

GL354 Managing practical work in non-specialist rooms (COVID-19 Pandemic)

Introduction

Taking part in practical work is an intrinsic part of studying D&T, food or art. However, during these extraordinary times, many schools are restricting access to practical facilities, or requiring that no practical is planned for the first few weeks of the autumn term. Where schools are delivering practical subjects, there may be, on occasion, the need to carry out some limited practical work in a general classroom. This guide is designed to help staff consider the difficulties that this may represent, so that they can put in place processes or systems to enable such limited practical activities to take place. Under normal conditions, CLEAPSS would advise against attempting practical work in rooms that were not specifically designed for this type of activity.

During the COVID-19 pandemic CLEAPSS understands that in order for a school to accommodate all the pupils in for all of the time there may be occasions when some practical teaching in a non-specialist environment is unavoidable. This is more likely to happen if a school's approach is based on 'bubbles' of pupils having all their teaching in one location.

It should be noted that the current DfE guidance does allow pupils to 'break' the 'bubble' in order to access specialist teaching, for example in science or design and technology. The following extract from the DfE Guidance for full opening: schools; 27th July 2020, makes this clear:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#>)

*"Both the approaches of separating groups and maintaining distance are not 'all-or-nothing' options, and will still bring benefits even if implemented partially. Some schools may keep children in their class groups for the majority of the classroom time, **but also allow mixing into wider groups for specialist teaching**, wraparound care and transport, or for boarding pupils in one group residentially and another during the school day."*

Note that; CLEAPSS is very clear that the teaching of practical D&T, food and art outside of a specialist environment should be seen as a response to the extraordinary situation presented by the global pandemic and **not** something that is acceptable under normal circumstances.

Safety when teaching in a general classroom

D&T and food rooms are designed to offer those working in them, a level of safety that may not be present in a general classroom. It is therefore likely that any practical activity will have either different, or increased levels of risk.

As a general rule, activities where the risk is increased should be avoided. This includes the risks arising from moving equipment and materials around the school.

It is essential that the whole activity is assessed for risk, prior to starting. The risk assessment should take into account:

- Gathering equipment and materials
- Moving the equipment and materials to the 'new' space
- Setting up the room
- Running the activity
- Clearing away
- Storing or returning the equipment and materials, and pupils' work

Factors to consider

- **Moving equipment and resources**

Heavy items pose manual handling risks, and trolleys may not be suitable for moving items across outdoor areas or up and down stairs. Moving equipment and materials will take time. Sufficient time must be allocated to technicians and others to move the items and set up and clear away. Moving equipment and materials when corridors are busy should be avoided.

- **Teaching in classrooms**

General classrooms may not have facilities available in case of an emergency. There must be access to running water for cleaning, as well as dealing with minor cuts and burns.

A general classroom is likely to be used for other lessons before and after the activity, setting up and clearing away will have an impact on other staff and pupils accessing the room.

If powered equipment is to be used, access to power sockets will need to be considered, most general classrooms do not have many spare sockets. Trailing leads should be avoided, which may mean that the furniture will need rearranging to ensure that equipment can be plugged in safely.

Dust or other debris will need to be controlled, general classrooms will not have dust or fume extraction.

If planning textiles work, bear in mind that pins and needles can become 'trapped' in carpeted floors.

- **Security**

General classrooms tend to be less secure than specialist facilities. Access to equipment and materials will still need to be controlled, which may mean arranging lockable storage in the room, or removing items between sessions.

- **PPE**

PPE and other safety equipment that is going to be required will need to be transported to the room prior to the activity.

- **IT**

Activities which require access to IT facilities may require moving of portable machines, reliance on Wi-Fi and access to power sockets, all of which will need to be checked beforehand.

- **Working with food**

When working with food, hygiene will be a priority. All surfaces will need cleaning before and after use. Arrangements will also be needed for washing utensils during, and after the activity.

Storing and transporting food ingredients will require careful thought, as general classrooms will not have suitable storage. Mini-fridges or cool bags may be suitable to store some ingredients for short periods of time.

Waste food material will need proper disposal. It should not be left in general waste bins.

Eating in classrooms is often discouraged in schools. Check local requirements before embarking upon any food practical where the product may be eaten as part of the activity.