

Learning during unexpected or planned school
closure - using the Internet and your VLE
- for all Secondary Learners KS3 and KS4

The aim of this document is to offer a few suggestions as to how a School might prepare for any future unexpected (or planned) closure so Learning can continue, through the use of the Internet and their own VLE

A summary diagram of the main points, links and lesson plan ideas for you to adapt are included in the appendix at the end



The aim of this document is to suggest to Schools how they can prepare their systems to enable full use of the VLE during School closures. In the appendix we include some lesson plans and other suggestions as well as some links to how others have worked online during such events. The ideas could be useful where School is either unexpectedly closed or during a planned closure (such as a holiday immediately prior to important public exams). With experience of E-learning across Kirklees we would be pleased to work with you to introduce the suggestions in this document

Teachers will sometimes have used a VLE for extension work and a few are using one on a regular basis. For these groups and their students, using the VLE (assuming all have home access) will be a natural extension of what they do anyway. But for the majority it is unlikely to be possible to simply pick things up from home on the day of an unplanned closure.

There is actually no need for a School to stop educating when there is a snow day or other closure when they are routinely using online learning at other times. There are a few pointers to success with closure 'virtual' lessons

1. It *must not* be the first time the class and Teacher have ever used the VLE
2. The School should not expect every class to run to a normal timetable
3. The School should prepare a 'closure' timetable for a day, always available to use, that gives priority to exam groups, whilst giving each year group a session online
4. You might consider actual lessons online with a Teacher for exam groups, for other year groups consider written instructions available on your VLE for them to complete
5. When Teachers plan an online lesson, they should aim at an hour online and an hour working offline (see appendix), so most of their classes might have access in a day

Management - suggestions on preparation for closure day lessons

Suggestion	Advance preparation
Send SMS texts out to inform Learners of what they should do, using such software as 'Groupcall'. It could go to Parents as well as the Learners themselves. With this type of software linked to the school MIS, specific information can be sent out to different groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather mobile phone numbers and set up 'Groupcall'
Some MIS systems, if accessible from home, could be used to access email addresses (where you have them) and this could be used to send information direct to Parents or Learners. Whilst this relies on people checking their inbox, more and more people use email routinely now on a variety of devices. If Parents are made aware, they will soon look in the case of an unexpected closure; add information to the School website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather email addresses and add to your MIS • Allocate the role of website update to a member of your staff in case of unexpected closure • Have a category on your registers for those who have taken part in an online lesson for analysis later

Suggestion	Advance preparation
<p>Update your VLE daily. Get your teachers in to the routine of using it. I have heard comments from young people on the lines of "our school VLE is rubbish, they never update it". Ensure Learners are in the routine of using it at anytime so there are fewer negative responses to it</p> <p>No software, online or otherwise, is effective in delivering learning if people don't or can't use it. Therefore there needs to be a development plan in place specifically to ensure that all Teachers can make use of the VLE at all times of year and do so regularly with their classes. It also needs to be embedded in the School daily and weekly routine as part of the efficient running of the organisation.</p> <p>Teachers need to be encouraged through CPD to use a VLE by 'hands-on' experience as both a Learner and Teacher. A task should be set for them to work with three classes online in the next month. A plenary session should then be convened where practice and progress in these classes can be shared.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPD for your Teachers • Set up a 'Teaching online forum' that meets regularly for teachers to attend face to face • Have an equivalent online forum available at anytime for sharing good practice or questions with a moderator to review it • Show the learners how to use the system in Y7 and at the start of each subsequent year have it as part of induction • Have online Learner champions in each class or year group who can be rewarded in some way
<p>Use your VLE for teaching and learning outside the classroom - VLEs weren't designed to be used in a class all the time, they are at their best when used for additional work and occasional use in a classroom.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure Teachers are aware of how best to use a VLE outside the classroom – they will avoid it if they feel they need to only use it in lesson, since computer access may be a problem
<p>VLEs are not designed to collect statistics. They can do this, but it isn't their primary purpose. They are intended as a means by which learning can be delivered remotely.</p> <p>A VLE linked to an MIS is the place for data gathering, together this tends to be called an 'MLE' (managed learning environment - emphasis on management, not learning delivery to classes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a conceptual and real separation between the VLE and MIS systems so the Learning role of your VLE isn't lost
<p>Not all Learners have access from home; if they do, there may be several people needing to use one computer. Most learners have mobile phones which are becoming increasingly sophisticated. Other devices have internet access such as games consoles, iPods and TVs through Sky, Virgin Media and other services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather information from Teachers and Learners in your School about internet enabled devices they have access to • Focus on those who don't have internet access at home • Consider supervised access in School for those who can't get access at home

