

Title: Now, Next and Beyond.

How we can use the experiences of the Covid lockdown to improve the future of learning.

Now...

This is our 6th week of lockdown restrictions, with schools operating in an obviously very different way than ever before. As a Headteacher, I understood the Government's decision to enforce school closure when it became clearly obvious that ensuring everyone's safety in relation to the Covid spread was becoming a larger and larger challenge.

Wapping High School was apparently ahead of the curve in comparison to some schools because we already relied on Google Classroom as a platform for home learning and staff were already confident in its use and application along with other Google Suite options. Before and at the beginning of the lockdown itself, staff were encouraged to populate Google Classrooms with sufficient, appropriate and engaging learning activities for students to access. Staff were keen to be proactive here and also share any strategies that led to success with each other in the numerous departmental, pastoral and leadership team meetings which ran online across the new school week.

Being in contact with other schools, especially School 21 and Big Education leaders was hugely helpful in sharing ideas and ensuring that we really were remaining focused on tackling the key priorities together.

Our school safeguarding team met at multiple times across the week, planning and making calls and general contact home to our vulnerable students and SEND students to ensure they were staying safe and knew that we were listening to all their particular learning and safety needs.

Multiple letters and texts, emails and ParentMail contacts have been shared with parents to ensure they remained a key partner in ensuring that student engagement remained as high as we needed it to be.

Next...

As we pass the peak of Covid infection rate we've now recently received the latest information from central government regarding a staged approach to return schools back to normality. A key initial priority for me, leaders and staff at Wapping High is to ensure that reintegration is managed sensitively and compassionately with students and staff mental health and well-being at the forefront of the reboot.

In our planning, staff will be encouraged to consolidate and revisit where necessary the previously set remote learning experiences and individual activities that have proved to be more challenging. This is not only to secure and consolidate learning here but to also provide an opportunity to create a new and established frame for learning with remote learning taking its place alongside the more traditional in-school learning.

I am confident that the emergence and realisation of this new blend of learning experiences form the crucial first steps for all leaders to take on a new pathway towards a more powerful learning model in the future.

Beyond...

Educational professionals are a dedicated and resilient group with leaders, staff and governors at schools sharing a passion for constantly pursuing the very best possible learning experiences for all their students.

In the aftermath of the Covid pandemic, the team at Wapping High feel that the future landscape for education is an exciting place, with the new powerful blend of learning experiences, easier access to knowledge sources and skill-building experiences that can be practised in many different ways really making a difference.

In the 'New Normal' online world, educationalists will find it much easier to share best practice and new knowledge with others across their own school, and potentially across all schools, for the good of all. Attending expensive and logistically challenging external Professional Development based meetings and conferences could be a thing of the past with digital meeting platforms e.g. Google Meet and Zoom bringing professionals together effectively with little or no cost or comparative challenge.

Digital learning and online lessons can be easily monitored and recorded. This creates a huge opportunity with the available historic examination data, and the ease of gathering consumer feedback in this new more digital world, to think again about how OFSTED might work. The door is open to how we can check on the quality of education provided by schools in so many different ways now.

Going even further, managing our busy modern lives provides a constant challenge to schools to introduce a more flexible learning experience for young people and their families to access more easily. Once again the door in our 'New Normal' is open here to potentially completely rethink the age old concept of the school day with ease of access to learning, and the impact that has on individuals well-being, carrying higher priority.

Finally, my own experience is that schools have shown a real determination to work together more closely than ever before to share and learn from each other during the current crisis and, as educationalists, we need to do all we can to maintain this in whatever future we determine for ourselves in the 'New Normal'.