challenges engaging and supporting pupils with SEND. Academies will consider what additional and/or targeted support will be needed to enable those pupils to catch up.

Pupils should not be prevented from accessing remote learning because of the way in which it is delivered. For instance, steps may need to be taken to ensure that pupils with hearing impairments can access the learning, e.g. it may be appropriate to use subtitles and/or ensure that the pupil can see the teacher's face when they are speaking.

Some pupils may not be able to attend school. Academies will ensure that those pupils can access learning remotely. Where a blended learning approach is being used to educate most pupils, the school will provide additional individual support to pupils who cannot attend school.

Various reports stress the importance of focusing on pupils' social and emotional wellbeing. Academies will ensure that they are aware of pupils' social and emotional needs and that all pupils can access support. Particular attention will need to be paid to how the academy supports pupils who need to remain at home.

2.4 Access to and use of technology: Many studies find that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds struggle to access computers and the technology needed to participate in remote learning. As a trust we will ensure that all pupils have access to the technology they need to participate in remote learning. Steps will be taken to ensure that pupils can access learning flexibly.

Academies will need to consider whether there are other potential barriers that prevent pupils from participating effectively in remote learning, e.g. having a quiet space at home to undertake study. If pupils cannot study at home then it may be appropriate to prioritise those pupils for face-to-face learning, paying appropriate regard to public health considerations and the need to ensure that settings operate in ways that are safe for pupils and staff.

Academies will consider whether remote learning might best be delivered by means other than technology and/or internet access.

Academies will ensure that teachers and support staff who participate in remote learning have access to the technology. Where teachers are working from home to support remote learning, it will be particularly important to ensure that they are provided with the necessary equipment in their home.

The trust will ensure that guidance and support is in place so that teachers and pupils use the technology safely and effectively.

The trust will monitor and evaluate the impact of blended and remote learning on groups of pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, pupils who share a protected characteristic under equalities legislation, and pupils who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). It will be important to use the findings of monitoring and evaluations to identify and remove barriers to participation and to ensure equality of outcomes. This might include providing targeted support to particular groups of pupils, making changes to how provision is organised, and identifying and sharing evidence about how technology supports particular pupils or groups of pupils.

2.5 Peer-to-peer pupil interaction and collaboration: Evidence indicates that remote learning that provides opportunities for pupils to interact with each other can help to motivate pupils and improve their learning outcomes. The trust will endeavour to innovate and deliver strategies designed to promote collaboration. Teachers will plan in order to encourage and support pupils to collaborate.
It will be important to monitor whether pupils are collaborating and whether they are doing so appropriately and effectively. Teachers will monitor peer-to-peer interactions to ensure that pupils are not being bullied or harassed.

2.6 Supporting pupils to work independently: While remote and blended learning can improve learning outcomes, some pupils may struggle to work independently. Studies highlight the need for academies to ensure that pupils are supported to work independently.

Self-motivation is identified as an important factor in enabling pupils to work independently. There is a distinction to be made between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and evidence indicates that extrinsic motivation can be increased by making a task compulsory or it contributing to a final grade. Evidence suggests that it is important to adopt strategies and approaches to learning that encourage pupils to become independent. For instance, pupils might be encouraged to reflect on their work. Evidence points to the benefits of learning that focuses on metacognition and self-regulation. Studies indicate that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit from explicit support to help them to work independently e.g. providing checklists and daily plans.

Academies will need to identify ways to support particular groups of pupils to work independently. For instance, some pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) may need additional specialist support to enable them to work independently.

2.7 Adapting remote learning to suit the task and the context: There is strong evidence which indicates that different approaches to remote learning suit particular tasks and contexts. It is accepted that different approaches have different strengths and weaknesses. Research finds that games for learning may have a high impact on vocabulary learning in foreign languages and technology to support retrieval practice and self-quizzing can help pupils to retain key ideas and knowledge. However, this is not a replacement for other forms of assessment.

