

Torfield And Saxon Mount Academy Trust



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Torfield 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

With outstanding leadership, staff at Torfield have continued to deliver excellent learning opportunities for pupils throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. The Senior Leadership Team have had a clear focus on retaining the well-developed atmosphere of learning at Torfield whilst in an uncertain world. All staff 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 Torfield 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 always defined the school. Primarily the school remains open for all pupils. Transport has, when needed, been adjusted, increased, and rearranged to facilitate that.

National context and analysis to help frame the need for 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.

School actions

Torfield School recognised that sustained support would be needed to help disadvantaged pupils catch up as well as support for families and carers.

The process within the school was clearly identified by the Headteacher and SLT and taken forward across most aspects of provision. Fundamentally, systems were put in place to secure the safety of pupils within a rich educational environment, maintaining the extensive and engaging curriculum. The ambition was for students and parents / carers to be confident in the systems in place within the familiar framework at the school.

The school has taken forward a clearly focussed agenda.

The context of this national change has been difficult for all pupils and staff and has had the capacity to raise levels of anxiety. All actions that the school has taken have always embraced the need to reduce anxiety. From September 2020 till July 2021, the whole school was organised into "bubbles" and the timetable was planned to reduce staff and pupils' movement around the school and to prevent any "bubbles" from mixing.

There has been no impact upon the curriculum's design or delivery apart from the disruption to educational visits and the decision to reorder the PSHE topics so that term one focussed upon supporting pupils' mental health and well-being.

Teachers have used parent feedback to plan home learning linked directly to activities in the classroom, this provided a seamless link between learning in school and learning at home for pupils self-isolating.

Within that agenda were the following key elements

The use of Catch-up premium funds

- To improve and develop the speaking and listening skills of pupils disadvantaged by lockdown
- To support pupils disadvantaged by lockdown to make accelerated progress in reading.
- To prevent further disadvantages caused by the ongoing impact of Covid-19.
- To provide all pupils with a wealth of educational visits and experiences once Covid-19 restrictions are removed
- Train and deploy a Teaching Assistant to deliver the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI)

Impact expected

Pupils make expected or better progress, as defined by tutors or subject learning leaders, in their EHCP outcomes

Outcomes Achieved

- All targeted children made good or better than expected progress in developing their reading.
- Across the curriculum pupil progress meetings have ensured a shared understanding of levels and equivalence.
- Pupils have participated and cooperated in lessons throughout the day, making at least good learning progress.
- All classes remained open to all pupils, unless instructed to isolate by DfE/PHE
- Teachers shielding provided high quality remote learning and feedback.
- All targeted children made good or better than expected progress in developing their speaking and listening skills.
- Year 6 pupils benefitted from a fulfilling transition programme ahead of their transition to the next stage of their learning.
- For all pupils it has been essential to make sure all baseline assessments in term one was secure so that so that the school could address any concerns, and plan for progress. As a result of pupils' regular attendance during lockdown these assessments have not revealed any significant loss of learning since the term four assessments.
- Star of the week and celebrations have continued in different ways, however the opportunities to celebrate success have always been retained.
- Positive outcomes continue to be achieved supporting social interaction and social progress.

Pupils' Learning and Overall Progress

The school has used term four data to form judgments about the progress individuals have made. Pupils were not therefore expected to achieve their end of year targets. This means the starting data for pupils in the school in September 2020 was their actual term four assessment data from 2020, rather than a projected 'possible' outcome.

Citizenship and SMSC

While SMSC events have still gone ahead they have been adapted to ensure Covid-19 security. The most noticeable difference being that parents and carers have not been able to be in school, instead they have been able to watch video clips of events and activities on Class Dojo.

Trips and educational visits - most have had to be postponed. When trips were possible, they took place in local, outdoor environments such as investigating woods and other environments. Celebration assemblies have continued but were initially class-based before moving online. Online assemblies have also enabled recognising and celebrating the successes of pupils learning remotely.

British Values

Within this context the School Council were unfortunately unable to operate in the usual format. Children, however, were consulted on key decisions.

Careers Guidance

While the careers roleplay area had been well established and well used, Covid-19 meant its room had to be repurposed. It will be introduced when it is safe to do so.

Healthy Living

In order to promote pupils' well-being the PSHE Scheme of Work was reordered so that the year began with a focus on this area to address concerns and anxieties following lockdown

Preparations for the next stage in education

Supporting transitions has been particularly hard as usual activities such as EYC pupils visiting Croft Road regularly has not been possible. As a result, many of the pupils eating in the hall for the first time found this a challenging experience. Support was swiftly provided.

Behaviour and Attitudes

School staff have kept in regular contact with families where pupils have been accessing learning remotely. Pupils' attitudes towards their learning remain extremely positive.

Attendance remained high and well above local figures. By the end of the partial school closure, 83% of pupils had accessed some time in school.

Behaviour for learning continues to be a strength of the school. Requiring each class to remain in their 'bubble' during playtimes has improved this further, as learning time is not lost to resolving upsets between children from different classes,

Equality and Diversity

Nationally there was a real concern that school closure would widen the gap for disadvantaged pupils. The school has taken rapid action to ensure pupils had access to appropriate technology. Laptops were delivered where they were needed.

Work continued to be delivered regularly throughout the partial school closure.

Food was supplied by the school and the Magic Breakfast also provided for families where pupils were not in school.

Conclusion

Pupils and parents have benefitted significantly from the outstanding response of the school and all the staff. Against all presumptions, children's learning has continued effectively, and families have been supported in their part of that process.

Pupil admissions have been maintained and transfers to "next" schools have passed, with support, but without significant issues.

The governors will be proud of the actions of all staff, pupils, and families. They have been encouraging and supporting whilst facilitating learning in the most difficult of circumstances, working together for the benefit of the pupils in a safe environment.

Signed:



Craig Pamphilon
External Advisor