



24 November 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Re: SEND Virtual Coffee Evening

I wanted to start by conveying my thanks to the parents and carers who were able to join us for our first SEND coffee evening. Whilst this one was virtual, we fully intend to offer all SEND parents the opportunity to join us face-to-face in the future.

Later in this letter I will reflect on some of the key questions we were asked during the session as well as what is being done in response to the topics raised. Before I do, it is important that I explain the late cancellation of the original meeting.

As many of you may be aware, Ms Haddow, our SENDCo at the start of the year is no longer working with the Trust. In the short period Ms Haddow was working with us she developed strong relationships with a number of families and consequently, I understand there may be concerns following her departure. We would like to reassure families that Guilsborough Academy Trust is in a strong position. Mrs Taylor is a qualified SENDCo and has been with the Trust for 14 years. She understands the challenges which students with SEND face and is determined to support each of them to make sure they make excellent progress. To give you a flavour of the meeting, I have included, below, part of the transcript from the meeting.

Mrs T Taylor

"I'm Tina Taylor, I am the SENDCo at Guilsborough. I have been at Guilsborough for 14 years this coming January and so I know the school and the students very well. I also have my own children, who are currently at primary school, so I also understand a parents view.

We produce a student passport for every child with SEND and this is shared with the teaching staff. This shares with them the best strategies that we can put in place for your child. We have high expectations of our provision for students with SEND and quality first teaching from the classroom teacher will support your child. We run intervention groups as well and these offer small group literacy and numeracy support. We also have social, emotional and mental health support.

We're currently running various programmes which vary depending on the need. For example, we have a dyslexia program. We have school counsellors to help students, we have students that are using laptops more and therefore running touch-typing interventions. Obviously, we're looking at access arrangements for students that are taking examinations this year and we're also looking at supporting students moving on to higher education."

Following Mrs Taylor, Mr Haddon spoke about the work we have done to ensure the curriculum is accessible for all our students...

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"I look after the curriculum aspect so obviously one of the things that we're really, really focused on this year is how our curriculum is adapted to suit the needs of our SEND students. We appreciate that no two students are the same, very individual needs with individual targeted intervention has been introduced this year as an electronic system. We started it last year with Go4Schools.

We're going to be increasing the information that we share via that online platform, so it will include assessments that are completed in lessons, so you'll be able to see how your children are doing in their individual class assessments. We are also going to be sharing some of our attitude to learning grades.

Student Passports, previously mentioned, are actually on that online system already, and all of our staff have access to those, so as Mr. Frazer mentioned at the start, there are key aspects really of the SEND Code of Practice that empower teachers to be able to put the correct support in place for the students, and the key aspect of that really is the student passport. We're also regularly reviewing and inspecting our curriculum, so part of our role as Senior Leaders is to look at the curriculum to see how it's best suited to our students. We've conducted already a number of curriculum reviews, including one on the English department, the Maths Department, Science Department etc and every single one of those reviews we have focused specifically on some SEND students and their experiences in lessons so we've been able to feedback to curriculum areas what's worked for those specific students, and actually, in some cases what hasn't worked.

We did replace one of our options with additional English and Maths support for SEND students who require it which allows the students to focus on fewer GCSE subjects. One fewer GCSE subject will support their preparations for English and Maths because we appreciate that their access to literacy and numeracy is so important, and actually feeds into their ability to access so many other subjects. That's something that we will continue to do.

A key aspect of this evening is that we start to open those channels of communication and we are keen to learn what works, from the students and from parents. This will support us as we constantly review our curriculum."

Questions and Answers

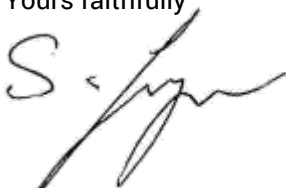
The main part of the meeting was given over to a question-and-answer session. A number of these have been included below:

Parent Questions	Response
When are the SEND progress checks completed by the team?	We will do one in the first term up to Christmas, one in the term up to Easter, and one in the summer term. There won't be a specific date because each Key Worker has a number of students to do so the dates will vary, with these being booked with each student. Once these dates are booked, we will let you know.
Please may we know when the school assessments are and when we will know the results of the assessments?	Assessment periods are timetabled and scheduled. The whole school assessment periods will be on the calendar which will be available on the new website. We will ensure the results dates are available. Results will be made available through Go4Schools.
Has the Academy done any Dyslexia training for staff?	We have completed dyslexia training with staff already this year. However, training is ongoing and we have further whole school training organised. We recognise that dyslexia is one of our areas of greatest need and therefore we do a lot of work focusing on that with our staff. The British Dyslexia Association undertook the staff training which was a really wonderful session. The staff were really

	positive about feeling much more empowered to use the strategies discussed.
What training have teachers had in supporting students with Autism?	Target Autism presented to the staff on the challenges that autistic children have and this was enlightening for staff. Teachers had the experience of what it feels like for an autistic child to cope in a lesson. Further training on supportive strategies is planned.
My child is getting too much Homework? What can I do to support them?	Don't make them do hours on one piece of homework. Set a limit and then contact the teacher and say this is what they have done. We've attempted it or we couldn't attempt it so that the teachers are aware that they're struggling. If homework across a number of subjects is the issue, please contact the tutor who will be best placed to support with this.
When will access arrangements be confirmed?	These are still being assessed and they will be confirmed in January.

We are keen to develop close relationships which has the student at the centre. Further SEND meetings will be arranged after Christmas and we look forward to meeting those who were unable to join us for the first meeting.

Yours faithfully



Mr S Frazer
Principal