

School context:



Churchill Academy and Sixth Form is a comprehensive school for 11–18 year olds in North Somerset. The school has 1,330 students in Key Stages 3 and 4, 14% of whom are eligible for pupil premium funding. We also have 287 students enrolled in the Sixth Form.

1 What problem were you looking to solve?



We sought to improve communication with families of students required to self-isolate due to Covid-19, guided by the recommendations made in the EEF's 'Working with Parents to Support Children's Learning' guidance report. Specifically, we wanted to ensure that our communications were targeted, that they encouraged a positive dialogue about learning, and provided practical strategies for structuring learning at home.

Following the first 'bubble' of students (30 Year 7 students) being sent home for a two-week period in September 2020, we conducted a critical review of our correspondence with parents and carers about our isolation protocols.

2 What were the anticipated barriers/challenges?



This process involved liaising directly with parents, asking their feedback about the isolation letter that they had received. All parents from this Year 7 'bubble' were contacted via email to gain their feedback regarding the effectiveness of the letter, and to provide an opportunity for any concerns to be raised.

The main barrier to the review was gaining feedback from all families in the isolating bubble. After the initial email was sent, follow-up phone calls were made to those who did not respond, as we were keen to ensure that the feedback we acquired was representative of the full parental demographic.

3 What did you do?



The feedback from parents identified both valuable elements of the current letter and specific areas for improvement. Parents' responses suggested that the online learning guidance was clear, but further information about structuring the home-learning day would be helpful. Parents also proposed that isolating students would benefit from more regular positive feedback.

As a result, we were able to update the letter to include a home-learning schedule, responding directly to the needs of isolating families. In addition, staff began giving reward points to students who completed class work. For 'bubbles' who isolated subsequently, this was highlighted to parents in their isolation letter.

Additionally, each family received a weekly communication from their tutor, with vulnerable student groups receiving additional targeted correspondence from a middle leader. This regular contact helped to provide a transparent communication pathway for isolating families.

4 How do you monitor/evaluate that the intervention is working?

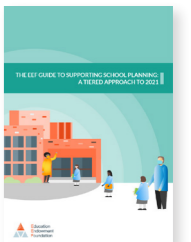


Feedback from parents was recorded, collated and consistently reviewed to assess the effectiveness of the updates to the isolation letter. Thorough records were recorded centrally on the schools data management system by Tutors and Middle Leaders after each communication with isolating students and their families. Their feedback was analysed by Heads of House and Heads of Faculty who collated and categorised any concerns raised according to theme. This was subsequently reviewed at our fortnightly Middle Leaders Meetings. Following the amendments made to this process, feedback has been consistently positive, suggesting a successful progression from the initial protocol.

Additional:

Suggested reading:

- *Working with Parents to Support Children's Learning* guidance report: eef.li/supporting-parents/
- *Communicating Effectively with Families: Guide for Schools:* eef.li/covid-cefg/
- *Other Covid-19 resources for parents:* eef.li/school-closures/
- *The EEF Guide to Supporting School Planning— A Tiered Approach to 2021* eef.li/school-planning/



Reflection questions



- How effective are your ongoing communications with families and how do you know?
- How targeted and specialised are your ongoing communications and how can you best utilise funding to enhance them further? e.g. effective technology to support remote communications.