



Patrician Secondary School
Newbridge Co. Kildare

Distance Learning Policy (DLP)

School Mission Statement and Preamble

We will strive to help every student realise his potential and develop into a mature and worthy individual as expressed in our 'Vision Statement'. We aim to do this by providing:

- A broad and balanced curriculum that caters for the needs of every student.
- A pastoral care and discipline programme that emphasises the importance of relationships and respect for all.
- A religious education programme that encourages students to reflect on the place of God in their lives and actively involves them in an examination of the things that are or are not of value in this life.
- A broad range of sports activities to help students develop physically and socially.
- Music, drama, debating and other extra-curricular activities that contribute to the cultural, social and creative development of the student.

In consideration of the uncertain times regarding school opening and closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic, school management has devised a 'Distance Learning Policy' (DLP). The function of this policy is to provide clear and transparent information, guidelines and procedures for teachers, students and parents to continue learning and teaching in the event of school closures. In an operational sense, school policies are generally conceived to operate within the physical school environment. However, current circumstances have required school management to consider a broader set of parameters in devising its DLP. It is acknowledged that at the conception of this policy, mitigating factors and increased guidance from a government level will result in changes and appendages to our DLP over time.

Introduction

This document sets out the DLP in respect of '**use of technology**' for '**distance**' or '**remote**' teaching and learning in the event where school is attended online or where the school is instructed to close. The DLP operates in conjunction with our existing Acceptable Use Policy (AUP), which can also be viewed under the policies tab on the school website www.patriciansecondary.com. In any of the aforementioned events, the school management will implement the DLP to the extent at which it can to provide the necessary support to teachers, students and parents to continue their learning and teaching experience. In terms of Information & Communication Technology (ICT), the school operates its online learning and teaching experiences through the Google Suite of applications, which will be described in detail at a further point in this document. In addition, the DLP promotes the continued use of the ePortal software for the purpose of attendance, assessment and other school business.

Hereafter, the DLP processes of learning and teaching will be often referred to as ‘**Distance eLearning**’.

Aim(s) of the Distance Learning Policy (DLP)

1. Health & Safety

- a. The primary aim of this policy is to ensure that learning and teaching is conducted in a healthy, safe and engaging manner for all participants.
- b. That teachers, students and parents are learning and teaching from locations that are in accordance with relevant guidelines as instructed by the Government and their subsequent Department of Education & Skills (D.E.S).
- c. That the online safety of all participants is reinforced by the supporting policies, namely the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) and Personal Electronic Device (PED) policy.

2. Learning, Teaching & Assessment Using ICT

- a. The DLP implies the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to continue student learning experiences in distance and/or remote learning settings. In the event that a student does not have access to relevant ICT to engage in learning, the school management will review other options on a case by case basis. This will include verbal and written communication with parents/students with respect to the availability of ICT resources relevant to the DES grant for Technology Support in education as well as other methods for communicating and completing school work.
- b. The DLP implies the use of ICT to continue teachers' professional practices in distance and/or remote work settings. The school management will ensure that teachers are supported regarding the use of ICT through school led Continuous Professional Development (CPD) as well as the provision of physical devices, to the extent at which it can, to support professional practices.
- c. The DLP implies that assessment of/for learning is continued through the use of ICT and with respect to the School's Assessment Policy and Academic Tracking Processes via necessary platforms for example the Google Suite and ePortal.

3. Wellbeing

- a. Student wellbeing is a core focus of the school community and its relevant experiences. The DLP will foster student wellbeing by engaging them in mental and physical learning activities that fosters the growth of personal development, personal values, resilience and self-efficacy.
- b. Teachers as professionals are adapting and evolving new ways to communicate with their students through the use of ICT. However there are mitigating factors, for example different teachers will engage in different ways through ICT as a result of variability in working from home. Teachers have additional responsibilities in the home place, for example minding family members, children and so on. School management will ensure that there is flexibility and additional support provided in each case.
- c. Parents are naturally a dominant influence in the home place. The DLP will encourage and support parents through resources, guidance and communication to make necessary adjustments and to help parents facilitate student engagement with eLearning.

