The British School of Bahrain
Blended Learning Environment during COVID-19

Staff Working from home policy

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1.1 **Scope**

This guidance covers laptop, desktop PC or paper-based work from a BSB employee's home. The same principles apply if using a laptop in another remote/offsite location, e.g.:

    1.1.1   Whilst travelling

    1.1.2   At another organisation's workplace

    1.1.3   From home (either as part of a formal arrangement or occasionally)

    1.1.4   From other non-school locations. This is any offsite work carried out by staff for the purposes of teaching, research, studying or other activities on behalf of the BSB.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Many staff work flexibly, including remotely at offsite locations and at home. Working at home, either on a laptop, desktop PC or carrying out paper-based work is a low-risk activity. This type of working pattern can offer a range of potential benefits, but there are also associated hazards. These include:

    2.1.1   working in isolation (wellbeing, stress or personal safety and accidents)

    2.1.2   lack of control over the work environment (DSE, fire safety and electrical safety) This guidance provides practical advice on steps to take to ensure work at home is carried out healthily and safely, and that relevant hazards are considered.

3.0 Staff Wellbeing

3.1 The School has a range of guidance and support for staff on wellbeing.

    3.1.1   Concerns relating to wellbeing at work should be discussed with your line manager

    3.1.2   Consideration must be made for vulnerable children and groups.

    3.1.3   There are a number of Educare Wellbeing courses that can be used to assist teachers & Admin Staff

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities of Line Managers

4.1 **E**nsure there are adequate contact and communication with home workers.

4.2 Ensure risks associated with home working are covered by the school safety management system. This might include DSE assessments, making sure home working is covered by the school rules as they would do in a normal school environment and using this guidance

4.3 There is generally no need to visit a homeworker at their home unless a specific concern has been raised.

4.4 The homeworker must tell the School of any health and safety risk at home and any home working arrangements that need to change.

5.0 Display Screen Equipment (DSE)

5.1 Setting up a workstation correctly at home is equally as important as in the office, and the same principles apply. Your workstation includes your desk or table, chair, and PC or laptop.

5.2 Definitions

    5.2.1   Display Screen Equipment (DSE). DSE is defined as 'any alphanumeric or graphic display screen, regardless of the display process'. A display screen usually forms part of a computer showing text, graphics or numbers (i.e., desktop, laptop or smartphone). The definition also applies to display systems such as microfiche and CCTV.

    5.2.2   User. User means any employee/student who habitually uses display screen

equipment as a significant part of their normal work. The guidance applies to users whether they are employed to work at their own employer's workstation, a workstation at home or hotdesking. The majority of the School's employees (including students) will be classed as 'users.

5.2.3   Workstation. A workstation includes:
- the display screen;
- chair, work surface/desk, keyboard or other input devices;
- telephone, document holder, printer etc.;
- any optional accessories to the display screen equipment;
- the immediate work environment around the display screen equipment;
- environmental considerations such as space, heat, lighting, noise and humidity

6.0 Minimum requirements for workstations

6.1 Workstations and equipment must comply with the minimum requirements outlined in the DSE regulations. The minimum requirements for workstations apply to all elements of the workstation, including furniture, software and environmental factors.

6.2 Inspections should be carried out of any school workstations used by students, for example in computer teaching spaces and IT classrooms.

6.3 These workstations should as far as is reasonably practicable meet the minimum ergonomic requirements set out in the Regulations in order to comply with the duty of care that the School owes to its students.

7.0 Daily work routines of users

7.1 Whenever possible, jobs using DSE should be designed to consist of a mixture of screen-based and non-screen-based work to prevent fatigue, eyestrain, musculoskeletal conditions such as backache and mental demands.

7.2 Breaks or changes in an activity must be included in working time.

7.3 It is advisable to take short, frequent breaks rather than occasional longer break: for example, a 5-10-minute break after 50-60 minutes continuous screen and/or keyboard use will be more beneficial than a 15-20-minute break every 2 hours.

7.4 If possible breaks should be taken away from the DSE workstation, to allow the user to stand up, move about and change posture. Most employees have control over their own work and will be able to organise their time to ensure that they take sufficient breaks.

