

Heathlands School Recovery Plan.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and two national lockdown periods created disruption to pupils' learning. The first lockdown period commenced on 23rd March 2020 and this included (on government instruction) closure of the school until 1st June, except to provide child care for vulnerable pupils and the pupils of key worker parents.

The immediate concern was to ensure that learning could continue. Fortunately, teaching staff and students were already familiar with online learning systems such as Google classroom and Edulink, to record and return home learning and to provide lesson resource material for revision or cover lessons for courses and sickness absence. However, as many students at Heathlands require support with the language in learning, it was crucial to be able to provide face to face learning, through sign language; Zoom was used as the main form of continuing lessons. In the first lockdown period a timetable was drawn up to ensure core subjects of English, Maths took place at least four times a week and other lessons such as Science and Humanities at least three times each week.

For safeguarding purposes, parents and students were provided with a revised timetable and secure link and password. A second member of staff was timetabled to be present in each scheduled zoom lesson.

Where a child did not have access to a device to support online home learning, school equipment was loaned and for 9 students, additional laptops were obtained via the government scheme to support disadvantaged pupils.

In order to ensure that the school site could remain open e.g. for students identified as being 'vulnerable' and for students with parents who were key workers, the Co-Headteachers led the SLT in creating a Covid Risk Assessment Plan. This took account of key aspects such as social distancing, enhanced cleaning schedules and limiting numbers on site.

Due to the success of this plan with clear guidance to staff and pupils, it was deemed safe to open the school to all pupils, on a week-on-week off basis, from 8th June 2020. As the half-term progressed more parents decided to send their children back to school. 55% of students returned to school for all or part of the final half term of the Summer 2020 term. Of the 45% of students who did not return to school, 46% were either clinically vulnerable or advised to self-isolate. It was inevitable that some parents would opt to keep students at home, especially those who were clinically vulnerable. For these students remote learning continued throughout, until the end of the Summer term 2020. A staff rota was compiled to make daily contact and keep an internal log of progress and issues on the school network.

In order to maintain pastoral support, assemblies continued on zoom throughout the school closure and pastoral support was provided to all form groups via zoom contact with form tutors. For some students enhanced support and contact was facilitated by a rota of support staff and staff who were shielding and a record kept informing form tutors of issues discussed.

Heathlands received £26,400 through Government provision of 'Covid Catch Up' funding for schools.

At Heathlands, students require staff fluent in sign language in order to access the Curriculum, which was not available through the National Tutoring Programme. Secondary and Primary departments were in separate 'bubbles' therefore the decision was taken to create two specific 'Covid catch up' posts; we were fortunate to appoint two experienced staff both fluent in sign language.

- A trainee teacher with British Sign Language level 6 to work with students in the Secondary department.

An existing part time teacher, (native sign language user), who was able to work one additional day each week

There have been some positive outcomes of the enforced changes due to Covid. For example, it was necessary to hold online parent consultation meetings and also EHCP review meetings. Given that Heathlands is a regional school for deaf children, many of the parents live a long distance away, some hundreds of miles away. The use of Zoom for meetings for parents is expected to continue even after all restrictions are lifted. This has also been an efficient means of contact for staff briefings and reduced travel time and time out of school for training or meetings e.g. senior teachers forums for schools for the deaf based all over the UK now meet online.