

Torfield And Saxon Mount Academy Trust



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Saxon Mount School External Advisor Summary Report: School response to Covid-19

The External Advisor undertook a number of visits and conversations with leaders and reviewed available information provided by the school in relation to actions taken during the pandemic between March 2020 and September 2021.

Overarching statement

The pupils and staff at Saxon Mount have been, and continue to be, exceptionally well supported by the Headteacher and the Senior Leadership Team throughout this long period of time during which the Headteacher has ensured that measures have been put in place to mitigate the impact of the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic at Saxon Mount School.

I have reviewed that provision which I believe has been outstanding.

Staff and pupils have retained the happy and purposeful approach to their learning that has been the hallmark at the school.

These have been the most difficult of times, never experienced before, and requiring imagination and drive to maintain the purposeful atmosphere that defines the school.

National context to help frame the action plan

- Nationally the Education Endowment Foundation EEF has identified that school closures during Covid-19 are likely to reverse the progress made over the last decade to narrow the gap. Where schools support effective remote learning, this can mitigate the extent to which the gap widens.

Saxon Mount recognised that sustained support would be needed to help disadvantaged pupils catch up, this support, as detailed below, was provided both on line and when pupils began to return to school full time.

The process at the school was clear

The Headteacher took forward an agenda focussed on,

- The identification of challenges
- Sharing the “Action Plan” with staff, parents and carers
- The review of “Action Plans”
- The use of Catch-up premium funds
- Clear discussions on what can be achieved through distance learning and what could be lost.

- Ensuring that when pupils began the gradual return to school the missing aspects such as peer group interaction were structured through high quality teaching.
- Mental health first aid remains a priority for the school, this resource for pupils who have faced personal or family difficulties during Covid-19 have someone to speak with who will offer practical help. Pupils can self-refer or be referred for support.

Provision was developed to reflect a wide range of facilitated structures

- These ensured a successful return to in-school classroom structured activities as well as skills development if a return to home / distance learning became, once more, unavoidable.
- To ensure that, if required, pupils would be able to engage with learning from home a key task was to identify the availability and need for IT resources. The school used a mix of government funding and existing provision to ensure all pupils were able to get on line.
- To ensure that where any pupil did not have digital or online access at home laptops were provided though the priority has been for years 10 and 11
- Overt structures were embedded, ensuring a recording of all work done and sites visited as well maintaining the safety and security of pupils on line.

TEAMS, the online group meeting platform was used to support contemporaneous learning in-school, at home or in a different part of the school. The development of teacher skills was supported; the headteacher confirms that the TEAMS works exceptionally well and will provide significant opportunities for the future.

Parental support and feedback have long been a cornerstone of provision at Saxon Mount and the school is aware of home situations where personal individual support might be needed. Wherever possible this has been achieved though there could be some situations where this is not always practical, in such a situation the school will provide alternative resources.

To continue to develop high quality teaching and learning the school has maintained a clear focus on:

- Adapting the curriculum through
- 1:1 academic and social interventions
- Supporting pupils with SEND
- Supporting social interactions, small group work embracing
- Holiday work days
- Support with technology
- Investment in high quality digital resources
- Developing skills for further possible remote education

Equally the school retained a clear focus on:

- Shielding staff
- Day to day organisation
- Keeping pupils safe

- When the fulltime return to the classroom began the impact of pupils being out of school and isolated at home became a specific focus for the school. This will be a journey rather than a quick fix, but a clear programme has been developed focussing on:-
 - 1:1 academic and social interventions
 - Small group work
 - Holiday work days
 - Support with technology
 - Mental health first aid
 - Continuing investment in high quality digital resources

Key positive outcomes regarding the organisation of the school day

- Movement around the school has been reduced
- Bells: the school no longer have these as an indicator that a lesson has finished. Many pupils don't like/ cannot tolerate loud noises, so this has been better for them.
- The construction of teacher teams within key stages has been very effective
- PE lessons: pupils now come to school in their (newly introduced and posh) PE kits on the days when PE is scheduled. This allows for a prompt start to the lesson. This has also reduced some low-level behaviour challenges.
- Assemblies: these are delivered by TEAMS. This allows for class group discussions and reduces time taken to deliver assemblies.
- Remote learning is now a key resource integral to all teaching
- Communication systems are now more highly focussed, and contacts more speedily achieved
- The day begins calmly and the calmness around the building is retained.
- Saxon Mount have ensured that the pupils have continued to be able to participate in extracurricular learning opportunities that they had missed during the pandemic. The school have already had 3 residential this year. There will be additional trips to support all curriculum areas including careers.

Governors have been kept aware of how the arrangements were changing, reflecting the needs for consistency and effectiveness in teaching and learning.

All involved with Saxon Mount should be very proud of what the staff pupils and parents have achieved.

Signed:



Craig Pamphilon
External Advisor