

## Deaf friendly remote learning: a checklist for teachers

Online learning offers challenges and opportunities for all pupils, whether it takes place remotely and in the classroom. Remote online learning has similar opportunities and challenges but learners do not have access to the same social contact and support. This may negatively impact on deaf children who are at risk of greater isolation due to their communication and language needs.

This resource provides some practical suggestions to help you reduce any negative impact, and on the reasonable adjustments that you can make to help ensure that deaf children are not disadvantaged by any move to online learning.

### Planning

Deaf pupils have individual requirements and learning preferences which you will need to consider when preparing and delivering remote online learning. Make sure that you are familiar with a pupil's needs by talking to their SENCO (or equivalent) and Teacher of the Deaf, sharing content with them and seeking feedback.

When planning remote online lessons think about:

- How you are going to provide deaf students with a connection to each other and with yourself. Keeping relationships central is vital for deaf pupils who may feel isolated or disconnected.
- Are you deaf aware and have you thought about how to meet the deaf pupil's communication and support needs?
- Is your teaching content suitable for delivery through a remote online platform or will it need to be repurposed? [Our blog](#) provides more information on making online learning accessible.
- Have you balanced pre-recorded or pre-formulated learning with real-time face to face online learning?
- Does the pupil have the tools and resources they need to learn independently? If not, what support do they need to access learning in the same way as their peers?
- Are any online assessments accessible?

### Making remote online learning accessible

Below are some things that you should consider.

#### Be deaf aware

- Is your communication style accessible to deaf learners? A simple test is to turn down the sound and ask a friend or colleague how easy it is to understand the content of your lesson or presentation.
- Make sure that when you are speaking your face is well lit and can be seen clearly. Avoid covering your face or mouth with your hands, or turning away from the camera. Deaf children use visual clues as well as auditory information to help them learn.
- When reading a story position yourself so that the deaf pupil can see the book/page and your face.

## **Communicate clearly**

- If appropriate allow pupils access to lesson content or a lesson overview before the session, so they can familiarise themselves with new vocabulary and learning.
- Before you start speaking, make sure everyone has muted their microphones and that there is no background noise.
- Pace your lesson – talk slowly and clearly and build in natural pauses.
- Try not to deliver too much information too quickly, and avoid abrupt changes of pace or content.
- Use clear language and avoid jargon. Give explanations of new, unfamiliar or key vocabulary and repeat or show a written version of the word.
- Speak in clear straightforward sentences and avoid using complicated language structures or drifting from the point.
- Make sure instructions are clear, supporting them with visual information if appropriate.
- Don't ask students to complete a task whilst you are still talking.

## **Break up content**

- Chunk your lesson into clear sections.
- Avoid long periods with just you talking. Break up learning with different activities.
- Build in learning breaks – listening for long periods of time is very demanding on deaf pupils.

## **Make group work accessible**

Think about how you are going to include pupils in your activities and interactions by:

- making sure that classmates understand how to communicate effectively online
- making sure a pupil's video is on before they speak so the deaf pupil can see their face
- asking one pupil to speak at a time and repeating or paraphrasing their answer
- using the chat function or creating a group chat.

## **Make good use of communication support**

- If children are fluent readers consider using closed captions, subtitles or live transcription.
- Some students will need some signed support or content interpreted. Make sure you have put that provision in place before delivering the lesson.
- If you are working with communication support workers (CSWs) or interpreters, make sure they have access to your lesson content well in advance.

This [article](#) provides more information on how to make communication accessible to deaf learners.

## **Use all available technology**

- Check in with deaf pupils before you start the lesson and test that hearing technology and devices are working, for example, headphones, streamers and radio aids.
- Make sure that deaf pupils are aware of the accessibility options on your online learning platform, for example live captioning on Microsoft Teams.
- Make sure that these options are fully accessible across a range of technology including computers, laptops, tablets and phones.
- Check that your platform provides good sound and picture quality.

- If you are showing video with audio content make sure that it is accessible through subtitles, for example.
- Record your lesson and allow learners to access the recording so they can watch it back at their own pace.

