



Office of
Education
Standards
Cayman Islands
Government

No place like home?

A review of home
learning in Cayman
Islands Government
Schools during the
COVID-19 pandemic.

June 2020.

START





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On Friday 13th March 2020, the Honourable Julianna O’Connor-Connolly, Minister of Education, Youth, Sports, Agriculture and Lands announced the closure of all educational institutions in the Cayman Islands with effect from Monday 16th March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This was implemented in accordance with Section 13 (5) of the Education Law (2016) and on Wednesday 15th April 2020, the Honourable Minister directed the Office of Education Standards to conduct a review of home learning in government schools.

A framework for the review was developed by the Office of Education Standards.

This report is organised into three sections with the following areas of focus;

1. The strategies developed for home learning as devised by school and government leaders;
2. The arrangements for monitoring home learning as devised by school and government leaders, and;
3. A review of the quality of teaching within the home learning provision.

Inspectors from the Office of Education Standards conducted a review of provision in all 16 government schools as shown in the table on the right.

Secondary and special schools and post-16 provision (5)	Primary schools (11)
Cayman Islands Further Education Centre (CIFEC)	Creek and Spot Bay PS
Clifton Hunter HS	East End PS
John Gray HS	Edna Moyle PS
Layman Scott HS	George Town PS
The Lighthouse School	Little Cayman Education Service
	Prospect PS
	Red Bay PS
	Savannah Primary School
	Sir John A. Cumber PS
	Theoline McCoy PS
	West End PS



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Each school had devised a home learning programme for students. The Office of Education Standards review of each programme included a scrutiny of data, documentation and guidance issued by the Department of Education Services and the Ministry of Education. Inspectors reviewed timetables, teachers’ lesson plans, assessment information, monitoring information developed by school leaders and communication with parents. Schools submitted, in total, over 700 documents which included video evidence from lessons which had been delivered remotely. In addition, the Office of Education Standards analysed surveys submitted by teachers, parents and by students in Years 11 and 12 from the three secondary schools and Cayman Islands Further Education College (CIFEC). Inspectors also observed a sample of on-line lessons delivered by teachers from each school. Inspectors observed English, mathematics, science, music, physical education and social subject sessions as well as small group interventions offered to a range of students. On-line parents’ meetings and school assemblies also formed part of the review. These included both ‘live’ sessions and recorded meetings.

This home learning review was conducted at a difficult time for schools, the Department of Education and the Ministry of Education. School leaders were not afforded the luxury of time to devise policies and were often required to action decisions within very narrow timeframes.

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It is commendable that, despite the worry and stress experienced by all at the time of this pandemic, the educational welfare and well-being of students in the government schools remained a priority and students’ education continued amid this crisis. School leaders and teachers should be commended for the resilience and innovation they displayed in balancing multiple roles amidst competing demands during this global crisis.

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The purpose of this review is to recognise strengths of the home learning provision and to identify areas for improvement. At the time of the publication of this report, the aim is for all government schools to re-open at the beginning of the new academic year, currently planned for mid-August or September 2020. The recommendations included in this report apply to the current interim period prior to schools reopening but also inform future arrangements for home learning post-COVID-19.



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Although everyone involved in delivering home learning deserves recognition for the continuation of educational provision, a key finding from this review is that home learning currently serves as an imperfect substitute to school-based provision.

Important technical issues and training requirements have been identified.

Additionally, this review has highlighted some inequality in terms of access for students of both primary and secondary ages in government schools.

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An appropriate educational digital strategy is required to maximise learning for all students during this COVID-19 pandemic. Irrespective of the current crisis, a dynamic, well-resourced digital strategy is required to support all students of the Cayman Islands. In order to contribute effectively in the future as citizens of Cayman and compete in an international context, students need to learn using technology and need access to the most up-to-date resources to do so.

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2020 Timeline for the review of home learning by the Office of Education Standards

Monday 16th March

All educational institutions on the Cayman Islands were closed.

Wednesday 15th April

The Minister of Education, Youth, Sports, Agriculture and Lands directed the Office of Education Standards to conduct a review of home learning in government schools.

Monday 20th April

Plans for the home learning review were submitted by the Director of the Office of Education Standards to the Minister of Education, Chief Officer of Portfolio of the Civil Service and to the Chief Officer of the Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports, Agriculture and Lands.

Wednesday 22nd April

The framework for the review was issued to principals with the associated survey links for teaching staff, parents and students.

