



Durham School for Girls Doha

DISTANCE LEARNING POLICY

Version 4.0 | June 2026

THE FIRST IMPLEMENTATION DATE | AUGUST 2021

REVIEW PERIOD | ANNUAL

DATE LAST REVIEWED | June 2026

REVIEWED BY | PRINCIPAL

VALUES

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Purpose of Policy

Durham School for Girls is committed to the continued provision of a varied and engaging education in the event of full or partial school closure. This policy summarises how this provision will take place so that there are consistent and well-understood expectations of the level of support that will be provided for all concerned. The intended outcome is to maximise pupil learning, following the curriculum but also taking advantage of opportunities to develop independent and digital learning. The policy is for the whole school community: teachers, parents, and pupils. This is an evolving policy that we will regularly review.

Introduction

This distance learning policy for staff and parents aims to:

- ensure consistency in the approach to remote learning for pupils who are not in school;
- set out expectations for all members of the school community with regards to distance learning;
- provide appropriate guidelines for data protection.

This policy may be updated in response to changing circumstance and to reflect changes in local guidance / requirements. Distance education may be an essential component in the delivery of the school curriculum for some pupils alongside classroom teaching, or in the case of local restrictions. We are required to plan to ensure any pupils educated at home or when travelling for some of the time are given the support they need to master the curriculum and make good progress. It may be appropriate to suspend some subjects for some pupils in exceptional circumstances. This would be in the best interests of pupils and would be subject to discussion with parents.

School Staff Responsibilities

The school accepts its responsibility to provide immediate distance learning opportunities for both individual and groups of pupils if they are required to be at home for health reasons or if the school is asked to conduct distance learning. We recognise that personal contact with our pupils is key to maintaining motivation and engagement, as well as sustaining fruitful relationships, both teacher-to-pupil and peer-to-peer, and also with parents. We also recognise that when providing distance learning, variety is key. The research is clear that pupils should be facilitated to engage in a variety of remote learning activities, including direct instruction, real time lessons, recorded sequences, quizzes, formal assessments, discussion forums and online material (including those set on platforms such as Teams, Class Dojo or any virtual learning platform via email). We will do our best to facilitate this variety, which might alter due to the age of the child, time zone complications and the practical considerations of teachers teaching whole classes in school and individuals remotely. We also consider ongoing pastoral support to be central to ensuring our pupils remain engaged within the school community. This occurs through regular contact with Class Teachers, Form Tutors, Heads of Year and through remote assemblies.

Expectations for Remote Provision

The quality of learning is at the heart of our policy and should always take precedence over the method or delivery platform. Learning needs to come from both individual and group effort, with enough opportunity for a teacher to assess and give feedback to each pupil.

Durham School for Girls has the following specified minimum expectations for remote provision:

- set assignments so that pupils have meaningful and ambitious work each day in several different

subjects, including new material, planning a programme that is of equivalent length to the core teaching pupils would receive in school;

- teach a planned and well-sequenced curriculum so that knowledge and skills are built incrementally, with a good level of clarity about what is intended to be taught and practiced;
- gauge how well pupils are progressing through the curriculum, using questions and other suitable tasks, and set a clear expectation on how regularly teachers will check work;
- enable teachers to adjust the pace or difficulty of what is being taught in response to questions or assessments including, where necessary, revising material or simplifying explanations to ensure pupils' understanding.

Whole School Closure

In the event of a whole school closure, we will offer a full remote learning timetable, the details of which will be communicated to parents at the first available opportunity.

Live Interactive Lessons

During short periods of school closure (e.g. two weeks), it is important that pupils do not lose academic momentum. Routines such as punctual starts, regular face-to-face contact with teachers and peers, engagement in lessons, and homework should not be abandoned. Depending on the age of the child, 'Live' lessons should be delivered in real time with cameras and microphones on. Lessons should be varied in content and format; however, the points below set out some of the principles of a good interactive lesson (depending on age), whether delivered from home or from an empty classroom:

- Pupils should be actively learning, rather than just passively listening
- For our youngest pupils, it might be more suitable for the class teacher to use a combination of pre-recorded videos and live lessons; parents will be aware of when live lessons will be taking place
- Some form of open question or challenge near the start of the lesson should require all pupils to contribute, either orally, in the chat window, or via an alternative application
- Targeted questioning throughout the lesson should deter pupils from 'zoning out'

- The lesson should contain the opportunity for higher order thinking and should be designed to challenge even the most able pupils
- There may be opportunities for pupils to collaborate or work in pairs/groups
- Pupils could be asked to present their own work to the class and engage in debate about this work with other pupils for extended oracy • Assessment for Learning (AfL) at the end of the lesson allows the teacher to ascertain the extent of pupil learning and engagement and will inform future lessons to maintain academic momentum
- Lessons may also be spent writing or doing independent work, which can be submitted at the end of lesson. In this scenario, the teacher must be on hand to answer questions in real time or check in with pupils individually.
- Homework should set as usual

Digital Platforms

- Pupils should have their cameras on wherever possible, with the expectation they are sitting in a well lit room at a desk or table (although this may not be possible for all), are appropriately dressed and have relevant books and writing material to hand
- Backgrounds for both pupils and teachers should be blurred
- Teachers may well choose to share their screens rather than use camera
- Teachers do not need to set up Teams lessons in advance as pupils should expect each lesson to be live unless parents have been told otherwise

Pastoral Care of Pupils

Working at home can be challenging for a variety of reasons. We appreciate the huge role that parents will be playing and encourage families to structure the day to give balance, variety, and a sense of purpose. Parents can play a key role in helping pupils adhere to a routine and the amount of support will vary depending on the age and personality of the child, and the parents' own work commitments. Time should be made for regular breaks, exercise, pursuing co-curricular interests and connecting virtually with friends and relatives. The School will also continue to provide a strong sense of pastoral support during periods of closure. Guidance will be offered to parents on supporting their children with distance learning. The school's pastoral support system will also provide a sense of mental and emotional wellness, in addition to ensuring our most vulnerable pupils will continue to receive focused pastoral support.

