



Norfolk County Council

Distance Learning Pack Guidance

Inclusion and Opportunity Service



For any enquiries on the information in this pack or any other support needs please contact:

Inclusion and Opportunity Service
Norwich Professional Development Centre
Woodside Road
Norwich
NR7 9QL
Tel: 01603 303323
Email: virtual.schools@norfolk.gov.uk

Distance Learning

The aim of this guidance is to give information and suggestions to schools and settings in relation to distance learning. A Distance Learning Pack (DLPs) can be set up to effectively support pupils to continue their education whilst they are experiencing long term absence from the setting.

To allow pupils to make good progress, we need to support them to make the most of the time they have in school, and additionally, to allow them to access their education whilst they are not attending an educational setting.

Specific statutory DfE guidance, which can be found online, outlines the importance of all educational settings to provide good quality education, stating pupils and Young People

'regardless of circumstance or setting should receive a good education to enable them to shape their own futures' (DfE: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school>).

Norfolk County Council have a Medical Needs Service policy which outlines the importance having good quality education to maximise learning potential for all pupils.

Pupils absent from school due to long term sickness, injury or hospitalisation may miss lengthy periods of time from school and would benefit from having a DLP. This would allow them to access some form of education, where possible, in relation to the reason for their absence from school.

Many Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT) pupils, particularly those from the Fairground/Showman community, travel for significant periods of the school year. For Fairground/Showman families, the travelling season varies, and the pupil may be out of the school setting for several months. Not all families have the same travelling pattern therefore each individual pupil will have a different amount of time away from school.

Children from Service families have mobility between schools but generally do not return to the original school, therefore, much of this guidance will not be of relevance. However, if there is a need to set a pack up for the interim period between schools, then this guidance may be of use for this purpose.

Children within the care system may also benefit from working from a DLP if accessing a school place becomes difficult and they are out of education for prolonged periods of time.

A good relationship between the school and family makes using DLPs an excellent tool for learning. Working through the set activities is an effective way for pupils to carry on with their education and support the pupil to settle back into school life when they return.

The setting up of a good quality DLP does need some forward planning, however, once the system is in place, it offers both pupils and parents some structure by knowing what expected of them and what the school will be doing to support the family during their absence.

This guide offers examples of how to put together a comprehensive educational pack, which can be offered to pupils of any age or ability whilst at the same time encouraging parents to keep in touch members of staff from the school.

Some things to consider before setting up a DLP:

From a school/setting perspective:

Who will be responsible for the production of a DLP and what to put in it?

Identifying someone to liaise with staff, pupils and parents.

Who will mark it and how will feedback be offered to pupil and parents?

What happens if a DLP is not completed and returned?

How to code absence.

From a pupil's/parent's perspective:

There may be a lack of suitable learning environment.

Family work commitments (GRT/Showmen families).

A pupil may complete the work independently with little or no support.

Parents academic ability

How to gain feedback or maintain communication with teachers/peers? A

pupil may not feel part of the school when returning to their setting.

It is the school/setting's responsibility to acknowledge these potential barriers to learning and work with the pupils and parents to find positive solutions.



Distance Learning in the EYFS

Most children within the EYFS will not fall into the statutory category of having to access education by law. However, it is good practice, particularly when children have started school to prepare for breaks in their schooling during periods when the child will be away either through mobility or other reasons, such as having medical needs.



Recommended activities to support Distance Learning in the EYFS include:

Keeping in regular contact using smartphones, tablets and ICT software such as Tapestry or Orbit Early Years.

Encourage parents to share drawings, early mark making, photos and videos via the app as a record of each child's unique journey which can be entered into the child's Learning Journal as evidence of their Early Learning while they're away.

These can be used by Reception Class Teachers to help make judgments when completing the child's EYFS Profile at the end of their Reception year.

Ask families to keep a photo diary while the child is away which can be shared, with permissions in place, with the other children in the setting and vice versa, to keep the relationship between child and setting 'live'. When the child eventually returns, their transition back to the setting is likely to be made far easier by having done this.

Encourage the child, with parental guidance, to keep in regular contact with their individual friends using software platforms such as WhatsApp or Facetime.

Regular communication from the setting such as a weekly phone or video call with the child and their Teacher or Key Person.

For Showmen families send photos of the family's stall/ride and the child's involvement with the fair while they're away to help promote cultural awareness.

For the older children encourage them to send postcards to the school as another means of keeping in contact while encouraging their Early writing development.

Always be aware that the children and parents are still part of the setting or school community even when they are travelling or unable to attend, and it is best practice to ensure that they feel as engaged as possible and know what is going on while they are away.



