

Lockdown learnings from Parsons Green Prep

Tim Cannell is a retired headmaster, ISI inspector and a member of Parsons Green Prep's advisory board.

The pace of change has been dramatic for schools, with many teachers having to upskill overnight in order to continue to offer our children the education and support they deserve.

How can teachers guide, support and teach their pupils remotely while ensuring that their pupils are both safe and supported emotionally?

The independent sector schools have in many cases been able to teach a full or partial curriculum face-to-face online. Teachers have had to take on new ways of planning, adjusting to a lack of resources that may be at home, interacting with pupils, as well as offering the vital socialisation of the pupils in their class that is a key part of life in school – a main reason why remote learning will not replace children from physically attending school.

There are further unseen consequences to come. Children returning to school in a time when social distancing is in place may find it confusing, not least for the youngest pupils. It is not returning to what they knew before but a third way of learning within a few months. This is just one of the current challenges for schools and teachers.

School leaders have had to be proactive, adapt and plan for a new way of learning. Amongst all the practical issues to oversee, the three key areas that I believe are crucial for leaders of schools to have in place and monitor are: safeguarding, promoting wellbeing and monitoring of pupil outcomes.

Safeguarding children

There are many vulnerable children that schools care for and it is imperative that schools work with the local authorities to ensure clear policies are in place and enacted upon.

Promoting pupil wellbeing

Wellbeing results from a complex range of approaches from physical exercise, offering opportunities for pupils to discuss their feelings as well as exploring yoga, meditation and more,



allowing children to have time to be quiet and just to be.

Monitoring both the teaching and the learning

Leaders need to be able to support their staff as they learn new skills, allow time to share ideas and to use technology effectively and in an exciting way. Likewise, do they know how well pupils are learning? Is the teaching supporting children with SEND and challenging the higher ability pupils equally? As some children start to return in June, others not until September, do they know where each child is on their learning journey?

All is not doom and gloom and many of the skills that are often referred to as the soft skills are coming to the fore, such as resilience and perseverance as well as Carol Dweck's idea of developing a growth mindset that allows for us to get things wrong and to strive for improvement.

Likewise, for the best schools as we move forward, teachers will embrace technology more and have a greater understanding of how it may be used to enhance and enrich the learning of all our pupils in the future.

Parsons Green Prep School 1 Fulham Park Road, London, SW6 4LJ
www.parsonsgreenprep.co.uk