Registration, Form Periods and Assemblies

- All pupils should log in to the relevant school platform each morning
- If a pupil does not log in, parents will be contacted
- in Secondary each Tutor will hold a weekly 10-15-minute form period on Teams, principally aimed at giving the pupils some interaction with their Tutor and others in their form
- in Primary, students should log on at the beginning of each day to meet with their Class Teacher
- Pastoral staff, including the Heads of Year and Deputy Heads will deliver wellbeing-themed messages and reflective assemblies
- Pupils should update Tutors or class teachers about any issues preventing them from completing work as expected

Teacher wellbeing

- It is recognised that this will be a stressful time for teachers
- Teachers should check in regularly with Heads of Year/Department and alert them promptly of any significant changes in circumstances, including living arrangements, health, and anxiety. The School Counsellors will be available as usual for any necessary assistance.
- The usual rules around confidentiality will apply; if a colleague believes that another member of staff may be at risk, it is their responsibility to share this with an appropriate member of senior staff
- Use of Teams or equivalent for meetings and as a means of maintaining morale is encouraged
- Opportunities for Continuous Professional Development, online courses and curriculum development or coaching may be discussed with the relevant Head of School and/or the relevant Head of Department.

Pupils' and Parents' Responsibilities

- When working remotely from home, pupils must remember that this is an extension of the classroom and they are to conduct themselves as they would in a classroom or school environment
- Pupils may use their school email account to communicate with their Form Tutor or subject teachers. Parents of younger pupils may communicate via email or Class Dojo.
- Pupils should only use platforms that have been authorised by the school
- Pupils must only use their school account credentials (e.g. email, VLE) when signing into school platforms
- When communicating with staff the language is to be respectful, appropriate and professional • Any communication relating to 'Distance Learning' which you feel is of a wellbeing concern must be immediately forwarded to the child's tutor or class teacher for further investigation. Safeguarding concerns should be reported in the usual manner
- Pupils should not be engaging with remote learning or completing work, tasks or activities at unsociable hours
- Pupils should not be communicating with staff via personal messaging services or non-school messaging services
- Please ensure that face-to-face communication is only between teachers and pupils
- Any parent-to-teacher communication should be in the usual manner, via email, unless discussed beforehand. To protect the wellbeing of staff and pupils, members of the school community should not record, share or comment on public forums about individual teachers or other pupils.

Live Communication with Teachers

- Pupils should get clear permission from their parents before they accept any invite to a live communication with a teacher
- Pupils should inform their parents when a live communication is about to begin and when it has concluded
- When joining a live communication, you should grant access to your camera and microphone to the web browser (i.e. 'Admit')
- When entering a live video, pupils must only click 'JOIN MEETING' when they see that their teacher is present
- If a pupil joins a live video call and no teacher is present, they must immediately leave and end the call
- When joining a group video call, pupils are to 'turn off' their microphone and only 'turn on' the microphone when told to do so by the teacher
- Pupils should be appropriately dressed and items worn should be respectful and non-distracting
- If the communication is live and there are wellbeing or safeguarding concerns,

the conversation/video must be immediately terminated and reported directly to the child's tutor or class teacher who will inform the relevant safeguarding or pastoral leads

- Pupils should be seated in a communal area of the home (i.e. kitchen, living room)
- If a pupil is working in a room by themselves (i.e. office or study) then it is important that the door remains open
- Live communication should not take place within the pupil's bedroom
- Pupils should only accept invites that come from a member of staff through an official school account and/or via an authorised school platform
- Pupils are not to use their school credentials to set up or invite other pupils to their own live communication
- Pupils are not to share teacher invites to live communication with other users or post publicly online
- Pupils are not to use the inbuilt chat feature unless clearly told to do so by the teacher
- Pupils should follow the instructions from teachers during live communication (e.g. when to mute microphones; limiting the use of the cat feature; when to leave at the end)
- If using a WiFi connection, pupils will need to be located in an area of the home with a strong and reliable signal
- If the sound quality is inconsistent, pupils can enable the inbuilt subtitles
- The backdrop of videos must reveal other members of the house (e.g. younger siblings)
- Ideally the backdrop of videos is a neutral background such as a wall or curtains
- Parents or pupils MUST NOT record any online interactions, lessons, activities or tutorials
- If any party is found to be in breach of this policy, the teacher will end the lesson/meeting immediately and inform a senior member of staff

Monitoring

Durham School for Girls accepts that 'Distance Learning' is a valuable educational tool. However, misuse of these platforms can have a negative impact upon pupil productivity, welfare and the reputation of the school. In order to ensure compliance with both this policy and the school's safeguarding policy, the school will periodically monitor and keep a record of who has accessed the school's platforms and attended live communications.

Sanctions

If a pupil or adult is found to have breached this policy, they will be subject to the school's disciplinary procedures. Pupils may also face the withdrawal of their access and/or restrictions to the school's 'Distance Learning' platforms. In addition to this, the severity of the breach may lead to parents/carers being contacted and in the event of illegal activities the involvement of the authorities.

Policy History

Date of adoption of this policy September 2024

Date of next review of this policy August 2027

Policy owner (SMT)Principal

Policy owner (Advisory Board)