Department for Education Document

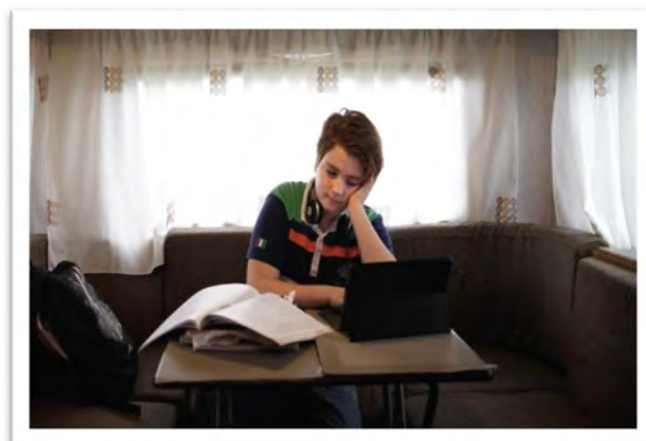
Teachers' Standards

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-standards>

A teacher must:

- set goals that stretch and challenge pupils of all backgrounds, abilities and dispositions
- be aware of pupils' capabilities and their prior knowledge, and plan teaching to build on these
- encourage pupils to take a responsible and conscientious attitude to their own work and study.
- promote a love of learning and children's intellectual curiosity
- know when and how to differentiate appropriately
- have a secure understanding of how a range of factors can inhibit pupils' ability to learn, and how best to overcome these
- have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils and be able to use and evaluate distinctive teaching approaches to engage and support them.
- use relevant data to monitor progress, set targets, and plan subsequent lessons
- give pupils regular feedback, both orally and through accurate marking, and encourage pupils to respond to the feedback.
- communicate effectively with parents with regard to pupils' achievements and well-being.

It would be good practice for staff to remain aware of any pupil who is unable to access the curriculum alongside their peers, including those who may lead a highly mobile lifestyle.



The fundamental right of all children to education
Article 28
United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child

‘Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils have the same educational entitlement as all pupils on a school roll to a curriculum which is appropriate to their age, ability and aptitude and to have their individual needs met, this may include distance learning arrangements when the family is travelling.’

In addition, children from a GRT background are protected from discrimination by the Equalities Act (2010).

‘Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Gypsy Traveller Pupils’
DfES July 2003:

‘School-based distance learning is particularly successful in minimising the effects of discontinuity, where school attendance is not possible ... It allows teachers to respond to pupils’ diverse learning needs as in the National Curriculum inclusion principles ...for pupils who may be absent for extended periods of time.’

‘Improving outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils’ DfES July
2003:

‘Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils have lower levels of achievement than other ethnic groups at all key stages. This is due to a complex range of factors, including barriers that prevent them from fully accessing the curriculum, such as lack of engagement, interrupted education and negative experiences of school... it is essential that schools and the Local Authority work together to meet the needs of these children and young people including during periods when they are legally travelling.’



As well as school staff, parents also have a duty to ensure their child, of compulsory school age, receives suitable education – but this does not have to be in a school/setting.

Parenting contracts can be used in cases of irregular attendance or alternative provision. Using this in the case of DLPs would define expectations and make the responsibility of both parent and school clear.

DfES - School attendance parental responsibility measures – January 2015

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-and-attendance>

Parenting Contracts

‘A parenting contract is a formal written signed agreement between parents and either the local authority or the governing body of a school and should contain:

- ✦ a statement by the parents that they agree to comply for a specified period with whatever requirements are set out in the contract; and
- ✦ a statement by the local authority or governing body agreeing to provide support to the parents for the purpose of complying with the contract.’



Preparing a DLP

With the first DLP of the year its good practice to invite the parents/carers into the setting before the child goes off, if possible. By having an informal, honest conversation about what is achievable while the child is not in the setting. Encourage them to ask any questions they may have and make suggestions on how they can keep their child motivated to study, when it is possible, dependent on their reason for absence. Include some information in a letter, setting out what you have discussed and the achievable expectations you have for completing the work set.

- ✦ set a realistic goal – complete some of the set work daily.
- ✦ practice spellings once a week.
- ✦ practice times-tables once a week.
- ✦ read daily.

These expectations should always depend on the age and ability of the pupil.

Things that should be included in the DLP:

For pupils where there is a set expected time scale, send enough work for approximately six weeks. Set revision work; consider whether the pupil has covered the area or topic of work being set. Including lined, squared, plain and graph paper and equipment like pencils, pens, glue sticks, scissors, rulers, protractor etc, in line with the work included in the pack.

Keep the pupil in mind whilst they are away.

Things that can be included in the work pack:

- ✦ **school contact details:** class teachers email address and information for accessing the school website –Make a point of getting in touch and email them a copy of any school news letters or any school events.
- ✦ **Details of school trips and transitions to new schools:** informing families of such events is important, even if the pupil is away from school. Many families would be willing to bring their child to school for these if they know about them and if the pupil is able to.



