



2020-2021
Caragh National School

Remote Learning Plan

Caragh National School, Co. Kildare
18654A

Introduction

This policy on Remote Learning in Caragh school was devised following the forced school closures as a result of the Coronavirus Pandemic in 2020 and 2021. This policy was formulated in consultation with the staff of our school and approved by the Board of Management.

This policy is informed by and in itself informs our school's Code of Behaviour, Acceptable Use policy, Child Protection policy, Data Protection, Digital Learning Plan and our policy guidelines on online classes.

This policy was drawn up and implemented following the publication from the Department of Education of *Guidance on Remote Learning in a Covid-19 Context: September - December 2020* and the relevant circulars to accompany this, namely *Circular 74/2020*.

Background

Following our return to school in September 2020 after the previous school closure from March to June, we analysed the measures we had put in place to support our pupils at home.

In the first school closure, we used Aladdin Connect as our platform to engage with the children. School work was posted and teachers provided feedback on this platform to children. We also used Zoom as a manner in which to engage with the children predominantly on a social level.

Special Educational Needs teachers supported the children with differing need by differentiating the work for the children and posting and emailing it to them. The teachers were in regular contact with the parents to offer whatever support possible.

*The events surrounding Covid-19 and the enforced closure of schools to pupils has highlighted the absolute necessity for schools to be prepared to support continuity of teaching and learning. **Circular 74/2020***

September to December 2020

Platforms

With the publication of *Guidance on Remote Learning* by the DES it was decided to review and assess our practices in the first school closure. While there had been much engagement on Aladdin Connect and through Zoom, it was agreed that the level of instructional teaching would have to be increased. The Department of Education's objectives for online learning recommend

- Regular engagement with pupils
- A blend of guided and independent learning experiences
- Appropriate and engaging learning opportunities
- Two-way feedback between home and school

In light of this we introduced new platforms in our school and began to trial these with our pupils on a weekly basis. Staff engaged in CPD on these new platforms and indeed collaborated in embedding these platforms in everyday practices.

- **Seesaw:** It was agreed and decided that our school would use the Seesaw App for classes from Junior Infants to 3rd Class. A unique QR Code was produced for each child and families were asked to download the app on devices at home.
- **Google Classroom:** It was decided that our school would use Google Classroom for the children from 4th to 6th Class. Consent was first received from parents. A unique email address was set up for each child in these classes within the [@caraghns.ie](mailto:caraghns.ie) domain of which the school principal is the administrator. As this is part of the G Suite of Apps for Education, the email functionality was disabled for the children. Children in our school are under the age digital consent (16). The children can log into Google Classroom with their teacher and thus engage with class work in this way.

From September to December these new platforms were used on a regular basis so as to familiarise the children and families with the technology and to iron out any technical problems.

This period also provided us with the opportunity to ascertain the availability of digital devices and broadband access in homes. In this regard the vast majority of our families are adequately equipped.

Plan for Remote Learning

The following information sets out the steps which will be taken in the event that a class or classes should need to self-isolate following an outbreak of Covid 19 in our school. This plan will also outline the measures which will be taken to ensure the continued engagement with the children in our school so as to maximise the possibilities for teaching and learning in this context.

The plan below also outlines the measures to be taken if indeed there should be a whole school closure following an outbreak in our school or should the national pandemic force school closures once more.

Class Closure

Should Public Health instruct a whole class to self-isolate as close contacts following a positive case of Covid 19 within the class, the following measures will be put in place. Consideration will be given to the number of children within the class and the number of teachers who must also isolate. The level of support will also be based on the numbers of teachers involved and the health of these staff members at the time.

- **Platform:** Each morning class work will be uploaded on the platform in use in the class – namely Seesaw or Google Classroom.
- **Online Teaching** So as to maximise the opportunities for online teaching and learning, Zoom lessons will take place each day. For logistical purposes the teacher will sub divide the class into more manageable groups. A maximum of 2 zoom classes will take place each day. This will be organised by the class teacher as is required. Such zoom classes will follow the procedures as set out in our guidelines. *Appendix A*
- **SEN Support** Support for those children in receipt of SEN support shall continue during the class closure with engagement with the SEN teacher. This will be conducted through Zoom classes with the SEN teacher and through sending differentiated work on the school platforms.
- **Communication** with teacher will continue through the platforms or through school email and of course on the Aladdin system. It will be important to maintain regular communication with families during this closure.

Should the class teacher be unable to support the class due to illness following positive Covid diagnosis, a substitute teacher will be employed for this period. The substitute teacher will take a position in SEN, thus allowing the relevant SEN teacher to support the whole class.

