

## Headteacher's Blog - 20<sup>th</sup> November "Improvise, adapt and overcome!"

Last Friday I led our annual Remembrance service from the School Hall in front of the commemorative plaque of our Old Boys. It was different from the normal occasion, where we would have hundreds of staff and students, but in some ways the empty space in front of me was a poignant reminder of what we are all going through. All the students watched the service in their classrooms, with many teachers commenting on the impeccable behaviour of the students and the curiosity shown by some of those in the younger year groups. If you wish to watch the short service you can find it on You Tube if you search Coleshill School Remembrance Service.

The phrase 'Improvise, adapt and overcome' is an unofficial military term, made famous by Clint Eastwood in the film 'Heartbreak Ridge'. We hear the battle against COVID 19 likened to a war in the media and whilst I am in no way describing what we are facing in school in these terms, I am in awe and admiration of how both staff and students have adapted to our ever changing situation, since returning from the half term break.

Over the last two weeks we, like two thirds of secondary schools nationally, have seen an increase in cases and in turn have had to ask a greater number of children to self-isolate. This presents challenges for ensuring that students can continue to learn. I know that there will be issues remaining in our remote learning procedures, but I am proud of what students and staff have achieved so far.

Going on a learning walk around lessons this week looked very different now from how it would normally, but it is a testament to how staff and students have adapted to overcome the challenges of our current situation. In most classrooms I saw teachers doing as they always do, delivering high quality lessons to the students, all be it with depleted numbers. In some classrooms I saw a teacher, alone with their laptop, teaching the Year 11 students who are all at home, through TEAMS. In other classrooms I watched as teachers taught their classes from home, their face projected on the screen, with a cover teacher supporting students in the classroom. We even have some teachers who are teaching the class in front of them in school, whilst students who are self-isolating dial into the lesson via TEAMS. I tried this yesterday and it worked quite well, although we did have a very chatty dog in the lesson too!



Teachers this week have reported very good attendance and behaviour in online lessons. Students who are either participating in live lessons, or dialling into lessons in school, are showing good engagement; answering questions and completing activities with the rest of the class. I have been

incredibly impressed with the patience and respectfulness of students who are in school but being taught by their teacher at home. There are sometimes technical hitches and delays but we believe having their own teacher teaching them, when possible, is the best way of students learning.

So, we have come a long way since the Prime Minister first told us all to stay at home in March. As a school leader it feels like we have made more progress in the use of online learning and video conferencing in seven months than the last ten years. School staff are improvising and adapting all the time. Sometimes this can be challenging I know, but rest assured we are doing our very best to ensure that our remote learning is as good for all the students, whether they are at home individually or alongside their whole year group. For those families where the technology is a barrier we are working with them to provide support, with a limited number of devices available for those most in need.

If you are unsure of what we are doing for your child in terms of remote learning I refer you to my letter from Monday 16<sup>th</sup> November

[https://www.thecoleshillschool.org/uploads/PDF/LettersParents/2020-2021/2020.11.16-Testing\\_Remote\\_Learning\\_-\\_Covid-19.pdf](https://www.thecoleshillschool.org/uploads/PDF/LettersParents/2020-2021/2020.11.16-Testing_Remote_Learning_-_Covid-19.pdf)

I hope you have a good weekend.

Stay safe

Ian Smith-Childs

Headteacher