### **Use visual support**

- Use visuals such as objects, pictures and animations to support learning but don't add in unnecessary visual information.
- Don't clutter PowerPoint slides, and keep information clear and informative.
- If you are using new vocabulary in a presentation allow pupils to click on the word and read the meaning through a pre-populated glossary.
- If you are using content from other providers, check that it is accessible to the deaf pupil.

### **Get feedback**

Seek feedback from your pupils. Ask questions about:

- how easy they found it to understand what they had to do
- the pace of delivery
- accessibility of images and videos.

### **Live streaming**

Some schools may choose to live stream their lessons from the classroom, particularly if some pupils are self-isolating at home.

Before you decide on whether to live stream your lesson from the classroom, here are some things to consider.

#### **Positioning**

- Does the deaf learner need to lip read and see your face at all times?
- How are you going to share visual information?
- Can the deaf learner still see your face when you are slide sharing?

#### **Audio**

- Is the pupil able to hear you clearly and at all times? Microphone options will be dependent on your classroom set up and how you teach
- Does the pupil also have access to technology at home that can help them to access audio content?

#### **Subtitles**

- Live captions can help particularly if the student has good auditory processing but are they accurate enough?
- Live captions used over a prolonged period of time can be very tiring so is there any other way you can provide key information prior to the lesson?

## **Training**

- Does the deaf learner feel comfortable with and understand how to maximise the functions of the platform you are using?

## **Interaction and group work**

- How are you going to involve the pupil meaningfully in the lesson taking into account safeguarding policies?

## **Learner experience**

- Is this going to be a positive learning experience for the pupil? If not consider other approaches.

## **Assessment**

Online assessments can be challenging for deaf pupils. Care must be taken so that pupils are not unfairly disadvantaged because they cannot understand what they are being asked to do. Here are some things to be aware of.

### **Audio content**

- If the assessment is not testing listening, then audio content could disadvantage the deaf pupil. If audio content is required – either to assess listening or because the child cannot read instructions easily, then consider using a live speaker or interpreter.

### **Instructions**

- Are instructions clear and straightforward? Is the language used familiar to the child? Are sentence structures simple with the most important information put first?

### **Visuals**

- Are the visuals helpful or misleading? Deaf pupils are more likely to seek information from visuals and could become distracted by competing information.

### **Support**

- Assessments can be stressful for all pupils but deaf pupils may become more anxious because of perceived or real difficulties accessing and completing tests. Make sure pupils feel well supported through careful preparation and planning.

## **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding and welfare of learners is paramount and takes precedence over all other considerations. At all times you should follow your school's safeguarding policies. All issues relating to online safeguarding should be dealt with in the same way as face-to-face teaching.

## Careful planning

Planning will be critical to ensuring a safe and successful live streaming lesson.

- Consider availability of pupils, and the numbers of pupils that can be included successfully for a safe lesson.
- Ensure the length of live streamed lessons are appropriate for deaf pupils.
- Consider the technology needs of the deaf pupil. If there is likely to be inequality of access due to technology issues, you may wish to consider alternative lesson formats.
- Ensure the lesson is planned in advance and give sufficient notice to pupils, parents/carers and support staff as required.
- Check all content is appropriate and for any tasks requiring online research, check the suitability/accessibility of the websites prior to the lesson.
- Be mindful that if the lesson includes tasks, some deaf learners may require more time than others.

## Location and camera settings

Think carefully about your location and camera settings.

- Choose a neutral location that is appropriate and safe, with no distractions. For example, Microsoft Teams enables you to change or blur your background display.
- Encourage deaf pupils to work from a suitable shared home location where there are low levels of background noise so they don't miss vital information to keep them safe.

## Pupil behaviour

- Make sure pupils have clear and unambiguous information about acceptable behaviours and expectations and reinforce these frequently to avoid misunderstandings. You may need to share these in more than one format and with parents and carers.

## More information

[Our blog](#) for professionals provides more information on coronavirus and education support for deaf children.

If you are creating new resources, our advice [How to make your resources accessible to deaf children and young people](#), may also be helpful.

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