

FAQs on using Google Classroom

1. How does remote learning differ to the usual learning that happens in school?

Remote teaching is not the same as face to face in school, though the way in which sessions and activities are planned may well have some similarities. One of the biggest challenges is making remote delivery as effective as face to face, because strategies that are used in person to deliver quality learning – including but not limited to focus teaching, questioning to move on the learning, formative assessment and subsequent adjusting of teaching, reacting to what the children bring to the lesson and their opinions and interests, giving instant verbal feedback, constant feedback from children and other staff – are all much harder or even impossible to do effectively in a virtual learning environment.

2. How is the remote learning offering from January 2021 different to that in place in 2020?

We have been working really hard to adapt and adjust our provision based on monitoring or and feedback from what was in place during 2020. Government guidance (from the Department for Education and Ofsted) is constantly evolving as well, but also we need to consider what is right for the children and families at our school. Another significant difference is that we have more children accessing the provision on-site than was the case last year (see also Q5), which means there are more staff physically working in school.

3. Is the remote learning the same for all year groups?

No, remote learning is not the same for all year groups, because the needs of the children change as they get older.

4. What are the challenges in terms of delivering remote learning?

Every school is different and so that is why there are differences between what schools are offering. Some of the most important factors, as well as those already listed in terms of the difference between remote and face to face provision, include:

- Capability of IT infrastructure
- When children are able to access technology at home
- Trying to ensure consistent provision across school
- Staffing.

5. Why is it so different in primary school compared to secondary?

Primary schools don't have anywhere near the technological capabilities of a secondary school, and primary schools have significantly more children accessing places because they are vulnerable or have parents or carers who are key workers – as of Jan 2021 we have nearly 25 per cent in and several of the children who are in the bubbles on site have additional needs and so require extra support, which may be one to one – meaning that the remote learning provision per year group is usually being delivered by one teacher and one teaching assistant (as full time equivalents as we have a lot of staff who work part time). With the majority of children at home – which is in line with Government guidance to stay at home as much as possible – it is a significant amount of work in terms of setting work and providing daily feedback to up to 50 children per year group who are undertaking remote learning.

6. What technology support is available for remote learning?

Mrs Elfred is off her usual timetable and purely dealing with children and families who are experiencing issues as well as supporting teaching staff who are delivering remote learning.

7. What is the remote learning provision for Years 3 to 6?

All year groups have maths, English plus at least one other subject on Google Classroom per day. Regular Google Meets to discuss learning and wellbeing checks. We are starting to put out some pre-recorded lessons with video clips of teachers as part of this.

8. Why is there no computing learning?

Children are using their computing skills every time they are doing remote learning and they are doing brilliantly – particularly the Year 3s who have switched from Seesaw to Google Classroom. We are aware that this has posed significant challenges for all involved in Year 3.

9. Please could staff be mindful of the amount of work being put online – sometimes it has been up to six pieces and children get stressed and anxious about it.

Sometimes it gets front loaded, but we will ensure that the workload is right.

10. What feedback is being provided?

Individual or group feedback is being provided, just as would be the case in class in person. We are working hard to make sure this is effective in terms of furthering learning for children, but it also has to be manageable for staff as well.

11. How soon is work marked once it is submitted?

It depends on the submission date which will be stated on the piece of work, but certainly within a couple of days, but it may be sooner. We appreciate that children miss the instant feedback that is possible in the classroom, but that is unavoidable in a remote learning environment.

12. Can we have answers, and for maths working out methods?

Yes, we can help with that, we understand that maths in particular can be challenging for parents and carers because modern methods are a bit different.

13. Are any groups running?

There is also small group support in place, for example for booster groups, pupil premium children and some EAL – group size is important in order to enable group working but not too large that individuals get lost. 4-87 seems ideal in terms of making sure all can contribute

14. How are you keeping an eye on the wellbeing of our children?

Contact logs ensure we stay in touch with families at least once a week, and the Google Meets act as wellbeing checks

15. Why does CCS use Google Meet and not Zoom?

Google Meet allows meetings to be set up by teachers that are only for people who are signed in with a Christchurch email address, whereas Zoom allows anyone to log in who has the link. Google Meets also allow a password to be set rather than one being auto-generated (that usually contains numbers and letters in random combinations) so the Google Meet passwords are easier for children to manage. Google Meets have to be started by the teacher and they are also the last person to leave, and they are only accessible from a password-protected device, which means it is the safest way for children.

