HEADLANDS SCHOOL
SINCE 1965

Blended Learning Policy

Written by	Headteacher		
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1 Rationale

At Headlands School, we are firmly committed to the principle that a good learning experience delivers positive outcomes for children and young people, enabling them to progress in their education. We remain fully committed to the position that a well-trained, highly effective practitioner in every classroom is the best way to ensure that positive student experience. We work with our range of partners to train the teachers of the future and invest fully in our Continuing Professional Development and Learning Programme.

However, recent research and our own experience has demonstrated that there are situations where, to avoid lost teaching and therefore potentially damage the life chances of children and young people, the use of technology to deliver learning can be harnessed to good effect. This policy and associated training is intended to support our learning communities develop effective innovative approaches to teaching.

Embracing Technology is one of our pillars of teaching and learning and is exemplified through the delivery of a blended learning environment.

This Policy aims to address the changing dynamics of learning in the current climate and:

- Outline expectations of delivery of on-line learning including addressing any misconceptions
- Be clear about systems and procedures around safeguarding staff and students
- Identify support available for staff to enable them to build confidence in delivering online learning

The definition of blended learning is:

'Blended Learning is defined as a way of learning that combines traditional classroom lessons and activities with lessons that use computer technology and may be given over the internet.'

The range of evidence based studies available suggests that the quality of the learning activity is the critical determinant to successful learning, regardless of the medium of delivery. We must not be of the view that blended learning must be about the delivery of a continuous provision of live lessons; this is not always the most productive use of time or technology.

However, while explanation can be delivered via pre-recorded video, assessing students' understanding and adapting the teaching to meet the immediate requirements of students cannot and for this reason Headlands School has revisited the earlier barriers, working to remove them to allow as the most effective 'live' and reactive teaching as possible.

We have provided a highly sophisticated information technology solution and platform (Google Classroom) to enable our staff and students to collaborate and continue their learning and teaching remotely, should they be away from the physical environment of the school building (either students or staff).

We recognise that a significant majority of our teaching professionals did not train to deliver on line learning and we have therefore developed a Continuing Professional Development and Learning programme to introduce and develop skills and confidence amongst our team of professionals.
Our blended learning approach may be initiated when:

Pandemic Full/Local Lockdown/Health Protection – recent times have demonstrated that the protection of wider community health can be prioritised above continuing education for our students. At this time, we must be in a position to ensure that an exceptional quality of education continues for our students.

Medical/Long term absence - there may be exceptional circumstances that result in a student being away from the physical school environment for a prolonged period of time. In such circumstance and where appropriate, a blended learning offer may be provided through access to our virtual school.

Workload – recorded lessons or webinar style delivery can be used for revision and will reduce workload for staff when coordinated across departments.

Best Practice – some of our identified trainers may record sessions to be shared, with their permission, with other colleagues to develop skills and knowledge

2 Delivery of a blended learning model

A successful blended learning approach builds on the best pedagogy. It is delivered through well planned knowledge delivery and a range of engaging focussed learning activities to develop learning and apply that learning with opportunities to consolidate and review. It may incorporate other web-based programmes to provide stimulating activities and, where these are used, the best programmes are responsive to students and will pre-mark work to reduce teacher workload.

A blended learning environment does not insist on live delivery of learning but a balanced combination of physical delivery, live streaming and pre-recorded webinar style sessions to engage and introduce students to the session. These sessions should be complimented by 'off line' resources to promote independence and application of knowledge and skills.

We recognise that a carefully blended delivery of online and offline activities will reduce screen time and improve engagement.

3. Strategic Considerations

The following information is to inform opportunities for collaboration to deliver a successful programme of blended learning:

- when students are isolating or there is a partial closure of school
- in the event of a full school closure
- for exceptional circumstances that result in a prolonged period of absence

3.1 Intended Audience – it is the responsibility of the Executive Headteacher or Head of School to manage the expectation of parents/carers of blended learning delivery. This includes timings, content, extent and being explicit about intended audience. This will be done through the most appropriate whole school communications and will remain a key feature of the school's communication strategy with parents.

3.2 Access to reliable device and internet (staff) – for staff delivering in school, this will not be an issue as devices are refreshed and fit for purpose and there is always specialist support available through the ICT Helpdesk. However, where delivery is required from an

individual teacher's home, we will endeavour to provide a device for home use and a temporary link to the internet where the member of staff feels this is not available to them. Staff are encouraged to have a conversation with their Senior Leader for Teaching and Learning as soon as possible if they feel this may present them with undue concern.