There is limited evidence about the use and impact of technology in different subjects and for different age groups, particularly school-age pupils. Therefore, teachers and school leaders will need to use their professional judgement to determine the strategies and approaches to remote learning that are likely to be most effective. It will be important to monitor and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of approaches and to share knowledge and practices across the trust.

2.8 Workload and wellbeing: Remote learning and blended learning will be implemented in ways that are manageable and sustainable. If incorrectly implemented, blended learning has the potential to increase teachers' workload significantly, for example, if teachers are expected to plan, prepare and teach lessons face to face as well as plan prepare and teach remotely. The trust will undertake a workload impact assessment of provision and take action to address potential workload burdens.

Remote learning is unchartered territory for many teachers. This has implications for the time that teachers will need to plan and prepare online lessons and resources. Academies will ensure that teachers have sufficient time to plan and prepare online lessons.

Evidence highlights the importance of ensuring that teachers are trained and supported to provide online lessons. The trust and academies will ensure that teachers have appropriate time to undertake training and professional development.

2.9 Leadership and management of remote and blended learning: System leader analysis suggests that some academies did not coordinate remote learning during the COVID-19 lockdown and this caused confusion as teachers were using different platforms for remote learning. Also, the lack of a coordinated approach placed competing and unrealistic demands on pupils and teachers.

It is vital that the trust's approach to blended and remote learning is led and managed so that practice is homogenous. Remote learning will cohere with the broader school curriculum; teachers' training and development needs will be identified and met; effective pedagogies, strategies and practices will be identified and shared across the school; and issues relating to workload and resourcing should be identified and addressed.

Academy leaders will work with the trust through organised networks to map out expectations for blended learning that are realistic and appropriate.

Leaders across the trust will ensure that remote learning practice complies with health safety and safeguarding requirements (as well as broader advice on the health and safety of teachers: and to wider school policies such as those relating to pupil behaviour)

Leaders who coordinate and manage remote learning and blended learning will ensure that they keep up to date with the latest research based evidence around effective practice. A trust network group will support with this area of development.

Leaders will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of remote and blended learning. This will include evaluating its impact and effectiveness for different groups and ages of pupils. Particular attention will be paid to pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with SEND.

2.10 Continuing Professional Development (CPD), training and support: Evidence reveals that in many countries teachers have limited familiarity with integrating technology into instructional practice. The OECD says that this highlights the need for teachers to receive training in remote learning, and the need to create opportunities for teachers to share knowledge, including new knowledge as remote and blended learning practices are developed. Other studies stress that the success of blended learning programmes depends on comprehensive teacher training for all teachers involved in using blended learning, and ongoing evaluation of the approach. They also find that few teachers have received sufficient technological support or professional development.

The trust will ensure that all teachers receive training and professional development on the use of blended learning. This will include training on how to use the technology, how the technology can support teaching and learning, and the pedagogical approaches that support the use of that technology and the learning context. Academies will also ensure that teachers are able to access ongoing professional learning, including opportunities to share experiences and practices with other teachers within and beyond the trust.

Academies should note that evidence finds that the features of effective professional development include ensuring that CPD:

- is carefully designed to focus on pupil outcomes
- is prolonged rather than a short course
- is relevant to teachers' day-to-day experiences and aspirations for pupils
- is underpinned by subject knowledge, subject-specific pedagogy, clarity around learner progression; and content and activity that helps teachers to understand how pupils learn
- includes explicit consideration of how the CPD translates into practice in the classroom, with teachers having opportunities to experiment in order to implement what they have learned.

Evidence also finds that managing and organising CPD effectively includes establishing priorities, resolving competing demands, sourcing appropriate expertise and ensuring appropriate opportunities are in place.