Suggestion	Advance preparation
Learners must be at the centre of developments and should be made aware and reminded of the various means of gaining access to learning information from School. The easiest way to ensure this is to make VLE access part of the routine - Learners must make use of the VLE for all their classes at regular intervals in the year, together with their fellow learners, to accustom them to its use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A section should be included in Learners' planners each year about online Learning • The website should have a section about online Learning • A major part of a whole School ICT policy should be a clear statement that Teachers are expected to use the VLE in their Learning delivery

Teachers - suggestions for online lesson preparation for closure days

Suggestion	Advance preparation
Tasks requiring online access should be no more than an hour long, and should be set up so that learners can make notes and take them away to be completed on paper, or complete a practical activity (perhaps measuring and monitoring the snow or wind direction and comparing with online sources, or with other Learners from their class then creating a comparison chart)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan the lesson in two sections for online and offline learning • Check any links you will be using in advance and on the day and have alternatives • Practice using the discussion forum/boards in a computer room with a class to familiarise yourself with it
Do not assume that because young people use the internet routinely, that this means they are using it effectively. They may know how to use social media sites, but this does not mean they know how to use a VLE to learn. Discussion boards are a good place to start using a VLE with a class that is working remotely as the teacher can monitor discussions and set tasks easily or support those who need it. Video is possible if everyone has the hardware and software	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the Learners which social media sites they use • Identify those who are frequent users and have them mentor others who are not • Have a reward system in place for these mentors and allow any Learner to become one – perhaps on a rota
A starting point is to ask Teachers to upload simple task sheets for learners to access in teaching groups. There is no need for it to be sophisticated if it works for all parties. As confidence builds other software can be used to make it more interesting - and why not ask the Learners (who will have the necessary skills of which you may not be aware) to develop the materials - the teacher supplies the expertise and content, the learners design it for delivery!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers could identify materials they already have electronically and make those available as tasks on the VLE • Do not try to produce materials yourself that are similar to those on the internet – these often take teams of experienced software engineers to produce – start simple! • In your Curriculum plan for each class design in a VLE lesson once a term or more, where you work with the learners together in a computer room to ensure they can make best use of it when working remotely later

Appendix 1

Example school

Snow no barrier to learning 07-JAN-10

Students in North Tyneside aren't letting the weather put a freeze on their work. Pupils who have been unable to attend school able to log on to North Tyneside's Learning Platform - a web-based resource and study area which pupils can access from home or local libraries.

The platform harnesses the latest educational software to give students anytime access to class notes, revision aids and homework. Learners can hand in homework from home, chat with friends and teachers and collaborate in online projects, as well as access free online storage.

Parents are also able to access the Learning Platform, where they can get school news directly from the school, talk online with teachers, see homework assignments and view reports.

Like hundreds of schools across the region, Marden High in North Shields has been affected by the problems caused by the current cold snap.

The school has been able to remain open to nearly 400 year 10 and 11 students, but unfortunately not to years 7, 8 and 9.

But Headteacher David Stainthorpe is determined that won't mean their studies will be put on ice, and the school has set online work for the students via North Tyneside's Learning Platform, and recommended to pupils that they log on while they're snowed in.

He says: "Here at Marden High we're using the tools and technology we have at our disposal to keep the school running as effectively as possible in these challenging circumstances. **Our technology savvy students are very familiar with the Learning Platform - they'd normally use it daily to access learning resources or complete homework.** We're encouraging students to log on and not let their studies slip.

"If students are kept away from school for more than a day or two, we can use the Learning Platform to **set work and alert them when it is available online, by text message.**"

...

Cllr George Westwater, Cabinet member for Children Young People and Learning said: "In North Tyneside we're working with schools to do as much possible to ensure that they can remain open. Where closure is necessary, the Learning Platform is a valuable and innovative resource for our students, and is helping us to minimize the impact of any closures on our pupils."