Should this not be possible for whatever reason, the substitute teacher will relieve a mainstream teacher at the same grade level, thus allowing this teacher to support the class while they are isolating at home.

Partial Class Closure

Should Public Health deem that only a certain cohort of children within a class are close contacts of a positive case and thus need to isolate the school will support these children in the following ways.

- **Platforms:** Class work will be sent out each day on the relevant class platform; Seesaw or Google Classroom.
- **Online Teaching:** The possibilities for online teaching will depend on the status of the class teacher at the time and also the number of children deemed necessary for self isolation. Should the class teacher also have to isolate, then he/she may be in a position to support the children online. If not, provision will be made in school either with the support teacher and/or principal to engage with this group of children who are isolating at home.
- **SEN Support** Support for those children in receipt of SEN support shall continue during the class closure with engagement with the SEN teacher. This will be conducted through Zoom classes with the SEN teacher and through sending differentiated work on the school platforms.

Should the class teacher be in ill health and unable to work, a substitute teacher will be employed to cover the class and teach the remainder of children who do not have to isolate.

Whole School Closure

If it is deemed by public health or following a national announcement that schools should close for a period of time due to the pandemic, then the following measures will be put in place to support our pupils and the school community.

National guidance will be followed at all times and restrictions will be put in place in line with public health and those recommended by NPHET.

- **Access to School:** If deemed permissible access to school for school staff will be in limited capacity and all staff will have to fill in the relevant *Access to School* form shared on Google documents.
- **Collection of School Books** An appropriate opportunity will be arranged for families for the collection of school books if deemed necessary by the school. This will be done in the shortest time frame possible ensuring limited access to the school building.
- **Communication:** Communication with families will be very important at this time in keeping them abreast of the on-going situation and to keep them informed of our practices in engaging with the children while at home.
- **Wellbeing:** While online learning is challenging for families and staff, it will be important to strike the right balance for the whole school community. The wellbeing of the children, their families and the staff members will be of

upmost importance. School authorities, while attempting to cater for all families, must guide the school community through this period of school closure.

- **Engagement:** As per Departmental guidelines, it will be important to engage with the children on a daily basis and as frequently as possible. This engagement will take place in one of three ways; feedback to class work on the learning platforms, through video lessons, and through online classes namely on Zoom in our school.

The following measures will be put in place to support our pupils during the school closure.

- **Platforms:** Class work will be sent out each day on the relevant class platform; Seesaw or Google Classroom. For continuity it will be important that each class in each class level sends the same work to each class. To this end, collaboration between class teachers will be important.
- **Video Lessons:** To ensure instruction teachers will use a combination of video lessons and zoom online classes. Research states that video lessons are very advantageous to children in ensuring a consistent level of teaching and learning. Also, this will provide families with further flexibility.
- **Online Classes:** It is recognised that online learning through Zoom is quite challenging. To this end Zoom classes will provide an opportunity for the children to engage socially and also with teacher for instructional purposes. Zoom classes will take place in a number of different ways, be it whole class or in smaller groups. The size of these groups will depend on the size of the class and the logistical requirements. Online classes will follow our guidelines as issued to parents and all staff members
- **SEN Support:** Support for SEN children during this school closure is of upmost importance. To this end the SEN teachers will keep in regular communication with families to ascertain the most appropriate manner in which support can be provided. SEN teachers will send differentiated work through our Aladdin system or using the platforms mentioned above. The SEN teacher will be included on these platforms so as to offer a high level of support for the children. SEN teachers will also engage in regular Zoom calls with small groups of children who may not wish to engage on the whole class Zoom lessons. This will provide valuable opportunities to ensure consistent engagement for all our children. A key element of these calls will be focused on the eventual transition back to full time schooling especially for those children suffering from a heightened level of anxiety.
- **Digital Devices:** Should it become apparent to school staff, that certain families are having difficulty engaging with online learning, then every effort will be made through the school to support them with digital devices on a 'lease' basis *Appendix B*

- **Non-Engagement:** Every effort will be made to ensure appropriate engagement of all children is maintained during the school closure and as a school we will support our families in every and any way possible.
- **Staff Engagement:** Weekly Zoom calls with staff will take place as a means of checking in on progress being made during the closure and as an opportunity to discuss teaching and learning.

If during the whole school closure, a teacher cannot work due to illness, every effort will be made to employ a substitute teacher for that period. If necessary, a teacher in SEN may be required to support a whole class thus allowing for continued level of support for the whole class. The substitute teacher in this instance may support the children in SEN.

Ratification

This policy was updated and ratified at a meeting of the Board of Management in February 2021.

Chairperson

Principal

Date

Date



Guidelines on Interactive Meetings In Our School.