7.5 Students are assigned breaks as per the school day and online as per the remote learning schedule.

8.0 DSE set up

8.1 Follow these simple steps to set up your working environment for laptops/notebooks and computer.

8.2 Computer Set-Up Start off by getting into a good sitting posture that will keep your static muscle effort as low as possible:

- Sit upright, fully back in the seat with your back straight and head up. If you can't get fully back in the seat because the cushion is too long, you need to adjust the seatback forward, if you can, or change the chair.
- As far as possible, try to get your ears, shoulder, elbows and hip bone all in a vertical line.
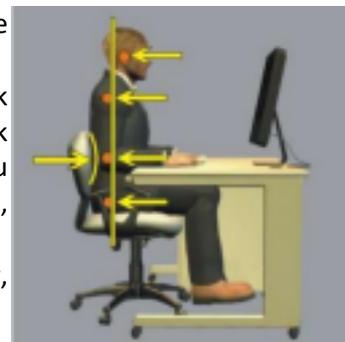
8.3 Set your seat to support you in that posture at your desk:

8.3.1 Adjust your chair height so that the underside of your elbow is at desk height when it is vertically under your shoulder.

8.3.2 Adjust the seatback forwards or backwards, and perhaps up or down, to support the small of your back in the upright position. If your chair back does not fit you like this, you need separate back support or a different chair.

8.3.3 If your chair has fixed armrests, they may well be too low, when you sit correctly. If so, pad them to make them higher, or remove them.

8.3.4 Don't leave them as they are, or they will tempt you to slump down to them.

8.3.5 Note that if you are doing a spell of paperwork, you should lower your chair for that period, to restore the intended work height for paperwork as opposed to computing.

8.4 Roughly half of all people will need a footrest, to support the lower leg at the right height. This is because the standard desk height was originally set for paperwork.

8.4.1 You should have light pressure under the front of the thighs. This is because heavy pressure will tempt you to slide along the cushion to relieve it, while on the other hand, too little support will transfer pressure uncomfortably to the upper thigh/pelvis area and the feet.

8.4.2 You should choose a footrest of a suitable height to achieve this. You can experiment with books or anything similar to find the ideal height of a footrest for you, to achieve that light pressure under the front of the thigh.

8.4.3 Then find or make a permanent footrest of that height. Make sure it is wide and long enough for you to change the position of your feet from time to time.

8.5 Adjust your monitor height to suit your position, so that your head is facing straight ahead, not up or down. Otherwise, your neck muscles will work too hard supporting your head.

8.5.1 Generally, this means having the top of the visible area at eye height; then your head is nearly in balance, while your eyes naturally look slightly downwards at the screen.

8.5.2 If your monitor is too low, you can stand it on something

8.6 Roll your chair towards your desk, so that when typing and using the mouse, your elbows are vertically under your shoulders not pulled forwards.

8.6.1 You may need to remove any fixed armrests from your chair if they

collide with the desk.

8.6.2 Better chairs have short armrests to prevent this problem.

8.6.3 If you are working at a curved corner of a desking unit, you may find it impossible to sit close enough to your mouse and keyboard. If so, move the monitor out of the corner so you can work at a straight section. In general, modern monitors have made corner placement unnecessary, and in fact, they are often too far away then.

8.6.4 You should not work with things between you and the keyboard - use a document holder if you're copy typing, either next to the screen or in front of it.

8.7 Next, adjust the distance from your eyes to the monitor. You should be able to find a distance where you can read your screen easily and without peering forwards at it, but at the same time have your eyes relaxed - not working to focus on the screen.

8.7.1 On a big desk, make sure your monitor is not too far away. You may benefit from computer-users' single-vision, glasses that adjust your eyesight a suitable distance. They are lighter than varifocals.

8.7.2 If you use reading glasses, you may find that the computer distance is in between your natural focus with and without them. If so, special varifocal glasses are available with an enlarged zone around screen distance.

8.7.3 Your operating system and software will allow you to alter the size of screen elements and text to make reading easier.

8.8 Now check that you are sitting squarely facing your monitor, not twisted. Make sure you can roll your chair along your desk to sit squarely if need be. Drawer units under the desk can normally be removed to make space for this, if necessary.
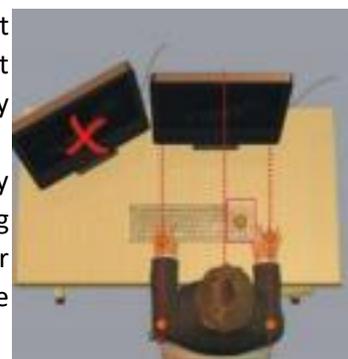
8.8.1 When your hands are in their usual position, they should not pull your elbows away from being vertically under your shoulders, either sideways or forwards; otherwise, your shoulder muscles will be working all the time.

