Remote Learning across The Rodillian Multi-Academy Trust
January Update 2021

We are pleased to feedback that we are now delivering 100% of lessons live following a normal school day and timetable, except for core PE. This significantly exceeds the DfE's minimum expectations.

Since the original lockdown in March 2020, the Trust has invested a huge amount of resource into professional development and ICT infrastructure to achieve this level of quality live learning. This has meant that despite the short notice of the recent lockdown, we have been able to operate in this way as of the 8th January.

Engagement has been very high across the RMAT academies with the following number of students accessing live remote learning since the recent lockdown began:

- Rodillian – 1495 students
- BBG – 950 students
- Brayton – 561 students
- Featherstone – 332 students

These numbers mean that well above 90% of students across the Trust have accessed live learning in the first week.

The RMAT team audited home access to remote resources over the Autumn term, enabling us to support students having to isolate during that term. The new situation of full lockdown has prompted us to seek further information from families in order to understand any issues that students have accessing our remote learning content. The context has now changed significantly from self-isolation incidents to full lockdown, resulting in many families where both parents and children may all be working from home. For each individual to have a suitable device for work and learning alongside adequate bandwidth delivering broadband is a significant challenge.

To facilitate suitable student access, we have purchased a number of devices as a Trust and have gratefully received a significant number of devices as part of the DfE Laptops for Students programme. The DfE has so far provided 199 devices to the Trust in batches, and there are another 131 devices on order. We have also purchased 80 devices so far to supplement the DfE scheme. 9 devices were also very kindly donated by Interserve, the buildings management company at Rodillian Academy. This means that we will have a resource of 419 devices but will add to this as necessary.

It is our aim to ensure that our remote learning content is as user friendly, accessible and secure as possible. In order to achieve this, we are setting up all the devices we send out with full monitoring and filtering along with similar software and files that they would access on internal networks within the academy they would normally attend. This does take us longer to setup devices but will ensure a better and safer experience for our students.

The last few batches of laptops received from the DfE have lacked certain networking capabilities which has delayed the speed at which we can build and deploy these devices. This has been raised with the DfE. However, we still have devices built and ready for deployment at all our academies and are adding devices to this pool every day.

We also have 4G/WiFi dongles available to support families who do not have suitable broadband or mobile data access. In addition we are participating in a national scheme to increase users' personal mobile data allowances to facilitate remote learning where needed.

To support the flexible use of existing devices in the home we have suggested that any students with a modern Xbox or PlayStation console can access their remote lessons live on screen via these devices. We are now assessing the value of providing keyboards to support enhanced student interaction with their learning when participating in lessons via consoles.

The ICT team would like to thank parents for their support and patience as we respond to the multiple challenges of trying to both analyse and find cost-effective solutions to our current situation. We congratulate staff for their can-do attitude to increasing their skills in delivering remote lessons, proving that teachers are learners too!

Mark Newman
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The Rodillian Multi Academy Trust