



Agile operations planning to keep the school safe



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For Wellingborough School, agile planning, flexible delivery and the ability to adapt quickly has been key to keeping the School community COVID safe. Despite benefiting on arrival from some excellent advance planning, it was clearly going to be a very different first year. So, what has had to change? What has been completely new and what have we learned?

What had to change?

Bubble Integrity for each year group quickly became key to minimising transmission. As well as encouraging students to keep left in transit and new one-way systems to reduce transmission risk, simple measures such as coloured year group lanyards have enabled staff to reinforce bubble integrity.

Classroom seating plans and meticulous register keeping, has allowed us to minimise the numbers of close contacts requiring to self-isolate at home, following a positive test.

In every school, lunch provision drives timetables, duty rotas and much more. By erecting a huge marquee on the tennis courts, Wellingborough School was able to double our dining capacity, to achieve the social distancing required and still maintain bubble integrity. The catering team have been remarkable, adapting to a non-contact lunch delivery whilst still providing a three-course offering each day.

Even the 'exam-style' seating now seems routine, although it remains humbling to see little people in Reception, taking it in their stride. Additionally, adapting the Grab and Go Breakfast and Tuck Shop has ensured critical weekly access to chocolate and waffles, whilst playground equipment rotas in the Prep School have ensured no one misses out.

Wellingborough School's excellent pastoral system is organised vertically, with older students guiding younger pupils. But COVID and year group bubbles required the school to reorganise completely, with each year group provided with a dedicated space. Tied to this, pastoral staff have

rapidly transitioned to new structures, so they can continue providing essential pastoral support to students.

Staff now switch routinely from being unmasked in their designated teaching zones, (situated two metres from students), to wearing masks when supporting students individually. Fortunately, as summer arrives, the copious amounts of ventilation required in classrooms, no longer demands the same steely resolve as chillier classrooms did in December. Exams have continued, not least to support the evidence required for Teacher Assessed Grades. The Sports Department have adapted PE and Games lessons to allow the Sports Hall to become an exam centre and with effective social distancing in place, students have not had to wear masks in their all-important exams. Be it keeping marquees warm in December, or the rapid deep clean of classrooms following a suspected COVID case or the enhanced cleaning regimes - the Estates Housekeeping teams have simply been amazing in keeping us COVID safe.

What has been completely new?

Implementing self-isolation rules has been key. Simple systems so parents can notify the school promptly of a positive COVID case have allowed the school to respond rapidly. By tracing student interactions to identify potential close contacts and then contacting parents, sometimes even overnight, to ask that children self-isolate at home, the School has been able to respond quickly to reduce transmission risk. The support of our parents and students has been outstanding, especially as every student self-isolation brings second-order consequences for families.

Without doubt, organising mass testing on site presented a significant challenge. How to test over 600 students and 200 staff safely and efficiently, three times, over a period of two weeks,

without impacting on teaching. Suffice it to say it was remarkable team effort, the Estates team transforming our chapel into a testing centre, the Medical and Administration teams running an incredibly effective testing system, with a raft of additional staff supporting the testing effort.

What was most notable was the time staff spent undertaking additional roles to help out; training staff, briefing and guiding students, processing tests, recording results and so much more. Parents were once again fundamental to success, by kindly bringing students into school for Test 1 before the official return, we were able to maximise student return on March 8.

So what have we learned?

The devil is still in the detail, either in understanding official guidance or working through plans to cover second-order effects. Stay flexible - every plan this year has been amended and adjusted countless times to arrive at the best solution. Be collaborative – COVID has shown that no one has all the answers, everyone can add value in arriving at a plan that the whole team has confidence in. And lastly, try to maintain clear and open communications with key stakeholders - no one expects all the answers, but they do like to know 'Why?' whenever possible.

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