8.8.2 If you are touch-typing the keyboard must be directly in front of you.

8.8.3 You can try using the mouse with your Left hand - even if you are right-handed, you may find you can learn to be skilled enough. Or you can move the mouse and keyboard over if you are using the mouse intensively.

8.9 Now fine-tune your setup so that your wrists are not working at an angle. Your

hands should be in line with your forearms, both looking from the side and looking from above. You should also be able to rest your palms on something whenever you are not actively typing.

8.9.1 Don't deploy the feet at the back of your keyboard unless you really need to.

8.9.2 Use a gel "wrist rest", or palm rest with your keyboard, or a mouse mat, for the heels of your hands to rest on (not your wrist which has tendons moving in it).

8.9.3 Make small adjustments to your chair height, so that your forearms line up with your hands.

8.9.4 If your mouse keeps 'escaping' across the desk pulling your elbow away, try cutting down a mouse mat or a piece of blotting paper and fixing it to the desk with double-sided tape or blu-tak.

8.9.5 After this stage, you should now be able to relax the muscles in your back, neck, shoulders, arms and hands, either all the time or at least frequently.
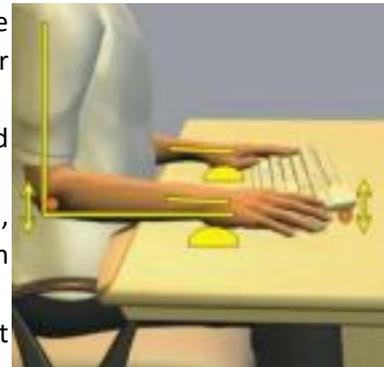
8.10 Set up your position in the room and the lighting to make things easy for your eyes. The background to your monitor should be a similar brightness to the monitor, or just slightly darker.

8.10.1 Try not to face a window.

8.10.2 Try not to have your desk against a wall. It helps your eyes if they can easily relax by focusing on more distant things from time to time.

8.10.3 Try not to have a window behind you that will cause reflections on your screen.

8.10.4 If this cannot be achieved, use blinds.

8.10.5 Make sure the room lighting is not in your eyes or causing reflections. Ask yourself if the overhead lighting needs to be switched on at all.

8.10.6 Consider using a desk lamp for reading paperwork. A tall lamp with a full shade is best.

8.10.7 Look at your monitor while it is switched off, to check for reflections.

8.11 Maintain the air quality in your work area:

8.11.1 Make sure you have fresh air, from a window or from the heating/ventilation system. You don't need a window open all the time, just some air changes periodically.

8.11.2 Monitor the humidity, it can drop to uncomfortable levels with warming from the computer, leading to eye and throat discomfort. 40-49% is generally comfortable.

8.11.3 Plants are a good way of maintaining humidity and air quality.

8.11.4 If possible, direct control of temperature can be a positive thing, otherwise, make sure you have effective communication with whoever controls it.
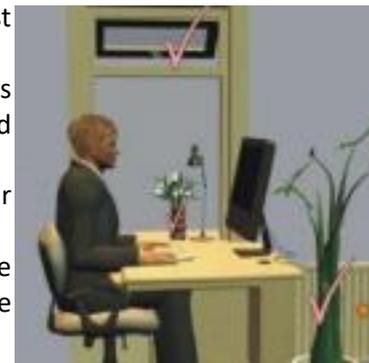
8.12 Manage stress and how you work:

8.12.1   Take regular breaks, at least 5 minutes away from your screen every hour, ideally with exercise or movement. Try not to have lunch at your desk.

8.12.2   Some different types of work during the day.

8.12.3   Take control of the order in which you do tasks.

8.12.4   Limit pressure to meet deadlines to what is realistic.

8.12.5   Communicate effectively with people who affect your work.

8.12.6   If stress becomes a problem, consult your Head.

8.12.7   If there is distracting noise, get it seen to.

8.12.8   Make sure there is enough space on your desk.
Use proper storage and filing and try to avoid storing things on your desk. Consider moving, e.g. a printer onto an adjacent surface like a filing cabinet.

