



## **UPDATE TO UTU MEMBERS**

### **REMOTE LEARNING**

### **DURING EXTENDED SCHOOL CLOSURES DUE TO COVID-19**

Dear UTU member,

In the past few weeks, Principals, school leaders and teachers have quickly risen to the challenge of setting remote learning work for pupils using many different ways and formats.

During this time, when schools are closed, teachers are not expected to work as normal. It cannot be expected that planners, assessment or evaluating will take place in the normal way. Instead, teachers should be setting meaningful work for their classes.

School leaders should be mindful of the fact that teachers are doing the best they can in challenging times and respect and trust their professionalism. They are supporting remote learning whilst doing rota time in schools and attending to their own childcare needs. Time available should be primarily focused on supporting children, with administration and paperwork not directly related to the children's learning experience being carried out only as and when the opportunity arises.

Pupils, parents and staff need to take a break in the evenings and at weekends. The UTU is advising that remote learning should not take place during this time. There may, however, be some vulnerable or anxious children who may need support during this time and as ever we trust the professional judgement of our members who will continue to care for them at this time. The pastoral support that schools offer pupils should continue and the health and well being for the staff should also be considered by the school leadership team.

UTU members are reminded that school leaders should ensure all the safeguarding procedures for staff using remote learning are in place. With this in mind, we would suggest that members do not use any web-based video conferencing with pupils. At times you may wish to upload to a school YouTube channel or make a short video clip, but members should be aware that when this goes onto the web, who observes it cannot be controlled. Teacher images and faces should not be included. The UTU strongly advises that were you asked to make video conferencing or a Youtube clip with your image that you contact us immediately.



The UTU strongly advises against giving out staff email addresses or contact details to pupils or parents. However, there may be times where Senior Leaders, Pastoral leaders or others find that parents or pupils require a point of contact. When this is required the UTU advises that only your C2k email account is used. Never use any personal email account.

Likewise, if pupils or parents can contact teachers via an app, the communication should be professional. Staff should be under no obligation to communicate with pupils or parents outside of the parameters established by the school and should speak to line managers or the designated teacher when concerns arise.

The UTU is fully aware that many teachers, parents and pupils may not have access to technology equipment or internet at home. Where a teacher feels they need access to ICT equipment, they should direct queries to their school leadership team. If they live in remote areas with poor internet or mobile networks, they should be under no obligation to purchase high speed internet or extra mobile data and should again speak to the school leadership team. Likewise, many families will have only one device, no printers or limited access to the internet and as such the demands from school must be flexible to support the child and family at this time.

At this time although pupils may be able to submit work and complete activities remotely, the assessment of and feedback regarding such work must be flexible. Teachers should not feel obliged to report on tasks set remotely but rather encourage and support pupils and families to ensure that learning in whatever form is available to the child and can take place in a meaningful way. We have attached the C2k Services - Extending Teaching and Learning beyond the school document for information (Information SheetEN091).

Finally, the mental health and well being of both our members and staff are paramount. For teachers, the Inspire Wellbeing Team [www.inspirewellbeing.org/](http://www.inspirewellbeing.org/) is available 24hrs a day and the Public Health Agency have 5 steps to wellbeing, available at <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/> For pupils and families, support is available via the family works counselling service <https://familyworksni.com/>

We are all working together to do our best in these unprecedented circumstances. Please do contact us anytime on the following e mail address [office@utu.edu](mailto:office@utu.edu) and we will respond regarding any issue, no matter how small you feel it is. Your union is here for you.