



South Dartmoor Community College

Executive Head teacher | Mrs J Veal

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05 October 2023

Dear Parent / Carer

RE: TEACHER ABSENCE PROTOCOL

Up until this last week, teacher absence has been much better than last year and certainly better than in previous years as we came out of the pandemic. However, this last week we have had a spike in illness in students and staff and therefore we are writing to explain our systems for teacher absence.

We all know how important it is to have a high-quality curriculum, delivered well, by someone who has excellent relationships with students and who knows the school. We always strive to ensure that students have the very best learning experiences and having a consistent teacher, who is a subject specialist delivering the curriculum, is a vital part of that. We have worked hard at SDCC to ensure all classes are taught by subject specialists. However, we are human and absences, planned or otherwise, do happen. Historically this has been 'covered' by, more often than not, non-specialist, unfamiliar adults coming into school, who, despite good intentions, are not as invested in the students and the school as our staff are. This can cause all manner of untold problems not least with behaviour (sometimes with students who have done absolutely nothing wrong who then become stressed and upset), and regularly the resulting work delivered is not of a good standard and takes more clearing up upon the member of staff's return. Having recognised this, we have implemented a new cover system to support students and staff in the event of a teacher absence.

We now have two dedicated IT suites equipped with individual desk top PCs, each with headphones to enable students to access the bespoke online SDCC 'Curriculum Map'. This is an interactive resource that all students access through ClassCharts. They click on their year group, and the term we are in, and then on the subject that they are missing, and they immediately have access to high quality lessons/resources which directly align to, and support with, the curriculum that they are studying. In addition to this, students have access to our Super Curriculum, which is a series of resources designed to broaden students' knowledge and experience. These resources provide students with links to 'something to read, something to watch, something to listen to and something to do'. As with the Curriculum Resource Map, Curriculum leaders invest a significant amount of time in producing the Super Curriculum and it is updated monthly. The Super Curriculum is available to everyone, cover lesson or not, through the website. Finally students can also, once they have completed the online learning for that lesson, should they have time, complete any outstanding homework. Whilst up to this point students have had the choice as to which of these three activities they want to complete, we have listened to feedback, and going forward we will be guiding students first to the Curriculum Resource Map, then if completed to the Super Curriculum and then finally to their homework.

The expectations in the cover room are consistent with those in all other lessons and students receive praise in recognition of good work. Conversely the systems remain in place to maintain a positive, constructive learning environment by removing those who are disrupting the learning of others. What this new cover system ensures is that students continue to learn in a safe and calm, purposeful environment, with staff who know the school and the students.

Having trialled this new system since the start of term, we are delighted with the system and the provision for students; the quality of provision in the event of teacher absence has significantly improved. The Senior staff of the school are regularly in the room, supporting students, and students report that it is generally much better than having a supply teacher teach them. If you have any further questions or feedback, please do not hesitate to get in contact.

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Best wishes



Mrs E Gallagher
Deputy Headteacher

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