16. Why are you not doing live lessons?

Having gone through all the evidence, it doesn't meet the need of our children at the moment, the main points being:

- Family circumstances really differ (for example, in terms of access to devices, reliability of internet connections, space to work) and live lessons would mean less flexibility in terms of when work can be accessed and uploaded.

- Using pre-recorded slides means reaching staff can work around their own family commitments – for example by recording at night after their own children have gone to bed and won't need their attention.
- Using pre-recorded lessons means teaching staff can focus on delivering the most effective teaching, giving full explanations and making it as accessible as possible for all children – if they were trying to deliver live, they would also be trying to monitor the chat function and so on.
- It is difficult to build interaction with a whole class or year group during live remote delivery because of the loss of true face to face contact, and participation and feedback is very challenging with large groups online (children talk over each other, become frustrated because they can't get their point across, try and get the teacher's attention via the chat as well as the audio channel, and so on).
- It isn't possible to run lots of live lessons for smaller groups because each year group is being supported by one teacher and one teaching assistant (as a minimum) and resourcing this would be very difficult.
- Children have varying levels of engagement with working online, which is usually shorter than in person, so delivering live lessons may put too much strain on children, and hence having some work that they can do away from a screen has an advantage.
- Technology constraints are a consideration – not all families have one device per child, and internet connections often go in and out which would be very disruptive for a live lesson but can be overcome through recorded and other activities.

17. Could Google Meets be more focused so curriculum based but interactive, and help parents who are struggling to support children who find independent learning difficult?

That is the way we are going – we are trialling with Year 6 and looking to roll it out through the year groups. At the moment (Jan 2021), in Year 6 the Google Meet is often split between English and Maths so children know they can go to whichever is best for their needs, and this is something we are looking to roll out to further year groups.

18. Could there be some live lessons that are then recorded so those who can't access it at the set time can still watch them later?

Limited in terms of staffing to deliver live lessons as a significant number of staff in school with the bubbles. Some year groups have 50 children at home so it would be very difficult to deliver. But the Google Meets that pick up on the issues children are experiencing with their learning and are more focused in nature will address that to a certain extent.

19. Wouldn't live lessons help keep children in their school routine?

While there are some families who would like that, for others it would be a real struggle to maintain that. So it is about finding a balance that works for all families.

20. Can there be more content that they can be left with and not supervised?

More recorded content will support that. It will not be live as such, but will still enable the child to see their teacher while allowing families to choose the time that they access it as not every child is able to access learning at the same time.

21. What if my child is struggling with something?

Please email the teacher as this can be picked up in Google Meets (these were on the newsletter that went out at the beginning of the school year). If you post a comment on Google Classroom, it can be seen by everyone, so emailing is better. If you have a technical query, please email Mrs Elfred on jelfred@christchurch.croydon.sch.uk.

22. Putting answers on worksheets can be really difficult – can something be done about this?

We didn't realise this was such an issue so have moved away from non-editable PDFs and are now including designated space for answers so this should have improved. Mrs Elfred is keeping an eye on this to make sure documents stay consistent in terms of being able to put answers in easily.

23. Is there support for the teaching staff working from home?

Yes, Mrs Elfred is supporting staff as well as children and families, and Mrs Hudson is also working closely with the staff involved in the remote learning provision.

24. Is CCS networked with other schools to share experiences of remote learning etc?

Yes, we are linked with other schools in the borough and that fall under the Southwark Diocese Board of Education area.

25. What if my question isn't here or I have some feedback?

Please email office1@christchurch.croydon.sch.uk and put "remote learning" in the subject line. Please do keep giving us feedback as it really helps us understand what is working and what needs improving.