8.13   Laptop and Notebook Setup

8.13.1   Common Mistakes

8.13.2   This image shows how a laptop screen is too close to its keyboard. This has several bad effects:

8.13.2.1   The screen is too low, pulling your head down.

8.13.2.2   The keyboard is too far away, pulling the elbows forward and up.

8.13.2.3   The screen is too close, making your eyes work hard to focus on it.

8.13.2.4   Thus, overuse injuries may occur in the eyes, neck, shoulders and back.

8.13.2.5   The high elbow position may also lead to wrist problems.

8.14   You can make a big improvement by using a separate keyboard and mouse, connected to your laptop.

8.14.1   Then by raising the laptop to the height of a normal screen, the posture problems can be solved.

8.14.2   The one remaining problem is that the screen will normally be smaller than a desktop screen, so it has to be closer to the eyes. This means the focusing muscles in the eyes have to work harder.

8.14.3   The keyboard and mouse can plug into a USB port, or they can connect wirelessly, or you can use a docking station. They make an economical solution to extend the safe periods of use, but it is a compromise.

8.14.4   For all-day use you should use a full-size desktop monitor as well by plugging in a desktop monitor, you can have the same quality of setup as a full desktop computer.

8.14.5   The laptop itself can be placed anywhere convenient (on most models you can close the lid

while a monitor is connected). If you are choosing a laptop/notebook computer, check that it has a suitable port for connecting an external monitor.

8.14.6 Then you can follow the normal setup process for desktop computers.

9.0 Tips for working on a PC or laptop remotely:

9.1 Raise your screen: Make sure your screen is raised so that the top of the screen is at eye level. This can be done using an adjustable laptop stand, a box or some books if necessary.

9.2 Use a separate keyboard and mouse. This enables the laptop screen to be positioned correctly.

9.3 Report pain or discomfort If you feel discomfort, report it to your line manager as soon as you notice it.

9.4 Adjust your chair height. Your arms should be at right angles, with forearms lightly supported by the work surface. You may need a footrest if your feet are not firmly on the floor.

9.5 Make sure the lower back is well-supported Support for your lower back will help encourage good posture. You can use a folded towel to give you more support or consider a back-support cushion or pillow if needed.

9.6 Use a screen Filter

   9.6.1 Either apply a physical screen filter or use the device's settings to reduce the blue light from the screen.

   9.6.2 Software called Flux is a free download for Windows

9.7 Take regular, short breaks: Move around for five or ten minutes every hour, aiming for frequent, short breaks. Consider taking micro-breaks to stretch, move around, change activity by taking a phone call, do some reading or get a drink to avoid prolonged static postures.

9.8 Take more frequent breaks if your DSE setup is not optimal or if you are experiencing discomfort. Try to avoid:

   - using phones or tablets for a long time,
   - sitting on unsupportive seating such as a sofa,
   - static postures.

9.9 Whilst it may seem easier to simply open the laptop and start working without making any adjustments, and this can lead to poor posture, which can cause pain and discomfort over time. It is well worth taking a couple of minutes to set up your workstation correctly each time you sit down to work.

10.0 Staff Wellbeing

   10.1 Take care of your diet

   10.1.1 In a situation as exceptional as the one we are currently experiencing, in which our activity decreases considerably, it is important to try to adjust the total caloric intake.

   10.1.2 Eating represents a very common form of avoidance and can be a common response to stress and distress. In the case of working at home, it's easy to reach increases the likelihood of consuming many more calories than are actually needed.

   10.1.3 To avoid these situations, it is recommended that you adopt a series of guidelines:

      10.1.3.1 Establish meal schedules or routines to avoid constant eating.

      10.1.3.2 Create a weekly menu based on a varied and balanced diet, which will also help you prepare a list of the products you need to buy, avoiding choosing unnecessary ones.

   10.1.4 Remember the importance of staying hydrated: drink water.

   10.1.5 Avoid artificial soft drinks, even those without sugar, as they usually contain

sweeteners.
10.1.6 Minimise consumption of drinks with stimulants: caffeine, theine, energy drinks.

10.2 Take care of your physical activity
10.2.1 Regular physical activity is an essential element in the development of your day-to-day life. Both at work and in your free time, it is very important to stay active.
10.2.2 According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an adequate level of regular physical activity in adults reduces the risk of hypertension, coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes, breast and colon cancer, depression and falls.
10.2.3 It also improves bone and functional health and is a key determinant of energy expenditure (essential) for caloric balance and weight control.

10.3 Take care of your rest
10.3.1 The better the quality of sleep, the better the quality of life.
10.3.2 Sleep is also behaviour and is an active and complex process, necessary to maintain the correct state of physical and mental health.
10.3.3 The need for sleep varies with age, but its quality is always necessary for having direct consequences on health, work and social performance.