Appendix 2

Useful links – what others have done as online lessons or how they have used a VLE

1. “Through all of this my online module has been ‘business as usual’ with students continuing to log on, complete their learning activities, comment on each others ideas, construct wiki pages together, post reflective blog entries, ask me questions, and build and upload their summative assessment tasks. Apart from one student stuck in a European airport, the snow has had virtually no impact on their capacity to engage in learning activities”

Source: <http://cathellis13.blogspot.com/2010/01/is-there-snow-alternative-to-face-to.html>

2. A primary school lesson online: “I decided not to use the inbuilt chat in our learning platform, [Studywiz](#), as I wanted to be able to try and use some of the same teaching strategies that I use on a day to day basis to see if they will transfer online. In particular, modelling the writing process through shared writing. I therefore needed a tool that would allow drawing and writing to be seen and used at the same time as audio and chat. For this purpose I decided to give [Twiddla](#) its first ever ‘work out’. Currently, you can register for educational use on the site and get a pro account for free, details at the bottom of [this page](#)”

Source: <http://www.twiddla.com/Replay.aspx?sessionID=176083>

3. A whole variety of materials that could be added to your VLE or be linked to from your VLE. You can then direct your Learners to them for an online lesson

<http://www.schoolhistory.co.uk/lessons/>

<http://www.bitesize.com/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/bitesize/>

...and many others you will already know. However you need to ensure teachers know how to get to a list of them so they can allocate work on an unexpected closure day

4. Greendown School Swindon – have a special page set up for closure “if the school is closed due to poor weather conditions, then this page will provide details of work that students can continue with from home.” Whilst it is not an online lesson it is an alternative to consider

<http://www.greendown.swindon.sch.uk/mod/resource/view.php?id=812>

5. How a teacher set up a Lesson using ‘Coveritlive’ online software:

“First thing in the morning I texted the parents of the Year 6 children to inform them of the online lesson and the time it would start using: [Teacher2 Parents](#) (our texting service provider). With 30 minutes to go, there was already 10 pupils online waiting for the session to begin and this grew to 17 by the time it started.... I set the poll to ask ‘How deep is the snow where you live?’ and set 6 options for answers. As children vote, these are then displayed as a percentage – A great numeracy link!”

Source: <http://mrmitchell.heathfieldcps.net/2010/01/06/my-snow-day-online-collaboration-lessonsresources/>

Appendix 3 – two lesson plans for you to consider and adapt

Lesson Plan for one hour ‘virtual’ Lesson – GCSE class

N.B. Although this is intended to be delivered online, it is advisable for teachers new to this approach to try it out in a classroom with a group until they and the Learners are confident about using it. It will be fraught with difficulty if neither have experience of online supervised learning!

Details	
Teacher[s] _____	
Date: Wed/..../...	Live Time: 1-2 pm
Group: _____	Offline work: 1 hour
Subject: Law GCSE Y10	Year: _____ No. in group : _____
Topic: _____	_____
Course taking place at: _____	(School /College/WBPL)

Description Of Lesson [Title]
To illustrate the nature of theft and its main components using case studies and scenarios to consider

Objectives
[Please include reference to the way you are using e-Learning in this lesson/course]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To direct Learner to resources to write about the legal definition of theft in English Law • To respond to learner enquiries through feedback online • To focus on the components that make up the legal definition of theft • To consider a case study to help understand the nature of theft

Resources required	Advance Preparation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to a VLE containing necessary links, Learners and teacher already set up to use a course • Access to a word processor for Learners to complete work – could be online (e.g. Google docs) • Links to websites on English Law to find definitions • Actual case studies and scenarios to illustrate this aspect of English Law – on VLE and/or online with links • Discussion forum topic and threads on the VLE 	Ensure all Learners know how to access or who to contact if they can't Ensure all Learners know how to use the discussions Set up discussions beforehand On the day: Send out groupcall message (or live by other means) to inform parents and Learners of lesson start time Check all links still live and active

Stages of learning **Note:** stage 1 and 2 are provided to allow flexibility so the lesson online can be divided in to two separate sessions if things take longer than anticipated

