



Rye College
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Executive Headteacher: Mr Barry Blakelock
Head of College: Mr Dom Downes

5th February 2021

Dear families,

I noticed this morning, as I drove into Rye, that the countryside all around is showing signs of spring. The inevitable transformation from winter into the dawning sunshine of spring has been, coincidentally, coupled with the news that over 10 million people in England have received a vaccination. Clearly, we can see some light at the end of the tunnel and, in the words of Captain Tom Moore, ‘tomorrow will be a good day.’

While the nation waits for the Government’s review of the lockdown on 22nd February and the subsequent easing of restrictions, Rye College community continues to work together to ensure that our children receive the best possible education and support in these unprecedented times. There have been so many acts of community kindness over the last year. From our families and students donating car loads of food and household items to Rye food bank to local Rye residents purchasing laptops to loan to students who do not have access to technology. In addition, the Rye College Advisory Council met on Wednesday, 27th January to receive reports on the College’s work: the Council will be sending a letter to families shortly.

Over the past few weeks, we have asked the Rye College community to provide feedback on two key areas of our work: the quality of our remote learning provision and the College’s equality, diversity and inclusion culture. We are very grateful to those of you who have responded to the surveys as your views and responses will inform our current practices and future plans.

We were especially grateful for the responses to our remote learning survey as we can further develop the provision. It is clear that the College has progressed in its provision by using Microsoft TEAMS to deliver learning and, while it remains a steep learning curve for all of us, we are seeing increased participation and engagement rates. Our progress is summed up by one family who state, ‘The live learning labs are great, the work set has been a suitable standard and, on the whole, varied and interesting...Feedback is good, the weekly check in from the form tutor is great.’

Alongside the numerous comments praising the provision and our staff, families made suggestions around a number of areas. The vast majority of you like the live learning labs and asked for more. We have sought to ensure that every student has at least two live contacts per day and encourage subject areas to use live learning sessions where possible.

We are, however, mindful that some families do not have adequate access to the required technology and/or data to support high levels of live learning. In addition, we are conscious that remote learning should be a mixture of activities that do not require students to be in front of screens for prolonged periods.



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Ofsted's report on best practice for remote education describes an effective approach where there is a mixed delivery and, when live learning is used, the sessions should be relatively short as people find concentrating on-line for extended periods difficult.

One area that came up in your responses was the amount of work set and how long students are taking to complete the work. Responses ranged from there being too much to there being too little. Once again, we are very mindful that individual child and family circumstances mean that responses to the work set will be different. Some children like the interaction of live sessions, and others prefer to work independently and at their own pace. Equally, we are all coping with complex work/family circumstances that require a degree of flexibility. We do recognise that we have some work to do in making sure that the tasks colleagues set are carefully planned and the amount of time required to complete them is carefully considered.

A number of families commented that a timetable will be useful to help plan the day. In addition, parents and carers stated that they would like to know what has been set and whether their child had completed the work. Currently, we are unable to find a solution within TEAMS as each student's account is personal and private to them. However, we have modified the way we record work and activities on ClassCharts so that families can see the week's schedule, including live learning labs. This approach also allows us a degree of flexibility as we increase and modify our provision. We are exploring how we provide feedback both to students and families via TEAMS. We have created a number of approaches that include immediate feedback and shared documents that can be seen by both the teacher and student. We will provide families with a fortnightly report on their child/children's level of participation in their remote learning.

As a result of the responses to the survey, we have put together a remote education handbook that provides detail regarding:

- Work expectations;
- How to guides;
- Support for students and families using TEAMS;
- On-line etiquette;
- Links to relevant and useful education and well-being websites and resources.

The handbook will shortly be available on the website. We hope you will find it useful.

Family feedback is essential for us as it informs our thinking and helps us in our continued journey to transform lives through education. Consequently, I am very grateful to all of you who have contacted us or responded to the surveys. In particular, the Trust's Equality Diversity and Inclusion survey – I will provide more detail regarding your feedback next term -- marks the beginning of a Trust wide programme that will have an impact on our communities for years to come.



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We would encourage you to get in touch via office@ryecollege.co.uk. If you wish to know anything further about our work, please visit www.ryecollege.co.uk/.

Finally, I would like to thank you all – members of the Rye College community – for your support, hard-work and engagement. By continuing to work in partnership, we will meet the challenges together.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. D. Downes
Head of College