Suggestions for worksheets to include in DLP

Ensure that worksheets are not too 'wordy': keep in mind whether parents or older siblings will have the literacy levels needed to help. Handwritten notes in a different colour pen or sticky notes to give examples, give it a personal touch.

Mathematics –

Ensure the pupil has the equipment and squared paper needed for maths activities e.g. number line, 100 squares, tape measure etc. It's a good idea to provide an example of methods used and additional paper for workings out.

English –

Revision worksheets are useful for practising sentences, punctuation, comprehension etc. and include weekly spellings and lined paper for practicing. Send an exercise book with the pack and encourage the pupil to keep a daily diary. Make it clear that, depending on the age and ability of the pupil, it doesn't have to be anything too comprehensive; a few lines of writing with how they are feeling, some details of what they have been doing would give a basis of discussion once the pupil returns to the school/setting. Include a copy of the 'Five Finger Writing Rule' (included at the end of this guidance) to support the child and parents in checking their work.

Science -

When it comes to science, think about what activities would be practical. For example, it might be appropriate to send some sunflower seeds and explain the equipment needed. The pupil could keep a diary of the sunflower's growth and fill out a growth chart. They could also be able to take photos to send back to school or include this as their diary entry with illustrations. For the GRT community, some caution should be taken when considering work around reproduction and human biology. Some members of the community have strong views on any teaching of this kind, including plants and animals, therefore, it is advised that these topics are avoided unless you can have a conversation with the family before the work is given.

Reading Books –

As reading is such a vital part of learning and reading books could be sent out with every pack, including reading review sheets. Families may be able to visit the local library but also encourage the parents come into school to change the books if they are able to do so. Include a copy of the 'Five Finger Reading Rule' (included at the end of this guidance) for parents to use as a guide for choosing a book with their child.

GCSE and SATs revision books –

Revision guides and past exam papers are a good resource for practising and preparing for future exams.

Year 6 SATs/GCSEs -

Make sure parents are aware of any exam dates and suggest they bring the pupil into school for these, if it is possible and depending on the reason for absence. For pupils who are travelling, another option would be to liaise with a school or local Attendance Officer in the area where they will be during that time. It may be possible for the pupil to sit the exams there.

DLPs returned to school -

With each DLP include a school-addressed envelope in which to return the pack or check whether the family have the facility to scan in any work if they are out of the local area. Keep in touch with the family and ensure you have a correct address to return marked work and any new work to be completed.

The most important thing while the pupil is absent from school is communication. Even though the children aren't in school they are still part of your school community.

Recording communication and progress –

It is essential to record all communication with the parents whilst the pupil is absent from the school/setting, as evidence may be required for the purposes of coding pupil absence. This record of communication will show that the school is providing an inclusive and appropriate alternative education provision for the pupil.

Log all emails, phone calls and meetings between pupils, parents and the school. Keep records of DLPs being sent out and returned, and the marking and feedback of these.

Progress whilst learning through a DLPs should be closely monitored to see if the pupil is achieving. If the pupil isn't completing the work or it is clear that they are struggling then it is important to contact the family to discuss this, reassuring them that the staff have acknowledged this and will make the necessary adjustments needed to ensure their educational need is being met through the DLPs.

Distance Learning Packs in Secondary Education Settings

Within secondary settings, the focus for the DLP should be on the core subjects throughout Years 7 – 9. Years 10 – 11 would be GCSE revision based on the pupil's core subjects and chosen options. For Year 11 pupils, it is vital that they have the correct exam timetable, so they know exactly when they need to be back, if this is possible. Additionally, inform pupils and parents of any revision sessions in a situation where the pupil can attend.

Best practice, and for ease of communication, identifying one member of staff who can liaise with all subject teachers would be beneficial. The member of staff could coordinate and collate suitable, bespoke, curriculum-based work. Ensure the staff member contacts the parents from the beginning to ensure contact details are shared. Make it clear that they are able to be contacted the staff member at any time, with any questions or concerns about the set work. Regular communication and meetings with parents, where possible, will help to maintain continuity between the pupil and school staff.

Marking DLPs and giving feedback to students and parents

It is crucial to be able to give any student feedback for their completed work, especially when students have completed the set work independently.

The DfE Teacher Standards suggests

...give pupils regular feedback, both orally and through accurate marking, and encourage pupils to respond to the feedback.

Parents should be given a progress update with each completed piece of DLP work and if they are unable to attend their child's parent review meeting, they should be offered an alternative date, suitable for both the parents and school staff.

The use of ICT to implement DLPs

It is advisable to ensure pupils have the use of a laptop and access to the internet, relevant passwords and parental permission before setting any work or using this method of communication. If the family do not have a laptop, consider offering one for them to use if this is possible.

