SAFETY

SAFETY will be paramount, both emotional and physical. How do we re-establish a sense of safety for this new normal so that students are able to learn and all are able to thrive? How do we help those who may have felt unsafe whilst they've been away from school, feel safe again?

What is safety?

Safety is a state or a place where you are not in danger or at risk of harm.

Why is safety important now?

Chidlren and staff will have had their sense of safety – physical and emotional – threatened in different ways by the pandemic:

■ **Physical safety:** Young people and staff may be concerned about whether it is safe to be in school yet, how the physical distancing measures will be met, whether to wear masks or not, what to do about sanitation, coughing and sneezing.

■ **Emotional safety:** Fear and anxiety may be prevalent. Fear of catching a potentially deadly virus, fear of larger groups, fear for their parents and wider family. Ongoing physical distancing requirements may increase anxiety and impact on people's ability to engage with one another and with teaching and learning.

Once it has been deemed safe to re-open schools, getting back to normal – albeit a new normal – in the routines and the rhythm of school life will help to restore a sense of safety. People's emotional and physical safety will be restored through having the opportunity to **recognise** and share their experiences at a safe distance, alongside experiencing success in the course of the school day.

How can we restore physical and emotional safety at this time?

Our need for safety can be addressed by **recognising** this need in ourselves, articulating it to others, listening to others with **empathy** and then discussing how we can all behave so that our collective need for safety can be addressed. If we do not deal with the difficult questions and feelings, they may present 'underground' through bullying behaviours, or social isolation of individuals through misinformation and/or misunderstanding.

In addition, the emotional turbulence may lead to difficulties in learning and attention in different parts of the school day.

With the Senior Leadership Team and with the staff group:

■ What changes do we need to make to classroom layout? What changes can we make to ensure safer movement around the school?

■ How can we develop a time and space to engage with young people so they can share their concerns and how do we record and act on the concerns we hear?

■ How do we provide a time and space to engage with staff so they can share their concerns and feedback on the changes? What opportunities are there for supervision?

■ How and when do we communicate changes? To staff, students, parents, the community.

■ How do we ensure we get the balance right? Making sure we don't over-protect?

■ What data are we using to identify those in most need? How will we know if the changes are working? Where are we getting the data from? Parents, agencies, students, staff?

■ How will we re-establish routines in a way that keeps people both physically and emotionally safe?

With children:

■ What do you need to help you feel safe physically and emotionally?

■ What can you do to help yourself?

■ What can you do to help others in the school community?

■ How can learning help? How can the school environment help?

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