



The William Henry Smith School

22/04/2021

Pandemic Review of Practice

Dear families,

I hope you are well and have enjoyed the Easter holiday period and the much-welcomed sunshine. The boys have certainly settled back into school nicely and we are all looking forward to the summer term when we can get outside, and enjoy some outside learning, play and activity.

The pandemic has been a challenging time for everyone, including the school, with many restrictions and considerations made to ensure compliance and promote safe practice. Yet as a reflective and progressive school, we continuously assess, review and learn from our practice and have noted during this last year what has 'worked well' and what has 'provided benefits' to our community.

As we begin to reconsider what 'normal' now looks like in terms of everyday functions, we would like to share our review with yourselves and seek your opinions too.

Our hunger and desire to keep getting better is embedded in our ethos. Our school is unique in terms of our 15-year Ofsted track record and whilst we of course thrive on ensuring we are ahead of regulators; we do not view external validation as a key driver for improvement. In fact, we have always pushed regulators and others to raise the bar, and our culture embedded by continuous building of sustainable steps and growth sets us in good stead for incremental improvement and enhancement. Our core drive for success mainly comes from fundamental principles that energise, create curiosity and interest within our whole community, and this has never been more apparent within our community than in the last year. Despite the challenges, there have been undoubted success stories.

To maintain the significant benefits seen during Covid for our students there are several ideas that *could* be implemented. Of course, we must consider not only our community and families' needs but also ensure we meet the requirements of external stakeholders in any process of change implementation. So it is important when we are consulting, to also understand that we are unlikely to be able to do everything, or everything all at once.

The William Henry Smith School, Boothroyd Lane, Brighouse, West Yorkshire HD6 3JW
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Registered Charity: 529132



So, let me share the feedback and common themes from Student Voice and bubbles (students and staff):

- **The bubbles have worked well.** Creating groups with small student numbers and consistent staffing has offered benefits. The level of adult interaction within the bubbles is greater and consistent, forging outstanding relationships. Specialist subject staff for older students of course remains key.
- **A reduction in daily transitions has worked well.** For younger students, less movement within the school day (including not having daily assembly) has given a grounded feeling and data has shown a reduction in serious incidents.
- **Facilitated movement breaks have worked well.** These have proved much better than a set break time for all allowing greater flexibility and breaks from formal learning and opportunities for students to get back on track and/or enjoy some fresh air and space.
- **Lunches outside of house bases have worked.** Removing a transition point and a less busy and quieter environment has been very positive.
- **Timings that are more suited to age.** Changes to timings to the day have helped. The earlier start and finish, particularly for younger children, have been trialled and proved beneficial, allowing for a more focused education delivery day.
- **Better use of staff.** Pockets of staff resource to facilitate personalised timetables has worked, i.e. having dedicated staff facilitate very small groups in areas such as design technology, music, cooking and on the farm has been very popular.
- **Integrating healthier lifestyles.** Independent and small group cooking of evening meals within the houses has helped develop life skills and a homely feel and belonging.
- **More valued use of resources.** Timetabling of school resources such as the gym and play areas have seen them used more consistently and valued by groups.
- **After school activities.** For students staying beyond the formal day, after school activities have focused on outdoor and group activities.
- **Meeting/greeting on the playground works well.** A friendly face to start the day. Contact is important for families and staff are able to interact and meet students and guide them to class or house.

If families have any thoughts on the above themes or any observations you'd like to share, please don't hesitate to send them to reception or to general@whsschool.org.uk.

And finally, we have also been focusing on ways to *connect the school community* and are planning a cycle of events spread across the year to add focus on different aspects of culture, mindfulness, well-being and physical activity. Please keep a look out for Quality of Life Newsletters, and challenges and competitions families can get involved in too.

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I would like to thank you in advance for your support and engagement and look forward to families joining us in sharing ideas as we reflect upon the successes of the past year.

Best wishes,

Sue

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