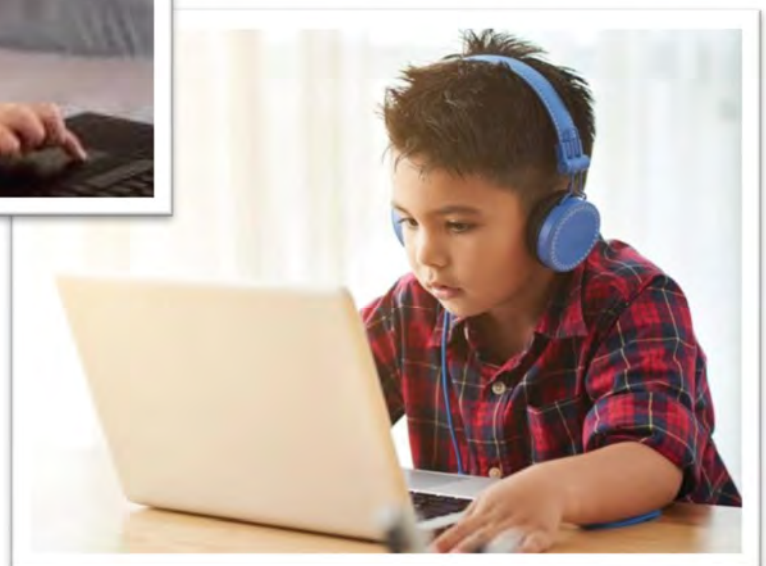
Laptops, the internet and educational software –

If the school has a VLE, ensure the pupil is confident enough to use this independently. Check the pupil has the relevant passwords and ensure their parents are on board with this. For any other learning programmes, ensure the pupil is confident to access and use them. If the school can install the relevant software on to the laptop, prior to the pupil being absent (if possible), any problems can be addressed before this point and any questions the pupil or family may have can be answered.

Emails –

Ensure the family have the school and class teachers email address. This is a good way for the pupil to stay in touch with their teacher and peers. Additionally, photographs are a beneficial way for pupils to stay in touch; for example, Showman pupils could use photos of their stalls and rides etc. to promote discussion within class about their family history.

Online-Learning could also be an option for parents to consider.



Coding absence from school

The DfE have specific guidance for pupil absence in schools and educational settings. The latest guidance can be found by using the link below, with key points taken from the guidance detailed in this handbook;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

Authorised Absence from School

Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

For children absent through long term illness

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)

Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness... If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence... Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc.

There are a number of different groups covered by the term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. These families often have the need to travel for occupational purposes and coding can be used specifically for this.

Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence...

Where there is a service for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils to attend alternative educational activity, this must be organised and run by qualified educators. If a pupil attends such a setting the pupil can be recorded under the following; code B. The pupil could be registered for an AM/PM slot in accordance of there attendance.

Code B: Off-site educational activity

This code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school... This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity... the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils.

5 Finger Writing Rule



5 Finger Rule

WHAT TO DO: Pick a book, open the book to any page and start reading. Put one finger up for each word you don't know.

0-1

1-2

3-4

5

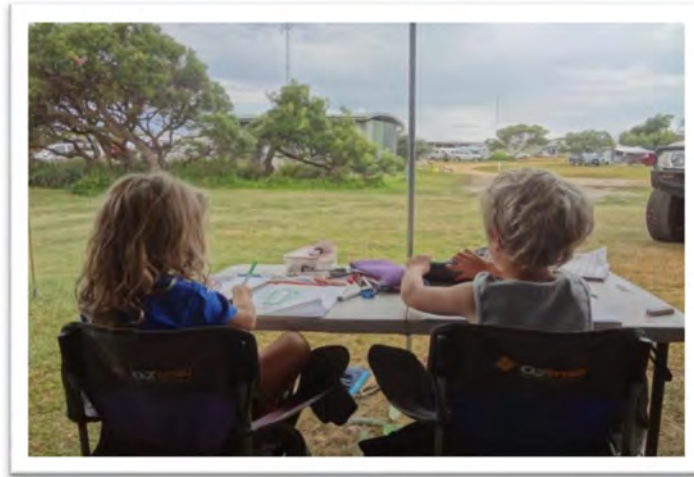
Too Easy

Perfect Choice

Give it a Try

Too Hard





Above all, a good quality, effective Distance Learning Pack should be –

- Varied, enjoyable and engaging.**
- Communicated to pupils and parents**
- Marked with feedback provided to the pupils and parents**
- Achievable and attainable**



For more information regarding attendance related matters, please contact our team to access the support of Norfolk County Council's GRT Access and Attendance Officers who can offer more advice.