The Bishop Konstant Catholic Academy Trust
Learning Communities, Inspired by Faith

GUIDELINES FOR TEMPORARY HOMEWORKING

Context

These guidelines have been developed to support staff and workers to work at home following the government's decision to close schools to the majority of pupils and to provide childcare for children of key workers and vulnerable pupils.

As a result of this decision, staff who are not required to go into school because they have not been rota'd to perform essential duties are expected to work from home to the extent reasonably possible, taking into account the accessibility of resources and the nature of each employee's role.

Staff who are temporarily working from home in these circumstances are required to adhere to the following guidelines and should seek advice from their line manager on any concerns or queries they may have.

Please note these guidelines may be updated at any time in line with changes to government policy and advice.

Duties

Line managers are expected to provide guidance and direction to those staff who are not going into school on what tasks might be suitable to undertake from home and it is recognised that some tasks can more easily be performed remotely than others. This might include, for example, project work, planning or administrative tasks. You could be asked to perform tasks that you do not normally perform, provided such a request is reasonable with regard to your job level, skills and experience.

Your pay will not be affected if the school has concluded that there is little or no work which you can reasonably undertake from home. If suitable work arises at a subsequent date you will contacted about undertaking this.

You will be expected to stay in touch with your line manager whilst working from home and will be expected to 'check in' at agreed intervals.

The following general principles will apply:

- the Trust/ school will end working at home arrangements at such time when government advice permits schools to re-open and operate under usual provisions;
- Staff are required to be available during the core hours as agreed with their line manager;
- Staff working from home will be expected to stay in touch with their line manager which may include attending virtual meetings;
- Staff working from home will also be required to undertake essential work in school as part of a rota as required;
- Staff working from home are required to comply with all Trust and school policies as they would if they were present in the workplace;

Pay

Employees who are working from home with the school's agreement will continue to receive their basic contractual pay based on their contractual working week.

Sickness

Should staff become unwell and therefore unable to work, they should report their absence to their line manager/attendance contact by phone promptly. Normal absence procedures will apply except where staff have been notified otherwise. Different rules on the need for medical evidence will apply to staff with suspected or confirmed coronavirus, to avoid the need to visit a GP.

Provision of Equipment

Staff may be provided with computer equipment and/or other technology by the school or may be authorised to use their own equipment, for example in order to check emails. Staff are not expected to provide any equipment at additional cost to themselves. Line managers will agree with staff in advance if any other costs such as phone calls, stationery or postage, will be re-imbursed.

Any equipment supplied to staff remains the Trust/ School property. Staff are expected to take reasonable care of this equipment and only use it carry out the requirements of their role.

Personal equipment that an employee uses for work purposes remains their responsibility and the Trust/ School is not liable for any loss, damage, repair or replacement of any personal equipment. If an item of equipment is deemed necessary for work, the employee should contact their line manager.

The costs of electricity, water, heating, telephone, broadband and other utilities will not be covered by the Trust. These costs will remain the employee's responsibility.

Protection of Data

While working from home staff are responsible for ensuring that any information relating to the school, for example in documents, files, online accounts, or emails is retained securely at all times. Staff must not remove from school/ Trust Central Team premises any physical documents which contain confidential information unless you have explicit agreement to do so and have the means to securely lock them away. Staff should continue to follow all usual IT security policies and procedures. Home computer equipment must not be used for any work that contains confidential information unless you are working via the school's secure remote access facilities. Passwords must be kept confidential and accounts or files not left open on the computer where third parties could access them. Staff must report any breach of confidentiality, or possible breach of confidentiality, to their line manager straight away.

Employees must not provide their personal address or personal contact details to pupils, parents or other third parties associated with the Trust or school. Meetings between pupils, parents, employees or other third parties at home are prohibited. All communications should be made through Trust/ School established routes

Health and Safety

The school remains responsible for the health and safety whilst they are working remotely. Although the nature of the work being carried out at home is low-risk, office-type work, staff are expected to take

reasonable precautions to ensure they are working in a safe manner and are expected to follow any instructions with regard to safe systems of work.

Homeworkers are required to use all equipment supplied by the Trust/school safely and in accordance with best practice and manufacturer's guidelines. Homeworkers will be responsible for any other electrical equipment used by them in their work activities and will continue to be responsible for the safety of electrical sockets and wiring in their home.

Staff should contact their line manager if you have any safety concerns and should report any accidents which occur during your working hours.

In particular, you should report any concerns which relate to:

- The area in your home where you propose to work (e.g. set-up of table/chair/computer equipment);
- The safety of the equipment (whether provided by you or the school) which you are using for work purposes;
- Any manual handling you need to undertake;
- Your personal welfare (particularly if you live alone).

Employees should continue to take rest breaks during their working day in the same way as they would do at work.

DSE Risk assessment

The Health and Safety Executive have said there is no increased risk from DSE work for those working at home temporarily and so employers do not need to do home workstation assessments.

The HSE have provided a video clip with further guidance for staff:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Af7q5j14muc#action=share

There are some simple steps staff can take to reduce the risks from display screen work:

- breaking up long spells of DSE work with rest breaks (at least 5 minutes every hour) or changes in activity
- avoiding awkward, static postures by regularly changing position
- getting up and moving or doing stretching exercises
- avoiding eye fatigue by changing focus or blinking from time to time

Caring for Dependants

In normal circumstances, homeworking cannot be used as a substitute for childcare and therefore employees who are working from home are generally required to make suitable provision for the care of dependants during their normal working hours.

