

### Submission from:

**Thomas Keaney, CEO and Schools Proprietor TCES Group, London**

## Context

The Complete Education Solution (TCES) is a family-owned group of Good and Outstanding schools and services for pupils aged 7 to 19 with an Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) and/or Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. The majority of our places are funded by Local Authorities. We are committed to achieving the best outcome for each pupil and their family through access to outstanding education and family support, including a complete transition into full-time schooling.

We provide a sector-leading therapeutic education and pupil leadership curriculum across our two day schools (Newham and East Acton), rated by Ofsted as Good and Outstanding respectively, as well as our TCES Create Learning, which works with more complex students who need intensive support as part of our Step Down Model. In 2020 we launched TCES Home Learning to provide a full curriculum for children who are unable to physically attend school for a variety of reasons, including severe anxiety and school phobia.

On joining us, pupils will have already - on average - experienced three permanent exclusions, been out of full-time education for up to 18 months and are recognised to be substantially at risk of being unemployed, developing severe mental health problems and involvement with the criminal justice system later in life. Between three and five years after leaving a TCES school or service, ninety per cent of our students are in education, training or employment, going on to study at college and university and pursuing careers in social care, retail and theatre amongst others.

Our authentic commitment to inclusion means that in our 20-year history working with over 3,000 children and young people we have never permanently excluded a single child. Since 2019 our fixed term exclusions have also been reduced to zero. Via our Alumni Mentor Scheme we're working to employ our neuro-diverse students within our schools and services.

## Lockdown background

While all our students have been entitled to come into school during lockdown many have stayed at home for a variety of reasons linked to their SEND, family circumstance and, not least, feeling extremely nervous about travelling into school in the midst of a pandemic.

We launched our distance learning via a phased approach consisting of:

- Paper packs and reading books posted out by tutors
- Telephone support
- Establishing IT needs
- Providing equipment to students where needed (Chrome Book and Dongle)

We then further developed it to include a combination of hard copy resources and virtual learning through Microsoft Teams with pupils following a daily timetable including PE and Wellbeing, English, Mathematics, Creative Arts, and the Independence Skills Challenge (as part of the LIFE Programme).

We also delivered bespoke distance therapy. We signposted to Oak Academy's SEND curriculum and BBC Bitesize. We also adapted our extra-curricular offer to ensure children had lots of opportunities to be creative, as well as keep busy, during lockdown. This culminated in our [Art of The Possible virtual art exhibition](#).

The nature of our cohort means we wanted to check in regularly with students and their families. We introduced at least daily education and welfare calls, which gave us an opportunity to check in on all aspects of pupils' lives – including how they were coping with distance learning. The list of questions we asked students is shown below:

- How are you today?
- What have you been working on?
- What have your successes been?
- What do you need support with?
- What are your next steps?
- Can you please read me your journal entry from yesterday?
- What will you write about today?
- Do you have any questions for me?

We used weekly celebration emails to parents to showcase the distance learning that was taking place.

Parents were surveyed a month after we launched our distance learning offer in April, and again in July. This gave us good insights into what works for our pupils' specific learning and therapeutic needs. Specific adaptations we made based on feedback from the first survey included increasing the amount of live lessons so students had at least one a day.

The success of our distance learning model has led us to launch our new Home Learning service, offering a school experience for children whose level of school anxiety means that they need to learn at home for a period.

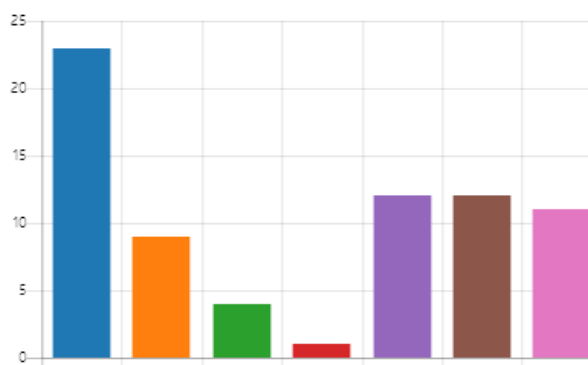
## Parents survey on distance learning

Ninety-five per cent of families said they were satisfied, or very satisfied with the distance learning package, and 81% said their children were fully or partially engaged. We asked parents to tell us what their children enjoyed most, and also what they least enjoyed. Results are shown in these two charts.

11. Which aspects does your child most enjoy? (Please tick all that apply)

[More Details](#)

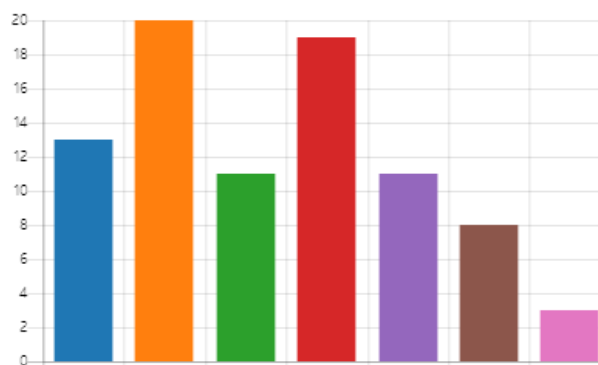
● Maths	23
● English	9
● D.E.A.R	4
● Journal	1
● Creative Arts Project	12
● PE: Health, Fitness and Wellbei...	12
● Other	11



12. Which aspects does your child least enjoy? (Please tick all that apply)

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● Maths	13
● English	20
● D.E.A.R	11
● Journal	19
● Creative Arts Project	11
● PE: Health, Fitness and Wellbei...	8
● Other	3



We concluded that the Maths was preferred as it was task based and easier to do online, without too much teacher support. Following this survey, we broke the English work into smaller bite-sized tasks and this improved enjoyment and engagement somewhat.

Asked to say if the level of teaching provided via distance learning was adequate, 88% of parents agreed that it was. The majority of parents said the level of work provided was appropriate.

In addition to their academic content, 55% of our students received online therapy during lockdown (a mix of drama, occupational and speech and language therapy). We found that some students who had previously refused to engage in therapy in a 'live' face to face setting were willing to do it via screens as it felt much more within their comfort zone.

17. Is your child receiving any other intervention? For example Wellbeing calls or those from therapists, including: Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Drama Therapy and/or Art Therapy?

[More Details](#)

● Yes	24
● No	18



While our surveys showed that the vast majority of parents have access to both a computer and broadband, we wanted to understand if this meant their children wanted to work on online. The chart below shows that most would like a mixture of both online and hard copy. We concluded that those children with ASC in particular appreciate the familiarity of the hard copy as it feels more like school.

19. Does your child prefer using the hard copy pack of work or the online version?

[More Details](#)

● Hard copy	11
● Online	14
● Mixture of both	17



25. Does your child now have access to a home or school computer/laptop?

[More Details](#)

● Yes	33
● No	9



26. Does your child now have connectivity to the internet via your home broadband or a dongle?

[More Details](#)

● Yes	40
● No	2



While the Department for Education's aim is for all pupils to return to school in the autumn term, we have developed a continually available Blended Offer for use in the eventuality of a second lockdown. This will harness the positive lessons we have learnt and further embeds MS Teams into our daily school life for truly seamless and collaborative learning for the modern world.