A. Online activity

Time	Teacher activity	Learner activity
1:00pm	Setting up; identifying who is online and sending a message out to confirm; Adding guidance to summarise the lesson and where to find things using a discussion forum thread	Reading posts and following instruction; trying things out from home and asking if a problem
1:10pm	Stage 1 Teacher puts up definition of theft and asks Learners to break it down in to 5 component parts Useful link: Nature of theft Illustrate why all parts have to be present for theft to be proven: Teacher begins new discussion thread and links to illustration case study e.g. R v Lloyd, Bhuue, and Ali 1985 Teacher prompts less active learners as needed (as in a class)	Taking part in activities/tasks set by tutor online – working individually or as assigned by the teacher using the forum in groups Learner reads case study and add comments on new forum thread begun by teacher
1:40pm	Stage 2 Direct learners in small groups to think of a scenario where theft has occurred and say why. Think also of one where it doesn't satisfy all criteria so is probably not theft Other resources:	Taking part in activities/tasks set by tutor – working in groups, individually or as a class In groups set by teacher, Learners begin a new discussion topic to create their own two examples
Work set:	To do for one hour – write a page or more about 'When is a theft, not a theft?' using illustrations as discussed	Learners work should be written and uploaded by 9pm this evening

B. Offline work

Offline work – for Learners to complete and upload later		Target time for completion: Same day - 9pm
3:00 pm start	Review discussion and make comments After deadline time: check uploaded work and assess/ upload for Learner to see	Use discussion points and links or references (e.g. in a book) provided by teacher to write about the nature of theft as directed

Lesson Plan for one hour 'virtual' Lesson – 14-19 Diploma

N.B. Although this is intended to be delivered online, it is advisable for teachers new to this approach to try it out in a classroom with a group until they and the Learners are confident about using it. It will be fraught with difficulty if neither have experience of online supervised learning!

Details	
Teacher[s] _____	
Date: Wed/... _____	Live Time: 1-2 pm _____
Offline work: 1 hour _____	
Group: Kirklees Collegiates _____	Year: Y10 No. in group _____
Subject: Creative & Media _____	
Topic: Multimedia _____	
Artwork _____	
Course taking place at: _____	(School /College/WBPL) _____

Description Of Lesson [Title]
To create an artwork for display in the School Reception area; to be executed not in water-colour or acrylic, but in video and sound. The work will run for 2 minutes before looping.

Objectives
[Please include reference to the way you are using e-Learning in this lesson/course]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To guide learners through a design brief • To respond to learner enquiries through feedback online • To focus on the components that make up a piece of multimedia artwork

Resources required	Advance Preparation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to a VLE containing necessary links, Learners and teacher already set up to use a course • Access to a computer and digital stills and/or video camera for Learners to complete work • Links to websites that could help research for ideas • Discussion forum topic and threads on the VLE 	Ensure all Learners know how to access or who to contact if they can't Ensure all Learners know how to use the discussions On the day: Send out groupcall message (or live by other means) to inform parents and Learners of lesson start time Check all links still live and active

Stages of learning **Note:** stage 1 and 2 are provided to allow flexibility so the lesson online can be divided in to two separate ones if things take longer than anticipated

A. Online activity

Time	Teacher activity	Learner activity
1:00pm	Setting up; identifying who is online and sending a message out to confirm; Adding guidance to summarise the lesson and where to find things using a discussion forum thread	Reading posts and following instruction; trying things out from home and asking if a problem
1:10pm	Stage 1 Teacher puts up artists creation brief and asks Learners to break it down in to 5 component parts: First thoughts; online research; selecting media equipment; collecting audio and visual elements; compiling and editing the work. Useful link: Multimedia Art Illustrate the use of a story board technique and timeline. Template link Teacher prompts less active learners as needed (as in a class)	Taking part in activities/tasks set by tutor online – working individually or as assigned by the teacher using the forum in groups Learner starts to come up with ideas and adds comments on new forum thread begun by teacher
1:40pm	Stage 2 Direct learners in small groups to think about the impact of art and what might hold the attention using multimedia images and sounds Other resources: Audacity and sound effects site	Taking part in activities/tasks set by tutor – working in groups, individually or as a class In groups set by teacher, Learners begin a new discussion topic to share their thought processes
Work set:	To do for one hour – collect images, either still or video and upload them to their VLE My Work	Learners work should be completed and uploaded by 9pm this evening

B. Offline work

<u>Offline work</u> – for Learners to complete and upload later		Target time for completion: Same day - 9pm
3:00 pm start	Review discussion and make comments After deadline time: check uploaded work and assess / upload for Learner to see	Use discussion points and links or references (e.g. in a book) provided by teacher to write about the nature of collage and music to create changes in mood

Appendix 4
 Summary diagram