Introduction

This document was drawn up as a guide for staff, pupils and parents as we consider the necessity of hosting online virtual meetings with the children in our school. The need for such a document followed the forced school closures due to the Coronavirus pandemic. While this document is not a policy in of itself, it is an addendum to the school's Acceptable Use Policy and is informed by the school's Code of Behaviour, Data Protection and Child Protection policies.

The protection of all children and staff members in our school, their personal private data, their physical and emotional wellbeing is of paramount importance and will serve as the basis for all such virtual meetings.

The use of Zoom as a platform has been considered and has been permitted for use in our school, as a means to communicate with our school children during the school closure following the Coronavirus pandemic. Such meetings are permitted in these circumstances as a means to cater primarily for the wellbeing of all our students.

Guidelines

Due consideration should be given by all, staff, children and parents prior to engaging in a virtual meeting within a school context. This list is just a sample of what should be considered. For the purpose of this document and it has been agreed and decided by school authorities that Zoom will be the chosen platform used in our school.

- Zoom meetings will be pre organised by the school with a given date and time.
- Children can contribute questions or news in advance of the meeting.
- The class teacher will be the 'host' of such a meeting.
- Ideally such virtual meetings should be co-hosted with another member of staff, however during whole school closures this may not always be logistically possible.
- The class teacher will send out the relevant details on the Aladdin Noticeboard for joining the meeting to parents, no earlier than 15 minutes before start time of the meeting.
- These login details cannot be shared with anyone other than those to whom the class teacher has invited.

- As children under 16 are not of the digital age of consent, parents must login in from their own Zoom account.
- Meetings will be available to join from 5 minutes before to 5 minutes after the scheduled time, and will then be locked once the meeting commences.
- One on One meetings are not permitted in our school.
However should an SNA be directed to carry out such a meeting as part of their reallocation of duties following Circular 27/2020 such a meeting will be permitted, following contact with the school principal.
- Small group meetings will be permitted.
- By joining in with Zoom meetings, parents are consenting to their child's involvement in said meeting.
- The rules of the meetings must be set out at the start of each meeting.
- Zoom meetings with the whole class in our school during the closure will provide an opportunity for the class teacher to 'check in' with the children and provide clarity for the activities to be carried out.
- Smaller Group Zoom meetings will provide an opportunity for some instructional teaching to be carried out. Consideration will be given here to the limitations such a platform provides for formal teaching.
- The recording of such meetings will not be permitted.
- Photographs of meetings will not be permitted.
- The sharing of content in relation to such meetings on social media will not be permitted.
- Recording of meetings, taking of photographs, or sharing of content will be deemed a serious breach of GDPR and may be reported as such.
- Parents will be required to be in earshot of the meeting at all times, but will not engage in the meeting for child protection reasons.
- All members of the meeting should be appropriately dressed for the meeting.
- Meetings should be conducted in appropriate settings in individual houses – not in bedrooms for example.
- An appropriate background for the meeting should be chosen.
- The meetings should last an appropriate amount of time and this should be communicated to parents in advance.
- Teachers should keep a record of those children who were in attendance at the meeting.
- General notes of the meeting should be kept.
- All participants joining the meeting will be muted initially and should remain muted until the teacher gives them an opportunity to contribute to the meeting.
- Teachers should 'lock' the meeting once all members have joined the meeting.
- Teachers should inform the school's DLP if they notice or have any concerns of child protection issues or should a disclosure be made to them.

- The teacher may end the meeting at any time should he/she deem any content inappropriate.
- Breaches of the Code of Behaviour or inappropriate behaviour will be reported to the Principal and will be dealt with thereafter.
- In such instances, children may be excluded from further meetings of this nature and parents may be contacted and informed.

This list is not an exhaustive list but is a mere guide for consideration. This document has been drawn up in consultation with the staff and Parents Council of our school and has been approved and ratified by the Board of Management on May 5th 2020.

This document was updated in January 2021 as schools were closed once more due to Covid 19.

Contract for Loan of ICT Equipment

Caragh National School



We _____, the parents of _____ agree to the following:

- We understand that the ICT equipment is the property of the school and not of the pupil.
- The ICT equipment will be used exclusively for the school work for Caragh school.
- We understand that in the case of damage or loss while at home or in our possession it is covered under our home insurance.
- We will take full responsibility for any repair or replacement of the device if damaged while being loaned.
- Only pre-approved apps or programmes by the school can be downloaded.
- The loan agreement is on a term-by-term basis and will be reviewed by the principal at the end of each term before continued use can be granted.
- Failure to comply with any of the above conditions will lead to the loan being terminated with immediate effect.

Signed: _____
Parent

Date: _____

Signed: _____
Principal / Teacher

Date: _____