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The
McAuley
Catholic High School
and Sixth Form
DONCASTER

Please

June (4) i57

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Juneteenth. Another new word for many. A massively important day marked down in history as the date in 1865 of the Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. The American Civil War which had been claiming lives for 4 years now took on a definite moral purpose.

Lincoln is famous for many, many inspirational quotes. One which is attributed to him is "You can please some of the people all of the time, you can please all of the people some of the time, but you can't please all of the people all of the time".

It was clear that a small minority of parents and carers are not best pleased by the decisions we have been making on behalf of the children and staff of McAuley. This came out from comments made in the recent Facebook live event bravely fronted by James Tucker.

We have over 3000 parents and carers so in this newsletter I have included the detail which has gone into the planning since before lockdown was announced. **Please take some time to read it.**

The School Critical incident team was established mid-March as a response to an anticipated announcement on the full closure of schools. In actual fact we ordered a partial closure the week before due to the escalating situation and the announcements about self-isolation.

The first SCIT team meeting took place that week on 18th March and was guided by an Emergency Plan. The aim of the SCIT was to manage any critical incident affecting school and to maintain business continuity. The SCIT was organised according to the Emergency plan and covers the following areas

1. Overall coordination
2. Executive decision making outside of SCIT meetings
3. Staff and student welfare inc the most vulnerable and safeguarding issues
4. Communications and media
5. Continuity in pastoral and curriculum teams inc the quality of remote learning, IT and network, timetable, sixth form, examinations and grading, data and information.
6. Finance and premises inc Health and safety

7. Admin support
8. Contacts to be notified – LA and Diocese

After the initial meeting the second meeting took place via ZOOM on the first Friday after lockdown and has taken place every Friday since bar half term and VE day. There have been a total of 11 meetings which have all been minuted.

A pattern of staff meetings and reporting was also established on 3rd April. This was based upon the established dates in the school calendar involving all curriculum and pastoral teams.

After the announcement that public exams would be scrapped much work was undertaken almost immediately by curriculum leads and their teams in moderating the assessments in responding to the demands of accurately and fairly grading all Y11 and Y13 students. All grades have now been submitted to the four exam boards. We now await the results of their standardisation exercise. We do not, at this moment, know how the results will be distributed but we do know when. The same dates as scheduled for both groups in August.

At every stage of this fast moving crisis we have adopted the principle of trying to provide as much stability and certainty as possible by anticipating and modelling for a response to the latest DFE guidance or prime ministerial announcement.

In my opinion and taking into account feedback via social media, staff well-being audit as well as responses from the 1-1 conversations that we have successfully provided that stability and certainty.

The staff well-being audit showed that the overwhelming majority of staff feel very well supported by their line managers. Most are working on average 7 hours a day online with marking additionally. Wellbeing checks are being made regularly. Those students who have struggled to access or return work are highlighted and contacted by their pastoral leaders.

Staff have been very supportive with around 50 volunteering to be on a rota to keep the school open every day since lockdown including Easter.

Staff and student morale has been buoyed by motivational videos involving a wide range of staff but also students showcasing their musical talents. McAuley stars continue to be awarded to great effect – Y10 taking an early lead in receiving them.

We have stuck to our strategy for Recovery which was shared with staff before half term and took as an inspiration a think

piece, which is now widely referred to, entitled 'Recovery Curriculum – loss and life for our children and schools post pandemic.'

There are five levers behind this recovery curriculum – 1 Relationships, These will need to be restored, confidence re-built 2. Community, listen to how learning has taken place in the home/family and learn from that. 3. Transparent Curriculum, show how we are addressing gaps in missed learning 4. Metacognition, listen to how students have learnt differently or not and 5. Space to rediscover self.- provide extra support for those most in need and most disadvantaged by this.

These principles have underpinned our organisation of 1-1 recovery conversations which has focussed on three elements – a well-being check based upon a student self-reflection, a progress check, quality and amount of work submitted with reference to work which is worthy of praise and then sharing the big picture of learning – the plan over the next 5 weeks.