The trust will ensure that CPD to support remote and blended learning reflects the features of effective practice described above

2.11 Collaboration and sharing practice: Evidence indicates that most teachers have little or no experience of remote and blended teaching and learning. Studies highlight the importance of enabling teachers to collaborate and of providing opportunities for teachers to share practice. Studies also highlight the importance of collaborative practice in supporting innovative learning environments.

Academies will ensure that teachers are given the time to collaborate and share ideas, experiences and practices with other teachers in the school. Academies should also work with other networks, including the trust EdTech Network to enable teachers and leaders to collaborate and share experiences about effective practice.

3.0 Blended Learning in Practice

To ensure the safe and effective delivery of blended learning the trust will ensure that:

- All live or recorded lessons will be delivered using the Office 365 tenancy and Microsoft teams.
- All staff will access the tenancy via the RM unify portal.
- All children will access the tenancy via the RM unify portal.
- All policies relating to blended learning will be updated and shared to ensure compliance.
- All staff will have read the staff code of conduct, including the updated section regards delivery of blended learning.
- All families will have read the parental code of conduct, including the updated section regards delivery and facilitation of blended learning.
- All pupils will have read the pupil code of conduct, including the updated section regards blended learning.
- All staff will have access to appropriate technologies to allow quality delivery.
- Blended learning logs are maintained by teachers for all pupils.
- Planning clearly identifies blended learning opportunities and sessions.
- There is clear evidence that blended learning activities are linked to the whole school curriculum.
- There will be an excellence guide created and distributed across the trust.
- An appropriate, ongoing CPD offer will be delivered trust wide.
- Schools review and assess the blended offer against expectations set out in ***Restricting attendance during the national lockdown: Guidance for all schools in England (January 2021)***
- The remote education provided is equivalent in length to the core teaching pupils would receive in school. This is inclusive of both recorded and live direct teaching time, and time for pupils to complete tasks and assignments independently.
- The amount of remote education provided will be in relation to the pupils' age, stage of development or special educational need, as a guide:
  - Key Stage 1: 3 hours a day on average, with less for younger children. Note: Younger children in Key Stage 1 or Reception require high levels of parental involvement to support their engagement in remote education, which makes digital provision a particular challenge for this age group
  - Key Stage 2: 4 hours a day, with less for younger children in the phase

4.0 Ensuring a strong blended learning offer is in place for all pupils

In the context of limiting attendance to all but vulnerable children and children of critical workers, the trust will expect schools to continue to:

- Teach a planned and well sequenced curriculum so that knowledge and skills continue to be built incrementally
- Be clear about what is intended to be taught and practised in each subject to support progression
- Set meaningful and ambitious work each day in an appropriate range of subjects
- Use MICROSOFT TEAMS consistently in order to allow interaction, assessment and feedback.
- Offer regular professional learning so that staff are confident in its use
- Overcome barriers to digital access for pupils by distributing school-owned devices accompanied by a user agreement
- Provide printed resources to supplement online resources and lessons (both live and recorded) to keep pupils on track
- Check daily whether pupils are engaging in their work, particularly vulnerable pupils
- Work with families to rapidly identify effective solutions where engagement is a concern

5.0 Transferring into remote education what we know about effective teaching in the classroom

The key issue is enabling important interactions such as questioning, reflection and discussion and know that where remote education recreates some of this interactivity, teaching is likely to be more effective.
Teachers will focus on the following effective strategies when teaching remotely.

- providing frequent, clear explanations of new content
- providing scaffolded practices and opportunities to apply new knowledge

- enabling timely and frequent feedback on how to progress (digitally facilitated or whole class feedback where appropriate)
- using assessment to ensure teaching is responsive to pupils' needs
- using assessment to address any critical gaps in pupils' knowledge
- avoiding over reliance on long term projects or internet research activities
- setting expectations on how regularly teachers will check understanding
- offering an agile way to respond to individual needs
  - video conferencing 'meet ups' for parents of pupils with additional needs and those who are vulnerable
  - follow up of non-engagement
  - proactive working with external agencies

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