Friday 1st May

Documentary evidence was requested from government schools, the Ministry of Education and Department of Education Services.

Monday 4th May to Friday 15th May

Inspectors from the Office of Education Standards reviewed submitted evidence and observed a sample of on-line home learning classes.

Friday 8th May

The on-line surveys were closed.

Monday 25th May

The draft report was completed and submitted to the Minister of Education, Youth, Sports, Agriculture and Lands, the Chief Officer from the Portfolio of the Civil Service and to the Chief Officer of the Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports, Agriculture and Lands.

Friday 12th June

Publication of the home learning report on the Office of Education Standards website.



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A prompt initial response

Immediately following the closure of schools, teachers and school leaders acted decisively in developing home learning packs and arranging distribution to the students. Furthermore, in the few weeks following the Easter break, schools had started to establish a platform for home learning characterised by a blended curriculum incorporating a balance of paper-based tasks and on-line face-to-face teaching.



An appropriate curriculum

Inspectors noted that the planned curriculum delivered through learning packs and on-line classes was well matched to programme requirements and year group expectations. In the examination classes at the secondary stage, changes to examination requirements by relevant authorities locally and internationally, required teachers to make a swift, appropriate response to course assessment demands.



A dedicated and hard-working team of educators

Teachers in government schools have, in almost all cases, demonstrated dedication and commitment to the challenge of teaching students based at home. From the document review and observations of 'live' lessons, inspectors noted that many teachers, who are parents themselves, effectively balanced multiple demands and multiple roles while supporting students' learning remotely. There is, however, a need to ensure consistency in good practice across and within schools. Despite the significant efforts of all involved in the delivery of home learning, inspectors judged that a majority of students made less than expected progress when taught at home as compared to school. The current home learning arrangements offer an imperfect substitute to face-to-face education.



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Improvements required to aspects of the home learning arrangements

Issues were noted relating to inequality of access and unreliability of technology. Additionally, teachers demonstrated variable levels of confidence in using technology. Students' attendance during on-line teaching sessions was noted to fluctuate and this adversely affected their learning and progress. Although the vast majority of staff were willing to have their lessons observed remotely, a few teachers did not collaborate with this review. In addition, principals reported that a few teachers did not provide regular on-line classes, as judged necessary. The irregularity and variable quality of on-line learning accounts for some inconsistency in progress. Clear guidance is required from the Ministry of Education to ensure all staff provide adequate teaching sessions to promote satisfactory learning and progress for all students.



Students' well-being is a priority

Schools and government departments placed an appropriate focus on students' welfare and well-being but attendance during this review was erratic and was not improving significantly in all institutions. For example, on 1st May 2020, schools reported a total of over 180 students as 'unaccounted for'.



Providing the equipment that students need to learn during lockdown

Staff from the Ministry of Education were proactive in loaning hardware to support students, as necessary. This helped to increase the number of students able to access on-line learning. However, at the time of the completion of this report on 22nd May 2020, the Ministry of Education reported approximately 300 students who had not yet been able to access on-line lessons because they did not have internet access or lacked the necessary hardware.



Partnerships help ensure students' welfare

Effective links with local businesses and charitable organisations helped address immediate need during the pandemic, particularly in relation to vulnerable students. For instance, sessions conducted by the Family Resource Center provided parents with useful and helpful advice.



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Preparing for examinations

A significant proportion of students writing examinations in the current academic year stated that they did not feel well prepared for their external assessments. Consideration should be given to alternative summer school provision, tutoring or extension of the school year, as is practical and permissible.



Catch-up strategies require agreement and forward planning

The quality of students' learning and their academic progress is of concern and there will be a need for curriculum content to be revisited and retaught in the next academic session/s. A common national strategy, as well as localised, school-level solutions need to be agreed, planned and financed.



Students' progress is hampered by a range of factors

This home learning review has judged the current arrangements for home learning to be an imperfect substitute for school-based learning. Teachers and school leaders were noted to be working diligently. Nevertheless, students' progress was not as brisk or as consistent across all subjects and in all classes as when the students were taught at school. Students are missing important opportunities to work collaboratively with their peers and require additional individualised feedback and direction from their teachers. Innovative practice makes student collaboration and individual feedback possible remotely and in a few lessons this was observed. However, this review has identified that such practice was not a characteristic of provision across all schools.