4. Inclusion

- a. The purpose of the whole school community is to nurture the dimensions within our school mission statement. The DLP is representative of all people within the school community and ensures that the community is maintained in a virtual manner in the event that there is distance and/or remote learning situations. Also, the DLP recognises that not all students will have access to relevant ICT to engage with junior and senior cycle programmes of learning taking place online. For the purpose of inclusion and equality of opportunity, the school management will evaluate and determine a suitable response to support students and parents in need regarding access to technology as well as other modes of communicating school work.
- b. SEN and SNA Support and Engagement - The students with special educational needs will continue to receive teaching and SNA support virtually in the event of distance/remote learning. The DLP recognises that for some students engagement in this process may be difficult. A suitable, differentiated approach may be applied if deemed necessary.
- c. Special Programmes, for example Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LP's), Transition Year (TY) and Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), will operate on the same basis as established Junior and Senior Cycle programmes of learning. Programme coordinators will facilitate and disseminate necessary information particular to these programmes amongst students, teachers and parents alike.

5. Management

- a. The Senior Management Team (S.M.T), as supported by the Board of Management (B.O.M), are responsible for the communication and implementation of the DLP in the event of 'Remote' and 'Distance' learning and teaching situations and events.
- b. Year Heads/Class Tutors will conduct their duties to the extent at which they can in the context of Distance eLearning. School management will be in constant communication with the aforementioned to gain feedback, monitor and develop more effective approaches to creating efficient and engaging eLearning experiences.
- c. Monitoring online activity is the responsibility of all participants. All relevant school policies apply in this scenario and the success of the DLP in this regard is dependent upon clear lines of communication amongst teachers and management. Data protection (GDPR), applies as in the normal school setting. However, it is acknowledged that there is always a risk beyond the GDPR guidelines even though the school and its services are fully compliant. Unusual activity, data breaches and the like are to be reported to school management without hesitation.
- d. Attendance and engagement will be evaluated through statistical information generated through the ePortal system and reports/feedback provided by teachers.
- e. The Code of Behaviour, as listed in school policies, applies where relevant in the event that a disciplinary issue arises through the use of ICT. This will be underpinned by the DLP, AUP & PED policies.

DLP Guidelines for Distance eLearning

This policy covers any aspect of student distance learning as used by Staff.

In all cases students must use their @patriciansecondary.com account to log in. Students are not to use any other account under any circumstances for the purposes of Distance eLearning.

The list of applications that will be used for distance learning will primarily be:

1. Google Suite, incorporating:
 - i. Gmail (e-mail)
 - ii. Google Classroom
 - iii. Google Docs
 - iv. Google Forms
 - v. Google Sheets
 - vi. Google Slides
2. Google Meet – for live online classes.

There may be some additional applications that teachers may use, and the teacher will provide the student with the information required to access them. This must, in all cases, use an @patriciansecondary.com account as the login.

eLearning Approach

eLearning will take what is known as a blended approach and some teachers may use different methods more than another teacher. For example:

- Some teachers may use regular live classes while others may not.
- Some teachers may use live classes through Google Meet while others may use Google Classroom.
- Some teachers may distribute work as weekly bulk assignments while others may do so as daily homework-style tasks.

In all cases the primary aim is to cover the required curriculum areas for their specific subject. The teacher will decide the most effective method to use to achieve this aim. Students should get in touch with their teacher right away if they are having difficulty with any aspect of their subject or if they are finding the workload unmanageable.

Everyone's Responsibilities while partaking in eLearning

The Distance eLearning school timetable will operate as per the normal school timetable with the following guidelines for participation set out below.