3.3 Access to a reliable device and internet for students – our evidence shows us that our students predominantly have access to a device and the internet but this may be a shared device. We continue to provide access to a device for any student in need of one for the reasons outlined in this policy. We continue to survey our families to ensure that we have a good understanding of barriers to learning.

3.4 Individual Students unable to attend school – it is the expectation that teachers will provide resources from the lesson (preferably prior to) for the individual student to keep up with their learning. These will be posted on the Google classroom. Teachers are not expected to deliver live to individual students if the rest of the students are in attendance. However, the school will make provision for the student to have a contact to provide additional learning support where necessary.

3.5 Individual Students unable to attend school for a prolonged period of time owing to medical or other exceptional circumstances – in addition to teachers providing students with lesson resources on Google classroom, where appropriate, students may be referred to our Virtual School as a short term intervention.

3.6 The teacher is unable to attend school – this should be reported and recorded in the appropriate way. In these circumstances staff are asked to deliver learning from home, but with use of other tools to deliver effective blended learning. The class will be supervised in school by an appropriately trained cover supervisor for the duration of the lesson.

3.6 Prior to the lesson

3.6.1 Review the curriculum to identify the core concepts and ideas which are best delivered in the physical classroom environment. This should be done in subject specialist teams with colleagues working together within the school.

3.6.2 Ensure that the teacher is confident with the technology to be used. It is always a good idea to develop their own skills slowly. Though the technology is advancing all the time, ensure they stay within their comfort zone until they develop their skills further and advance. This way they will be better able to manage successfully their own virtual classroom.

3.6.3 Identify elements of the curriculum which are best delivered through the virtual environment. These are usually linked to further development of key learning points and consolidation or application of learning.

3.6.4 Plan for learning activities and virtual collaboration. It is not expected or desired that a teacher will deliver content for the full lesson, just as it would not be in the physical world. It is important that thinking time, activity time and opportunities for students to collaborate are built into the virtual lesson plan.

3.6.5 Plan for technological failure. Although we have a high quality technical infrastructure and support, the systems must be embedded with students and staff and supported by home technology to be able to consistently deliver in the virtual world. This cannot always be guaranteed. As lessons will be a full blended approach, plans should include resourced activities that can be used in the event of technological failure.

3.6.6 Additional support for students in the virtual lesson– where there would usually be support in the lesson for students with additional need, teachers are encouraged to invite the child's Learning Tutor to their lesson for support. Messages of support and encouragement can be sent to the child personally through the Google Chat feed and the Learning Tutor may then be able to support with 'break out work'. It is not anticipated that the child will have support during the lesson at home.

3.7 During the lesson

3.7.1 Remember this is a classroom in the virtual world. Behaviour management and scene setting within a lesson is essential, regardless of the medium used for delivery. All staff are encouraged to ensure that students have a clear understanding of the 'virtual classroom' rules and the teacher's expectations to support the learning for all. (Appendix 1) Headlands School Positive Discipline Policy should be followed in the virtual classroom. At times, because of the link to social media platforms, it may be that students feel they can be more informal in a virtual classroom; this should not be accepted.

3.7.2 Be alert to safeguarding as a primary role. Ensure the safeguarding information is shared with students at the start of each session as they join. Reporting systems embedded within the school must continue to be used.

3.7.3 Pedagogy considerations. As with all lesson planning and delivery, good pedagogy sits at the heart of successful teaching. Delivering a varied and appropriate lesson matched to student needs is essential to foster engagement. However, there are no experts, we don't know what best practice looks like in blended learning so we will focus on the skills our staff already have to deliver effectively.

3.7.4 Intended audience – The lesson delivery is *'private'* between the teacher and their class. If the teacher is aware of parent/carer or other unintended audience members attending the lesson, they should professionally end the session and provide alternative independent work for students to complete to avoid further loss of learning. The teacher MUST then report their concerns to their departmental Senior Link Teacher (SLT) who will contact the parent/carer and discuss our expectations with them personally. The SLT Link will feedback to the teacher before any further virtual learning for that class is delivered. Where parent/carer does not meet the expectations, they will be invited to 'attend' a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss continued learning. At no time will we disadvantage a student's education as a result of the behaviour of their parent/carer.

3.8 Post lesson

3.8.1 Time for reflection and review. As with all professional practice, this will provide opportunity for improvement and a focus on the critical aspects that defined the positive experience for staff and students.

4 Policy Monitoring and Review

It is essential to monitor the impact of this policy on the following aspects of its application:

- Staff workload and well being
- Engagement with students
- Reliability of Headlands School provided technology

- CPD engagement with staff
- Impact on outcomes (in their broadest sense)
- Survey Outcomes – staff, students and parents conducted termly

The Associate Deputy Head for Quality of Education will be responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy.

