Rationale to our approach to remote learning

We thought it helpful to share with parents/carers the rationale behind our approaches to learning in lockdown, as well as links to some of the guidance documents. Throughout, the terms used in this letter will match the definitions Ofsted use to avoid confusion. These definitions can be found in an Ofsted guidance document (link below), alongside some useful myths Ofsted have identified about remote learning.
Oftsed Guidance: What's working well in remote education

Parmiter's model is based upon the guidance issued by Ofsted in January, research into best practice in remote/distance learning, the various needs of our entire student population and our staff's particular expertise in both academic provision and the delivery of their curricula.

The Education Endowment Fund reviewed the research into remote learning and identified 5 key findings that we have used to frame our provision. The full document is available here. These findings are:

1. Teaching quality is more important than how lessons are delivered.
2. Ensuring access to technology is key, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.
3. Peer interactions can provide motivation and improve learning outcomes.
4. Supporting pupils to work independently can improve learning outcomes.
5. Different approaches to remote learning suit different types of content and pupils.

The evidence indicates that the best remote provision is a combination of different approaches that are varied both within a curriculum area as well as across age groups and subjects. Ofsted and much of the research indicates that synchronous lessons (commonly referred to as 'live' lessons) look like they are an exact replica of a classroom experience, but are actually quite a different teaching method (as any of our staff would attest). Like anything, they have their benefits and drawbacks and are best used as one part of a wider, more dynamic provision that allows us to use them meaningfully.

The model we have followed meets the key findings of the EFF research in the following ways:

1. Departments and teachers can use their professional judgement to determine how they deliver their lessons within the framework of a mixed provision of synchronous, asynchronous and independent learning, in order to maintain a high quality provision in all areas that is suited to the particular demands of the subject.

2. We can ensure that all students can access the curriculum equally, regardless of their particular home circumstances, device access, wifi issues etc by clearly delineating synchronous and asynchronous learning using Google Classrooms.

3. Our teachers are providing synchronous learning to all students in all classes on a regular basis to ensure there is some form of peer interaction, as well as using other platforms to allow wider, non-video interaction to ensure varied interaction.

4. The mixture of synchronous and asynchronous learning ensures that we are both allowing students some autonomy to manage their own work whilst at the same time ensuring there is regular feedback, structure and monitoring for all students.

5. Departments will set their own mix of synchronous education with independent asynchronous work with the precise mix deliberately varying between subjects and across age ranges, as well as adapting to the precise material being studied at any given point in a course.

This model should see your child having a range of different educational experiences across a given sequence of lessons that varies depending on the age of the student and the subject studied. All departments have been expected to offer at least:
- one synchronous lesson per week per teacher at A Level;
- one synchronous lesson per week at GCSE;
- one synchronous lesson per week for English, Maths and Science in Years 7, 8 & 9;
- one synchronous lesson per fortnight for other subjects in Years 7, 8 & 9.

Other timetabled lessons are then being used as either preparation work or consolidation activities/assessment. The variation comes down largely to the difference in material and the suitability of a live session for that content.

For example, in A Level Politics, students have been set an asynchronous lesson of note making and written responses to questions, followed by a live session discussing the work completed - a live lesson for the note making and written responses serves no purpose and so is not deemed necessary. The work is submitted and monitored and builds through to the subsequent live lesson. In Maths A Level, students would be having more frequent synchronous lessons as the nature of the subject lends itself more to this medium than others do. This difference across the subjects is to be expected and is allowing each student to experience the best of multiple means of instruction and feedback.

Our model is intended to deliver high quality learning in a flexible and dynamic manner that best replicates the excellent provision that takes place in school. It is also best suited to allowing us to continue to provide an effective remote learning programme whilst at the same time ensuring our students can move smoothly back into classroom learning once schools fully reopen. That said, we are interested in establishing how it is being experienced by parents and students, as well as checking the ratio of synchronous to asynchronous learning is working.

As the provision of large scale remote learning has never been done before, the research into this area is developing all the time, and we are committed to staying up to date with what has been demonstrated to be best practice. Should it become apparent there is a need to redesign the model as a result, we will do so, at all times taking into account the various needs and contexts of our students.

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