

Establishing policies and processes for remote working: considerations for leaders



Remote Learning

As schools prepare for closure, it is important for senior leaders to establish clear policies, expectations and guidance for their staff around remote working. Below, we outline a range of areas for leaders to consider.

Communication

- **Ensure that all staff have access** to the necessary technology infrastructure (device and home internet access) and the requisite knowledge to engage effectively.
- **Select the communication channel(s) you will use** to communicate with staff and set protocols for communication, including for what purposes each channel will be used and expectations around engagement (such as how frequently staff will be expected to be in communication with other staff and the regularity of staff meeting).
- Consider developing an approach for **cascaded communications** to provide clarity and direction for all staff.
- **Establish frequent check-ins**, including leading a brief daily touch point with staff (these might be whole school, syndicate or departmental) to check in and communicate key information. Document any follow up actions to ensure clarity.
- When holding online meetings, **observe tight meeting discipline**, with clear start and end times, an agenda, and follow ups.

Establishing priorities and expectations

- Identify **key priorities and responsibilities** for each stakeholder group – teachers, support staff, students, parents and whanau – and ensure that these are clearly communicated to each group. Any lack of clarity in roles, responsibilities, and expectations is amplified in a remote environment
- Establish **clear expectations** around the work expected of staff members, with clearly defined deliverables and timelines.
- Identify the school's primary aim over the period of physical shutdown and ensure that priorities and expectations are aligned around a **shared common purpose**.
- **Keep it simple**, focused on key priorities and do not overload staff.
- Ensure that mechanisms are in place to **accelerate decision making** and to synchronise teams.

Leadership and culture

- Ensure a cohesive culture and a common commitment to shared values as this is even more important when working remotely.
- Prioritise regular communication on the situation from the top, with the right balance of information, support, and morale boosts. Be aware that isolation and a lack of a sense of direction or clarity over roles and responsibilities can degrade morale and performance.

- **Demonstrate care** for your staff members.
- **Encourage staff to stay connected:** group chats, emails on social topics, using a video call to check in as a team. Ensure there is daily communication among teams and that meetings are not just about work but also a chance to connect personally, as isolation and a lack of social interaction can lead to lower employee motivation and less cohesion as a team

Be the point person

- **Proactively problem solve** through frequent engagement with key staff (middle leaders) to understand roadblocks and progress, offer timely assistance and prioritise recognising and solving problems
- **Mobilize resources**, by gathering relevant existing resources or those shared by external organisations and make sure you share these across staff and teams.

Ensuring necessary resources for remote working

- **Assess the infrastructure needs** for staff working remotely and make sure that you pilot and test systems.
- Check that staff have a **home environment that will enable them to work remotely**. While it may not be realistic to ensure this, it's important to know if there are staff members who cannot easily work from home.
- **Be aware that staff will have a range of competing demands**, including anxiety over the current situation and children at home.
- **Encourage staff to set a routine** that gets their work done but also allows for getting outside, exercising, and decompressing.

PREPARED FOR THE EDUCATION HUB BY



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