For staff and teachers:

- Teachers have overall control of the online interaction of their class
- Teachers need to use their @patriciansecondary.com account for communication with students.
- Teachers will do their utmost to be available at the identified time on their timetable – this may be via a Google Meet live video, through Google Classroom or by gmail.
- The minimum expectation would be that teachers make themselves available online for at least a 50 minute period for each 58 minute class on their work timetable. How teachers make themselves available on the relevant school eLearning platform(s) is entirely at their discretion, for example being available on Google Classroom for student questions.
- Where a teacher is unable to operate their timetable from home then school management will accept any alternative solutions, within reason, that a teacher may present.
- Teachers are only required to be contactable by students as per timetable 9am to 4pm Mon./Tues./Thurs/Fri. and 9am to 1.15pm on Wednesdays.

- Disruptive students will be removed in order to allow those who wish to partake a fair chance to do so. Repeatedly disruptive students may receive a temporary ban from all online access.
- If students are contacting teachers outside of school hours, please inform a member of the school management team and they will endeavour to ensure that this does not happen again.

For students:

- A clearly defined protocol for students/teachers for online learning. They must login using their camera, not an emoji or a photo/image on the screen, with their mic off until instructed etc, a roll is called etc etc, it needs to operate as if we were in an actual class.
 - You are to communicate through your @patriciansecondary.com account only. The use of any other account or e-mail address is expressly prohibited
 - Do not engage in communications with any account other than an @patriciansecondary.com account and report any such activity to your teacher or year-heads @patriciansecondary.com g-mail account
 - You must always be civil and respectful to your teachers and fellow students
 - You are not to record or forward any content within a Classroom group – such as worksheets, exam papers, answers, solutions, videos, notes or Meet links – to anyone else without the permission of the creator of that content
 - You understand that all your online activity is recorded. This includes anything you send or say via G-mail, Classroom, Meet and Google Suite, and whether you are checking regularly for assigned work.
 - You may contact your teachers within school hours only, 9am to 4pm Mon./Tues./Thurs/Fri. and 9am to 1.15pm on Wednesdays, with the exception of teachers giving you permission to contact them outside of these hours.

For parents:

- You should ensure that your son is checking in regularly for assigned work
- Where live classes are being run you should ensure your son is in an area of the house that is quiet and free from distractions. Please be mindful of Child Protection Guidelines, for example, bedrooms should not be used for live classes
- Live online classes should be viewed by your son only.

Live Online Classes

Teachers may deliver some of the course “live” using Google Meets. This will use varying combinations of audio, video, virtual whiteboards and screencasts.

In the use of Google Meets:

- Students must always follow the direction of their teacher just as in the classroom
- Students are not to turn on their video at any time
- Students are not to turn on their microphone unless the teacher invites them to do so. In any case, all microphones should be on mute when a person is not speaking to avoid distracting background noise being broadcast to everyone.
- A link is intended for the student only. The teacher will decide who should receive the link. Do not forward any link to anyone else.
- Only the teacher is allowed to record a session. No-one else is permitted to record.

Data Privacy Statement

Our Distance Learning Policy operates in addition to the Internet Acceptable Usage Policy (AUP) and Privacy Policy which are available from our website. For clarity, we will outline aspects specific to Distance Learning but this should be read alongside our existing policies mentioned above.

What we retain:

- Login activity, specifically, the last time a student logged in to their Google account
- Within the date and time of if/when a student views any assignments or notebooks set for them and when they submit any work for same

Why we retain it:

- To assist us in making sure students are engaging in learning sufficiently and in good time
- To assist us in generating appropriate and relevant feedback to parents on progress
- To provide revision materials by means of replying topics covered in a live class, and to ensure those who might be unable to attend live classes can still cover the same content as the rest of the class
- To provide a record of activity in the event of a disciplinary or other issue arising during a live class.

Where we retain it:

- All recordings are kept within the school's own systems which requires a valid @patriciansecondary.com login to access
- The School's own systems are configured so that all data resides within an EU country only, which in the case of Google, is Ireland.

How long we retain it for:

- All data is kept for the specified periods outlined in the GDPR guidelines as instructed to schools by the Department of Education & Skills (DES), which can be viewed at <https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Data-Protection/gdpr/parents-children/>

Ratified by the Board of Management on: 7th September 2021

Signed (Chairperson): Pat O'Leary

Signed (Board Member): Brenda McHale