A responsive versus a proactive strategy

In reacting to the challenges of COVID-19 and subsequent school closures, the Ministry of Education and the Department of Education Services responded promptly and effectively to help ensure the continuity of education for students in government schools. However, the lack of a pre-existing digital strategy in schools left too many students with limited access to learning and this has led, in turn, to some inequality of opportunity.



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- R1** The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with wider government departments, should develop a comprehensive educational digital strategy to promote high quality learning for all students in government schools incorporating regular opportunities for students to learn more effectively at home as well as at school.
- R2** Teachers' knowledge and skills should be enhanced through ongoing professional development opportunities that relate to the agreed learning platforms to be used by schools.
- R3** The Ministry of Education should agree and resource an appropriate and manageable range of platforms to be used at different stages of education.
- R4** In implementing a revised digital strategy, there is a need to improve wireless connectivity and bandwidth provision across the Cayman Islands to facilitate effective home learning. As a priority, all upper primary and secondary students should have regular access to an appropriate, designated 'Bring Your Own' device to support their school-based and home learning.
- R5** Principals and relevant staff from the Ministry of Education and the Department of Education Services should further enhance the provision for information technology in all government schools to add new technology and improve connectivity ensuring equality of opportunity for all students.
- R6** All school leaders should agree minimum expectations in terms of on-line, face-to-face ('synchronous') teaching at different stages of education and monitor implementation on a regular basis.
- R7** Officers from the Department of Education Services should assist school leaders to regularly monitor the quality of students' on-line learning to maximise improvement and share best practice.

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R8

School leaders, in partnership with the relevant government departments, should devise clear processes to monitor and track attendance during on-line sessions and ensure consistency in arrangements to address poor attendance in the context of home learning. It is important that data is accurate and comprehensive in order to inform policy.

R9

At the start of the next academic year, assessment arrangements need to be in place to ensure that teachers and school leaders have accurate and comprehensive information regarding students' skills, knowledge and gaps in learning. This information should be used to deliver appropriate school-level 'catch up' provision.

R10

The Ministry of Education should provide a clear lead and direction to schools in order to devise coherent 'catch-up' plans for 2020-21 and 2021-22. The plans will need to include suitable adaptations to ensure students' health and safety in the school environment when they return to school. Arrangements should be informed by best practice noted in an international context in those countries where students have already returned to schools after lockdown. Strategies to address gaps in learning may include, for example, lengthening the school day for certain ages of students, providing catch-up sessions, additional examination classes or summer school. Lengthening the next two academic years, if possible, may be a necessary consideration.

R11

Cross-agency, multi-disciplinary partnerships should be strengthened. Relevant student information needs to be quickly accessible to all appropriate professionals to help address the welfare needs of all students in any given emergency situation.

R12

Appropriate modifications to existing school premises are required in advance of the students' return to school, to ensure the health and safety of students, staff and parents. Considerations such as the provision of multiple hand-sanitising stations and signage to reinforce adequate social distancing protocols need to be agreed across all government schools. A heightened regard for supervision at break and lunchtimes when young children would naturally congregate will be needed. Additionally, as planned by the Department of Education Services and certain schools, innovative timetabling solutions may be necessary at an individual school level to minimise social interactions that could put students and staff at risk.



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Data in relation to home learning

The following table represents data collected by the Department of Education Services from school principals regarding aspects of the home learning provision.

Total number of students: 4,916 (including Reception-age students) on 18th May 2020*	18th May 2020	Note	Trend
% daily attendance/contact with students**	88%	Approximately 590 students not 'attending' daily.	See comments on page 24 of this report regarding attendance.
% students accessing on-line learning	92%	Approximately 390 students not yet accessing on-line learning.	Trend is positive as students are increasingly being provided with the technological resources they need.
% students accessing paper-based learning only	7%	Approximately 325 students.	Trend is positive as more students are provided with access to on-line learning.
% students needing access to a digital device/computer	9%	Approximately 450 students in total.	Numbers are reducing but remain high (up to 30 per cent of school roll) in certain schools.
% students needing access to the internet	4%	Approximately 200 students across all schools.	Numbers are reducing but remain high (up to 20 per cent of school roll) in certain schools.

* From the 1st May 2020 onwards, the Department of Education Services collected data from principals regarding aspects of the home learning provision. The information in this chart has been collated from the submissions by schools and includes both students of statutory school age and also Reception-age children in government schools.

