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Dear Parent/carer

Many thanks for your feedback from the survey and your constructive responses. I would also like to thank the many families who have passed on their gratitude to individual members of staff and departments for the work they have been doing to support students with home learning.

Survey headlines:

- 85% of parents felt that the work being set was accessible and their children were able to work independently on tasks which was an improvement on the last survey, in which there were concerns raised about students have problems accessing work. This is supported by the student survey, in which 90% of students felt they could work independently on tasks.
- The majority of parents have suggested the work being set is about the right amount, although we acknowledge that some parents feel that too much work is being set whilst other families feel they would like more work to be sent.
- You have also reported that 'motivation' has become an issue in sustaining progress with home learning. This reflects national figures and feedback from our local schools.
- Your feedback has also acknowledged the growing number of 'teacher explanation lessons' have been effective, with 53% of families, stating they had been beneficial in supporting learning.

Key Concerns:

The work being set is not challenging enough and is being completed too quickly.

After the first parent survey we received a significant amount of feedback informing us that our students were struggling to cope with home learning and it was damaging students' well-being. As a result we reduced expectations for how much work should be set. We have shared this feedback with our Heads of Faculty and asked them to ensure that extension work is included in the lessons sent home.

Why have there been no live lessons?

We have decided not to pursue live streamed lessons for the moment for a number of reasons; however, we will continue to review our Home Learning policy.

We have kept up to date with the latest guidance from the Education Endowment Foundation. This is an organisation which considers academic research from across the world and has recently published guidance to schools on effective home learning. They have been involved in advising the government with their 'catch-up plan'.

The key points that have come out of their guidance is that there is no evidence that live lessons, or what they call synchronised lessons, are more effective than other forms of home learning.



Their research has emphasised the most important factor in effective home learning is the lesson planning. Our work in developing our home learning provision has focussed on sharing that guidance and developing 'teacher explanation' lessons – lessons which are pre-recorded or have audio embedded into them.

These lessons enable teachers to: provide explanations about aims, activities, feedback and student reflection on their learning, as well as modelling processes and structures which are all key aspects of effective learning. These also give students the opportunity to pause and rewind teacher's explanations and has given students effective lessons.

Since half term, our staff team have been working hard to enhance their ICT skills to enable them to provide lessons which are filmed through software such as Loom or Stream or enhanced by adding audio to the work set. The teaching staff are committed to developing home learning provision and the number of filmed lessons have increased significantly since half term.

The feedback from the schools locally and nationally have raised questions about the impact of live lessons on learning, which appear to be less effective with large groups. The lessons can lack pace and with large groups limited interaction is possible and they have tended to become instructional. Additionally, they have not solved the national problem of student motivation as these lessons have had increasingly poor attendance.

As previously stated we have concerns about live lessons from a safety point of view, and colleagues in other schools have expressed some concerns about behaviour during live lessons which has undermined teachers. Evidence suggests that not all students are comfortable with live lessons.

Can students have more feedback?

We recognise that feedback is a crucial part of learning and as a result have introduced learning reviews which have been giving students feedback on their progress since lockdown. This is beginning to have an impact as noted by families in their survey responses, as one parent commented:

"The increased feedback from teachers this half term has been hugely beneficial and motivational."

As we continue with home learning, teachers will be providing regular learning reviews, and much of this will be delivered through Teams.

It is therefore extremely important that students complete the learning reviews set by their teachers.

What you can expect from Downlands:

We will continue to evolve home learning and behind the scenes we have been working hard to develop our provision.

Teachers have been given support and training in the use of software to enable them to create 'teacher explanation' lessons and we have led webinars on how to deliver video lessons.

A significant amount of time has been spent investigating how we provide feedback to students other than via email which would have been unworkable. This has led us to investigate the functionality of Teams and to deliver weekly support and training to colleagues who have had little experience with the platform. This has had an impact as students are now completing and gaining feedback via Teams.

We will continue to provide on-going training and support throughout the remainder of this term.

Our teachers will set daily work according to a student's timetable via email by 9am each morning. These lessons will follow as far as possible the students planned curriculum and increasingly the majority of those lessons will have 'teacher explanation' embedded. Students will continue to gain feedback and acknowledgement of their work during lockdown through learning reviews.

Yours faithfully

S Adams

Mr S Adams
Assistant Headteacher