In line with the rationale statement of this policy, we will not, as established good practice, continue with this approach for full classes/cohorts other than when absolutely necessary.

The quality of live lessons will not be judged as part of the formal QA process for Headlands School and will not be admissible as evidence in an appraisal review meeting or pay decision. There are no experts to deem what is or isn't good practice for on line learning delivery therefore it would be ethically wrong for us to make this judgement.

Appendix 1: Headlands School Online Home Learning: Responsible User Agreement

Headlands School Online Home Learning Responsible User Agreement

Rules:

- I will only use the technology associated with my school account and online learning for school purposes as directed by my teacher
- I will only use this technology with an adult's knowledge and permission
- I will not reveal my passwords to anyone
- I will be responsible for my behaviour and actions when using technology (Google Meet; Moodle; Gmail; Show My Homework and other interactive applications), this includes the resources I access and the language I use
- I will make sure that all my communication with students, teachers or others using technology is responsible and sensible
- I will not deliberately browse, download, upload or forward material that could be considered offensive or illegal. If I accidentally come across such material, I will report it immediately to my teacher or parent.
- I will not record or take photos of my classmates or teachers during any face-to-face sessions
- I understand that, when using Google Meet or other applications provided by the school, that my use can be monitored and logged and made available to my teachers
- I understand that these rules are designed to help keep me safe and that if they are not followed, school sanctions will be applied and my parents / carers may be contacted

Guidelines for Google Meet usage:

When using Google Meet, remember that this is an extension of the classroom and you should conduct yourself as you would in a classroom. This includes:

- Video conferencing from an environment that is quiet, safe and free from distractions (preferably not a bedroom)
- Be on time for your interactive sessions
- Be dressed appropriately for learning
- Remain attentive during sessions
- Interact patiently and respectfully with your teachers and peers
- Provide feedback to teachers about your experiences and any relevant suggestions
- You MUST NOT record each other's online interactions or share links to Google Meets with peers not in your class
- Make sure you end the session as soon as the teacher indicates to do so

Appendix 2: Operational Teacher Guidance for successful delivery of blended learning.

This is advice and guidance which has been obtained from colleagues, both within and outside of Headlands School, to support high quality blended learning delivery. It is not intended to be a checklist but to offer support in your professional development and confidence to deliver.

Teaching and Learning Top Tips

- try to practise your lesson delivery with a peer support, even once is a help to build confidence
- plan exciting and engaging lessons to deliver in the virtual environment
- provide gaps in the lesson for independent activities and bring students back together for review sessions, in these gaps cameras and microphones should be turned off and support offered through the chat
- share a verbal plan of the lesson at the start with students to provide a scaffold
- narrate your actions and progress through the lesson (metacognition)
- use student names to direct questions
- 'warm call' students through the chat or informing them as you set the task
- provide thinking time for students to complete activities and respond to challenges
- maintain a good pace to the lesson as you would in the physical world
- where possible provide pre lesson information/tasks to support students to prepare for the lesson
- have a blended approach so that resources are available to students if the technology fails or students cannot access the lesson

Do

- make your classroom rules explicit
- we want our lessons to be positive and collaborative learning experiences using student microphones and cameras may achieve this, but learning can be equally successful if these are turned off for all participants.
- if you choose to leave cameras on, insist that students use one of the 'background features' for equality.
- schedule your lesson at least 24 hours before delivery to ensure students attend
- schedule your lesson in your usual timetabled slot to avoid clashes and support students to develop their independence for engaging in all aspects of their learning
- follow safeguarding and behaviour management policies
- use the features of the technology to support lesson delivery – ability to enter the lesson via the lobby, mute all, attendance download, removing access to ppt control
- use the Headlands School 'Virtual Lesson Welcome Page' at the start of every online lesson
- record all lessons for later use by students for review and consolidation and as part of our safeguarding protocols
- ask for help from colleagues if you feel you want it
- speak to your Line Manager/SLT Link or Headteacher if you are experiencing issues with competing priorities for example, in full lockdown you may have childcare commitments, which may mean you are unable to meet the provision around continuing education for students. You can also seek support through your Trade Union Representative.

Don't

- plan to deliver live lessons for the full lesson allocation every lesson, this is not necessary and is unsustainable from a workload perspective.
- accept anti-social or over familiar behaviour or language over the internet
- have parents/carers/other siblings attend as part of your lesson
- save your lesson onto a local device, always save into google drive to protect your own and student data privacy
- ignore safeguarding concerns in the wider background of a virtual lesson
- over challenge yourself, either with elements of technology or activity, go slow and use what you are confident with
- use an email address to invite students other than their school email account
- schedule a lesson for an individual student without express permission from the Headteacher
- meet outside of the lesson in the virtual world with any student on an individual basis
- worry

Appendix 3: Frequently Asked Questions – Summary of Key Policy and Practice

Q) I have some students in my class that are absent and some who are present. What should I do?