** The criteria used to calculate 'percentage daily attendance/contact' with students as advised by the Department of Education Services were as follows; 'Daily – throughout the day. Each student should have at least one engagement session with their teacher per day e.g. in an on-line lesson or small group session per day. For students working off-line: Teacher has made contact e.g. via telephone call, WhatsApp, or students/parents have provided a response to an e-mail'.



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The strategy to support home learning in government schools

Following the announcement of school closures, most schools responded quickly and issued home learning packs to individual students, and school leaders began making the necessary arrangements to introduce remote home learning. However, with the absence of an agreed national strategy, a diverse range of approaches arose with some more effective than others. Effective strategic leadership was noted at Red Bay PS, Creek and Spot Bay PS and Savannah PS where an agreed policy was produced identifying 'minimum expectations'. This clarified the number of on-line sessions all teachers were expected to deliver each week and the main platforms to be used for this purpose across key stages. Similarly, at John Gray HS, school leaders created a digital learning strategy with five priorities. These consisted of 'connectivity', 'no child left behind', 'no staff left behind', 'visible on-line learning' and 'come back better, stronger and smarter'. Useful guidance was issued to staff and students regarding positive and safe approaches to digital learning. The schools' plan addressed resource requirements, staff training, student safety and communication with parents. These were examples of good practice in this unprecedented crisis situation.

Other schools included useful strategies to promote safety during remote learning. For example, school leaders at Red Bay PS developed a 'student on-line learning agreement', which clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of teachers as well as the expected behaviour of students when working on-line.

Although similar strategies evolved in other schools, not all were as timely or comprehensive as those mentioned. School leaders would have benefited from more extensive guidance and direction from the Ministry of Education and the Department of Education Services in relation to core requirements and timelines. A distance learning policy was drafted by the Department of Education Services but this was narrow in focus and at the time of the conclusion of this review had not yet been shared with principals nor approved by Cayman Islands Education Council.

In a strategic document developed by staff from one of the secondary schools, the aim of digital learning was stated as follows; 'we want learning and feedback to take place digitally, not just work or tasks set'. There is an important distinction drawn here.

One of the findings from this review is that there has been too great an emphasis upon the completion of work sheets and narrow tasks which lack challenge. There is scope for further incorporation of activities which encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning and thereby acquire a broad range of skills which characterise effective learning.





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The strategy to support home learning in government schools

An example of good practice observed at Key Stage 2 at Prospect PS featured students writing their own letters to Cayman Islands government officials regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. This real life context for learning proved far more motivating and engaging for students. Overall, there were limited examples of this kind observed and therefore opportunities to develop the students' learning in a relevant and meaningful context were missed.

From 1st May 2020, the Ministry of Education required schools to submit specific weekly data as listed on page 11 of this report. There was inconsistency in the submissions received from schools. For example, some of the schools did include Reception-age children in their analysis and others didn't. Student numbers in a few of the primary schools were initially entered incorrectly. From 8th May 2020, Reception-age children were completely removed from the data collection. Such inconsistencies meant that data collated, for example, regarding the number of students 'unaccounted for' and the number of students not accessing on-line learning was unreliable. Inevitably the initial inaccuracy of the data made it difficult for senior leaders to monitor the impact of their home learning provision.

Despite these aforementioned challenges, the view of most stakeholders was that the initial strategy to support home learning as developed by schools was effective. Eighty nine per cent of staff agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'The school has good arrangements in place to support students' remote learning'. Eighty per cent of parents agreed that, 'There are good arrangements in place to support my child's home learning'. Sixty-eight per cent of students agreed with the statement, 'There are good arrangements in place to support my learning from home'.





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Helping students to prepare for external examinations

Inspectors reviewed provision for students who were due to take external examinations in summer 2020. All students due to take examinations were particularly affected by school closures. In March 2020, the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) announced that examinations were to be postponed and would be rescheduled for July 2020. There were also changes to the requirements of the British Technology and Education Council (BTEC) examinations. I-GCSE (International General Certificate of Secondary Education) examinations were cancelled.

Teachers were proactive in responding to course and assessment revisions. Wherever possible, assessment arrangements managed by schools were appropriately modified to reflect the learning opportunities now afforded to students whilst learning from home.

These changes to course assessment and work submission were communicated swiftly to students. For example, Cayman Islands Further Education College (CIFEC) cancelled work placement programmes for Year 12 students and alterations to the course programme and assessments were made. In all of the secondary schools and post-16 institutions, on-line lessons commenced in earnest following the Easter break, however levels of attendance in Years 11 and 12 were low in certain classes and schools.