Feedback has been really positive. We had 220 requests for conversations. That's an 82% response rate. 101, 46% were actual face to face conversations all conducted by SLT. 74, 34% were by phone and 20% by zoom – mostly conducted by Y10 tutors; all three methods backed by Safeguarding focussed risk assessments.

What have we learnt from these that we need to address?

Emerging and consistent issues raised as a result of the 1-1 conversations which have taken place so far.

1. Parents and children are very keen to be back in school.
2. They have concerns about what next year will hold - exams, curriculum starting points
3. They want to see more videos led by teachers.
4. There were some concerns about sent work not being acknowledged.
5. They do understand the constraints and have concerns about social distancing and handwashing facilities.

SOME KEY MESSAGES

Please remember that we are very keen to get students in but in a measured way. Current guidance from DFE is that for Y10 and Y12 the predominant method of learning will be remote and face to face experiences will be to supplement that. Numbers are restricted to 25% on any one day, however, to date around 65 Y12 and 120 Y10 students will be coming in to school. This is much, much lower than the 1-1 Recovery Conversations.

Please be aware that we always hear announcements from the Department for Education at the same time as you. We are at the whim of DFE and OFQUAL re exams 2021 but we do know that this year staff had to take into account a range of evidence in accurately assessing where children were/are. Y10 students place themselves in stronger positions by fully engaging in remote learning. For this reason Curriculum teams have been working on the Big picture of Learning for every year group. These can be found on the extended learning section of the website and then under remote learning summer 2020. This is to ensure that when we return all students will be at the same starting point.

Please note that although the Secretary of state announced all students will be back from September they have promised 'further information and guidance next week'.

Whatever happens in September - remote learning is here to stay therefore the way we produce it will evolve too.

Please continue to support Home learning and let us know if you have any difficulties.

The big picture is on the website for Y7, 8 and 9 too. Every student will get an end of year report and start of the year arrangements booklet – issued in the last week when we know what the plan is!

Please be aware that staff are not on holiday they are all working very hard to support your children. We have undertaken a staff availability audit, Risk assessments, Y10/12 parental survey, Y10/Y12 student survey, the big picture of learning, progress reports for Y10/12. Governors have met three times in various committees.

A lot of extra work to plan for the week commencing 29/6 – the anticipated start of the face to face teaching. These have included Risk assessments finalised, timetables and rooming determined, one way systems established and signage sourced, rooms cleared and cleaned, parents/students informed, bus routes established and training for key staff **Please be patient.** We are working on a number of scenarios for September. Experience thus far tells me that we will plan and then have to react to some late announcement or throwaway comment from DFE and OFSTED. **Please know that we are working on other things too.** There are other things that we have been planning for; Transition for Y6, Tutor teams allocated, looking at the practicalities of the current school uniform and plans moving forward.

Recruitment has successfully taken place and we are fully staffed from September.

A significant number fast moving decisions have had to be made to respond to this but especially very early on the demands from DFE, LA and diocese were significant mostly in requests for duplication of information, constant updating of guidance, pressure from unions, promises made publicly but significant failures in reality passed on to our new MP but with little effect. Free School Meal voucher challenges, delays and bureaucracy in sourcing computers for 'disadvantaged' Y10 students, delays in being able to receive requested and ordered ppe and signage.

Please continue to support us in supporting your child. Your positive messages have a real impact particularly those who contacted us very recently. I have passed on your comments to staff.

In all this I wish to put on record the hard work and dedication of the McAuley Senior Leadership Team and the admin. team who support us in particular, as well as the challenge and support of the Governors of the school.

Please do let us know what we can do better but never doubt our professionalism.

Please hold us to account by contacting us first so that we have the opportunity to address your concern directly. Please avoid using social media to express your concern.

And finally whenever we ask 'please' this should always be followed by 'thank you'

God Bless and keep safe.
John Rooney