

Questions and answers

Parent/Carer comments	School response
<p>One of your CHARACTER values is happiness – but can you really reach happiness?</p>	<p>We think it's a really important goal for students to be happy. We think that if we teach students to work hard and be kind (to themselves, those around them and their physical environment) then we maximise the chance of them being happy.</p>
<p>We're concerned about provision for children who are using crutches. It seems that that a child can be in the BIR for large parts of the day, that work is not always set and that the child works really hard in class but due to not being in class, they don't get house points.</p>	<p>We are really sympathetic to this problem. Students on crutches need to work in downstairs spaces. We are working on changes to our process that will maximise the opportunities for those on crutches to be with other students rather than in the BIR, that they always have work set, and have the same access to house points as other students. This is under review and we hope to have made changes soon after half term.</p>
<p>We are happy with the rules and discipline of the school but it would be useful to have a reminder of what the process is if a child is late etc.</p>	<p>This is a good point – thank you. We communicate the rules and consequences regularly to students but need to do that more to parents and carers. I, as Headteacher, am producing regular video casts and will shortly produce one about rules and routines – why they matter and what our consequences for breaking them are.</p>
<p>Positive feedback – brilliant that the canteen is bigger and that you have year based loos...</p>	<p>Thank you. The canteen is bigger because we've moved all the serving areas to the front, freeing up space inside. This makes the queues quite long at the beginning, but they move very fast.</p> <p>The year-based toilets are working well. We are aware that some of the toilets are becoming a bit tired and we are working on a refurbishment programme over the next 12-18 months.</p>
<p>My child has a fortnightly science lesson with a non-specialist. This is a worry for me.</p>	<p>In a reasonably large school such as Denefield there are always going to be occasions when a non-specialist teaches a lesson. However, our curriculum is carefully designed to ensure that students can make maximum progress with all teachers. For example, in science we have a major emphasis on knowledge recall, and non-specialist teachers will often lead lessons which are based around knowledge-based tests, quizzes or using software such as Educate to check students' understanding. We record how well students do in these tests and online to check they are making the progress we expect. Mr Crossley, the Head of Science, reviews the curriculum regularly with his team and will</p>

	<p>evaluate the impact on students and on their learning over the next term.</p>
<p>There appears to be a lot of online homework. I have concerns about the amount of screen time this creates. I've also seen my child using Google to find out the answers to online tests – surely this can't be a good idea?</p>	<p>There is very little screen time work while the students are in school. They are doing harder, more open-ended tasks in school where their teachers can help them. Online work, which students do at home, is great for drilling core knowledge and scores in assessments suggest this is working.</p> <p>Please do encourage students to use Google/any available reference text when they are stuck. The best way to do online quizzing is to read the question and think hard and if you can't remember or aren't sure then look it up.</p>
<p>While we like to see all the good aspects of the school and its' performance, we would also like the school to be really open and honest about anything the school is struggling with – that will help us understand the school better.</p>	<p>All schools have challenges and it is the job of school leadership to overcome them and maximise the benefits for students. The challenges in education have been well publicised, and Denefield is not immune to these. These challenges include funding, recruitment, changes in student behaviour and socialisation as a result of both Covid and the use of social media, and lower than expected attendance of some students. Like all schools Denefield works hard on students' behaviour. We have recently had a review by four Headteachers from other schools who concluded that there was little or no disruption in the vast majority of lessons – we are now working on the small minority of lessons where behaviour is not what we would expect and the small minority of students who are not meeting our behaviour expectations.</p>
<p>My son seems to be eating a lot of the same foods every day, pizza, paninis etc – Year 7. Should I be concerned about this?</p>	<p>Our catering team provide an excellent variety of daily offerings. We have a different hot meal every day and a salad bar as well as grab and go salad boxes. Many students and staff choose these either all or some of the time.</p> <p>Students tend to make better choices over time as they become more aware of what a balanced diet looks like.</p>
<p>What about the changes to the length of the school day? There was talk of having a shorter day on a Friday.</p>	<p>We did discuss the option of having longer days on a Monday to Thursday and a slightly earlier finish on Friday.</p> <p>Overall, those we surveyed were against the idea. Some parents and carers were concerned about it</p>

	<p>being darker when students left school on Mondays to Thursday or about not being able to be picked up on Fridays. Staff were concerned that the new working week would be too intense and stressful. Students were less concerned one way or the other, though many staff, students and parents/carers questioned having another change after Covid had forced so many changes on the school. Leadership is about the right decision not the popular one but if two groups are adamantly against a change then it is wise to pause and consider other options. We have now changed the internal structure of the day with the tutor period first thing and after lunch, and only one lesson in the afternoon. We have had very positive feedback about this change from staff and students.</p>
<p>Can you explain the new yellow lines that have been added around the school?</p>	<p>The yellow lines started with the queues at the canteen and they really worked in terms of getting students into the canteen efficiently and safely. We have put them in other places to clarify to students where they are and are not allowed to be at break and lunchtime. This is about keeping the whole community safe. We have restricted students so that they can no longer do laps of the school around the outside of the school buildings – sometimes that led to students running and putting themselves or others in danger. The new yellow lines have made a significant difference to how break and lunchtimes feel. The restricted zones come into force a few minutes into break or lunch time when they have already gone to their first destination for example the canteen, their outside area or their year group toilets.</p>