Although all our staff are classed as key workers and should have access to childcare at their children's usual school, should this become problematic and staff have children or other dependants at home during normal working hours, they should discuss this with their line manager what they can reasonably do and how this might be accommodated, for example by working at different times of the day to normal.

Insurance

Staff are advised to let their landlord/mortgage provider and building/contents insurers know that they will be working from home on a temporary basis.

Wellbeing and Keeping in Touch

Staff and line managers should maintain regular contact and staff should report any concerns or issues. Pressures and stress can occur when working from home and the Trust encourages the early reporting of these issues so that practical steps can be considered and implemented to the mutual agreement of both parties.

10 top tips for working remotely

1. **Set up a designated workspace.** Separate space for yourself to work in, somewhere you can focus on tasks without being distracted and set up with everything you need for a normal working day – computer, phone, stationery, papers…etc.

2. **Make sure you have all the tech you need.** This includes a reliable and secure internet connection, any necessary files, hardware and software, remote access to your company network and, importantly, knowledge of how to get IT support.

3. **Get dressed.** Changing into working clothes will help you mentally switch to productive work mode. It will also help you distinguish between 'homeworking' and 'home life'.

4. **Write a daily to-do list.** Set out a list of realistic, achievable tasks to keep you focused.

5. **Know when to step away from your desk.** Be clear about when your working day begins and ends and take breaks to refresh. It's easy to let yourself be 'always on' when your home and office are the same place. When work is over, be sure you switch off to avoid burnout. Think about having 'core hours' which people you work with are around for.

6. **Stay in conversation.** Contribute regularly to team chats/group emails so you don't drop off the radar. Ask about what people are working on and share what's on your plate. Being physically separated means you miss the 'water-cooler moments' so this is a means to keep informed.

7. **Foster relationships.** Make time for non-work chats as you would in the workplace and use video calling to maintain face-to-face contact.

8. **Be clear in your communication.** Speaking in person gives you visual and audio cues that help you communicate. Conversing remotely removes a lot of that extra information so make your communications extra clear and concise.

9. **Ask for support when needed.** Speak out when you need assistance, further training or support. Your manager, colleagues and you are part of a team and should be supporting each other, especially remotely.

10. **Make remote working work for you.** Change where you sit, put on music, whatever helps you work. And enjoy the perks – no commute or uncomfortable shoes, and all your home comforts!

10 Top tips for managing remote teams

1. **Agree ways of working.** Make sure every team member is clear about how you will work together remotely, how you keep each other updated, and how frequently.

2. **Show the big picture but prepare to flex.** Remind your team about the big picture and how their work fits into it. Review short-term goals regularly and adjust as needed. If some members can't carry out all their usual work, consider other skills they can lend to others to meet team goals.

3. **Set expectations and trust your team.** Be clear about mutual expectations and trust your team to get on without micromanaging. Focus on results rather than activity. This will help alleviate pressure and anxiety.

4. **Make sure team members have the support and equipment they need.** This includes any coaching they might need to use online systems or work remotely. Keep your calendar visible and maintain a virtual open door.

5. **Have a daily virtual huddle.** This is essential for keeping connected as a team, to check in on each other's well-being and keep workflow on track. It needn't be long, but regularity is key.

6. **Keep the rhythm of regular one-to-ones and team meetings.** This maintains a sense of structure and continuity for all.

7. **Share information and encourage your team to do the same.** Without physical 'water-cooler conversations', opportunities to pick up information in passing are more limited.
   Share *appropriate* updates or learnings from other meetings and projects and invite your team to do the same.

8. **Tailor your feedback and communications.** People can be more sensitive if they're feeling isolated or anxious, so take this into account when talking or writing. Communicate regularly, not just when things go wrong, whether it is information, praise or criticism.

9. **Listen closely and read between the lines.** Not being in the same room means you don't have extra information from body language or tone to get the sense of what people are thinking or feeling, particularly in more difficult conversations. Home in on what's not being said and ask questions to clarify your interpretation.

10. **Help foster relationships and well-being.** Make time for social conversations. This increases rapport and eases communication between people who may not meet often. It also reduces feelings of isolation.

Further resources on remote working

Discover how to improve your productivity, stay focused and connected with LinkedIn Learning's remote working course. The course includes insight from entrepreneur Arianna Huffington, and can be completed in bite-sized chunks.

Missing the workplace buzz? Homeworking doesn't have to be a lonely experience. A crowdsourced Remote Work Survival Kit will arm you with tools you need to achieve a happy and balanced remote working set-up.

Wordpress Co-founder Matt Mullenweg considers how homeworking impacts office dynamics in his 4-minute Ted Talk. He asks: how can we make sure that all employees, both at headquarters and at home, feel connected?

A blog from *Rescue Time* looks at ways to build community among teams who work thousands of miles apart. Many of the key takeaways also apply to remote workers in closer proximity.

'How to collaborate effectively if your team is remote' is a short read from *Harvard Business Review* to help your business tackle remote collaboration and perform at the highest levels.

Get Lighthouse takes an in-depth look at remote working with 11 essential tips on managing remote workers.