A) *Please upload your lesson resources and set homework on Google Classroom for the missing students. This will allow the students who are absent to keep up to date with your subject and facilitate a positive return to your class. Please teach the remaining students in school as normal.*

Q) My entire class is absent. What should I do?

A) *Please teach a 'live lesson' to your class via Google Classroom.*

Q) How do I do this?

A) *The suggested way of doing this is by sharing your screen with the students. This allows you to give verbal explanations over your PowerPoint or other resources and model techniques using your graphics tablet or visualiser, where available in the classroom. You should be able to teach the live lesson sitting at your computer.*

Q) Do I have to appear on camera?

A) *No. However, you may find this easier to gauge engagement of your class in the learning you are delivering. If delivering from home during teacher absence or full lockdown we would ask you to use a filter background and insist students do the same to avoid any issues with social disadvantage.*

Q) Will I be able to see or hear the learners?

A) *No if your classroom rule is that they turn the camera/microphone off; however, if you do this you must make use of other strategies to gauge engagement and receive feedback from students to ensure that your teaching is having a positive impact on learning. If you are using microphones in the 'live' lesson then we recommend you use the mute all feature and only invite students to speak when appropriate within your lesson.*

Q) If I can't hear my class how will they ask me a question?

A) *Students can communicate with you through the chat function; you should monitor this throughout to provide timely interventions and receive feedback on learning.*

Q) What if students use inappropriate language or make an inappropriate comment in the chat?

A) *Students will log in via their school email, so all chat comments have their name next to them. Any inappropriate language will be dealt with through the Behaviour Policy and you should report it in the usual way*

Q) Should I aim for my lesson to be live for the full length of the slot?

A) No, 'Live Lessons' are 45 mins long. As is usual in a lesson, there may be times of teacher input and then independent work. You may wish students to 'post' their work to you at the end of the session so you can review it but we are working with young people and parents to ensure our expectations of independent learning are clear.

Q) What about students who don't have the technology to access these lessons from home?

A) *We are providing the technology to students who need it so all can access these lessons, as far as we are able.* The class recording may be really important for some as our research shows us that shared devices in a household are common so students may not be able to engage in your live lesson but will be able to keep up with their learning.

Q) How do I give feedback to work submitted via Google Classroom?

A) *As per the Feedback & Assessment Policy*

Q) What should I do if a student is regularly not completing work set at home?

A) *If this is just in your subject then it is worth speaking to your Subject Leader in the first instance. Where there is a pattern across subjects then pastoral teams will also become involved to try and get them back on track.*

Q) Will recording be used for quality assurance?

A) *Absolutely not. Recordings are only there to allow students to revisit the lesson if they could not attend at that time or wish to revise*

Q) Should I be concerned that a parent/carer might 'sit in' my lesson?

A) This *is unlikely to be positive for student engagement in the secondary phase. If you feel that parents are attending your lesson, then please politely close the lesson down by setting a learning task for participants and seek advice from a member of SLT.*

Q) Should I respond to students' questions and queries outside lesson times?

A) There is no expectation that teachers will be available at all times for students. *As students become more familiar with online learning they may ask more questions outside the lesson time on chat functions. While staff are free to respond whenever they wish, there is no expectation this will happen outside normal timetabled lessons or school hours. This will be explained in the letter issued by Headteachers to parents/carers to manage expectation.*

Q) What if in any future lockdown or self-isolation periods I have childcare or other personal issues that prevent me from doing what I want to deliver to my classes?

A) We all have personal lives and at this difficult time it can sometimes feel like we are being pulled in competing directions; don't worry there is always a work around. Speak to your Line Manager/SLT Link or Headteacher if you are experiencing issues with competing priorities. You can also seek support through your Trade Union Representative.

Q) Have issues around workload been considered?

A) As we have throughout lockdown, we remain committed to being reasonable and sensitive to concerns about workload. In developing this guidance, we have considered staff workload and well-being and have worked with union representatives. However, this is new for all of us so we will be reviewing these procedures regularly and part of that review will be an opportunity for staff to give feedback. We will do this by:

- *Informal Feedback*
- *Staff, Student and Parent Survey*
- *Quantitative Data*
- *Help Desk Call Levels*

This feedback will be shared with Trace Unions and the Headlands School Governing Body, and we commit to act on feedback to ensure workload is reasonable and manageable.