

Adapting delivery of IT qualifications to stimulate engagement in a safe environment

Centre name:  Ashton on Mersey School

Area type:  Town

Region:  Sale, Greater Manchester Area

School type:  Academy

Ashton on Mersey School forms part of the The Dean Trust, which comprises of 10 schools across the North West, six secondary schools and four primary schools. It's recognised for aspiration, endeavour, and excellence, and their commitment to opening up a future of choice for our young people.

Background

Ashton on Mersey School offer a wide variety of BTEC qualifications, both Level 2 and Level 3, in subjects including Construction, Sport, IT, Creative Digital Media, Enterprise, Business, Child Development, Psychology, and Health and Social Care.

Adapting teaching methods to allow remote learning

Throughout lockdown, Ashton have delivered a variety of activities and lessons to engage pupils with remote learning, such as:

"At Ashton we went fully online with remote learning through a variety of activities. The backbone of our home learning mode was Show My Homework (SMHW) and Google apps for education with Google Classroom."

Simon Howe, Head of ICT

- **Daily lesson activities:** these are sent from subject teachers via SMHW. Lessons are delivered daily, within the context of learning sequences and schemes of work, with detailed instructions and accompanying resources.
- **Assessment & Feedback:** conducted by subject teachers via SMHW and Google Classroom to communicate with pupils about their schoolwork and the progress they are making. In addition, pupils have been set SMHW low stakes quizzes to assess them at key points after a block of work.
- **Podcasts:** Teachers pre-record short lesson podcasts through Screencastify to give extra instruction and context to tasks set on SMHW. The pre-recorded lesson is posted with resources on SMHW and Google Classroom.
- **Online video conference lessons:** The school offers a schedule of remote lessons through Google meets and Youtube live stream on a daily basis.

Ensuring that students are still engaged and productive whilst learning from home

Staff use a variety of tasks to ensure pupil engagement each week. The tasks include self-mark quizzes, assessment tasks via templates on Google Classroom, drop in sessions for KS5, one-to-one tutorials for KS5 pupils, podcast lessons and a variety of external websites to help supplement teachers delivery of content and make lessons interactive, such as Seneca Learning, Code Combat, Edublock, Snakify and Repl.it. In addition, the faculty lead enriching curriculum lessons every two weeks to engage pupils with real world IT/Computing topics, including AI and Robotics.

“Overall engagement in home learning has been good, with an average weekly engagement of 91.9% across all year groups and subjects.”

Simon Howe, Head of ICT

We define engagement as a pupil being seen to have logged on every day of the week. If pupils are identified to not be engaging through the SMHW, their form tutor or head of year will call the pupil to ensure they are OK and can access the home learning material.

Best practice when adopting new distance learning solutions

I'd advise other teachers who may be new to distance learning to keep variety within their distance learning model as this helps pupils engage, with a minimum of one task each week. Build week on week with content to keep your home learning fresh and engaging.

Have clear communication with pupils at home to support with engagement and feedback on

work. At Ashton, we use the Chat feature in SHMW and Gmail to contact pupils. We also found it beneficial to allow students to upload pictures to support written or design work.

Both staff and pupils may need training before and during the use of any new distance learning EdTech. Ensure staff are well trained and have support material to aid when setting home learning tasks. (e.g. a set of video tutorials to support staff). However, it's best not to rush into integrating new technology - look around for the best option and then test solutions before selecting any new platforms or technology.



Teaching IT courses from September 2020

We created strictly defined zones around the school, so each year group is taught in a 'bubble.' We have also set up a fixed IT classroom in each zone of the school, giving each year group their own IT room. In addition, we have a Chromebook trolley in each zone, which is prioritised for KS4 due to the vocational nature of the BTEC courses.

All resources are available online for pupils to access, so if students are isolating, they can still access and engage with all lesson material from home.

Ensuring that IT facilities are kept Covid-19 safe:

- Pupils sanitize their hands-on entry and exit to the room
- Pupils wipe down their keyboard, mouse and desk after they have finished
- Rooms are cleaned regularly throughout the day
- Screen control software within the IT classroom to help pupils and limit staff proximity to pupils throughout the lesson.



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Preparing for the future

We continue teaching year groups in 'bubbles.' Although staff are not restricted to these zones, the school aims to limit movement as much as possible. We also adhere to the 1m+ rule wherever possible. Pupils arrive and leave the school at staggered times and via different entry/exit points, washing or sanitising hands every time. What is more, pupils have double periods throughout the day, so they only have three lessons rather than six, to minimise contact with other staff and other pupils.

At Ashton, each class teacher has an online seating plan for each class, this is then used to perform a school track and trace for positive cases to enable us to send targeted pupils home based on proximity rather than sending the whole year group home to isolate.

Simon Howe is the Head of ICT at Ashton on Mersey School, where he leads and delivers the Computer Science and ICT curriculum from Key Stage 3 to Key stage 5. Simon is also a Google Qualified Individual, Raspberry Pi Educator, CAS Master Teacher and a SLE, who prides himself on developing innovative ways to deliver the Computers Science curriculum across all key stages.