In a Year 12 mathematics examination group, for example, student attendance dropped from 54 per cent in March to 28 per cent in April, despite the significant efforts of teachers who used a variety of communication tools to encourage and maintain participation from one session to the next.

School leaders ensured continuity of curriculum provision in examination subjects. Despite the issues experienced by students regarding connectivity and access, the use of paper-based resources and the issuance of textbooks meant that students could work regularly and independently on their revision assignments. In an on-line lesson, for example, a teacher was observed methodically working through past examination papers to help improve the students' examination technique. In another on-line lesson, a mathematics teacher from John Gray HS had developed a helpful 'You Tube' resource which had been published and was accessible to all students who could access on-line material. This led the students through potential examination topics and also modelled solutions to solve problems which would possibly arise in their forthcoming examination. All Key Stage 4 students (Years 10 and 11) were provided with on-line course textbooks. Secondary school leaders reported that the students' course content had largely been covered in lessons prior to school closures. Consequently, teachers focused on revision work and examination technique with their students.

Students were allowed to submit their work on-line and were also directed to complete on-line tests to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.





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Helping students to prepare for external examinations

Schools made appropriate arrangements to maintain a broad range of examination-related activities to support graduating students. For example, scholarship information was distributed to CIFEC students and staff provided support to individual students needing advice and guidance regarding their future course and college applications. At John Gray HS, an on-line meeting for parents and Year 9 students offered comprehensive course information to inform subject choices for study in the forthcoming academic year. This meeting was attended remotely by more than 100 parents and students. A link was provided for students and parents to access this detailed and informative presentation themselves.

The survey completed by Year 11 and 12 students as part of this review identified a number of concerns raised by students due to take examinations during this current academic session. Over one hundred students completed the survey and approximately 40 per cent stated that they did not feel sufficiently well prepared for their examinations. The most proactive and successful school programmes made use of different strategies to help check on students' well-being and learning. For example, John Gray HS and Layman Scott HS, conducted their own survey of student and parent views which focused upon a range of topics relating to on-line learning. This information was used to guide the distribution of resources and to target support for those students who had indicated that they needed further assistance with their examination preparation.





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Technological support to assist staff and students

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic all teachers employed in government schools were issued with a laptop. Subsequently, teachers were provided with technical support to access a wide range of platforms they were required to use to support home learning.

During the observations undertaken as part of this review, inspectors identified the following platforms used across schools; Class Dojo, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, One Note, What's App, Skype, Everest, Zoom, You Tube, Edmodo and IXL. However, in the survey submitted by teachers, more than one quarter of staff stated that they had not received the training required to equip them to deliver on-line learning to students. Since certain platforms were relatively new to the teachers, the roll out of on-line, synchronous teaching was a challenge for many teachers.

The use of different platforms and lack of agreed strategy across government schools consequently required a very broad range of training considerations. Despite this challenge, schools did start to address the professional training requirements of teachers by offering courses to meet the main needs of individual staff.

For example, at George Town PS, teaching staff received training to increase their confidence and skills in using Zoom. School leaders at Layman Scott HS facilitated professional development sessions for their teachers to promote students' learning in the on-line environment. The staff had developed a student guide

for submitting homework using Everest providing useful step-by-step guidance for students and parents. At John Gray HS, software training was delivered which led to improved teacher confidence and competency in using Microsoft Teams. Consequently, although teachers initially reported to inspectors that they had not received sufficient training, by the time they were required to deliver on-line sessions, most judged themselves to be competent in their use of on-line platforms.

Most primary schools provided guidance documents and on-line sessions for parents. These offered step-by-step directions about how to use different platforms. At East End PS, for example, parents were given helpful instructions by means of a school newsletter about how to use Google Classroom. Similarly, at Clifton Hunter HS and John Gray HS, senior leaders organised a series of remote presentations to help parents support their children's on-line learning. Additionally, a number of school leaders used Facebook to encourage student engagement in on-line learning. Across all schools, centrally-based technology teams promptly and effectively supported technological difficulties experienced by staff and students alike.

A loan scheme was launched to provide laptops and portable devices for students in need. By 12th May 2020, the Department of Education Services and the Ministry of Education had issued 600 laptops to students across the islands. The laptops were loaned to students for their use at home until the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. Support staff in schools were also loaned laptops to facilitate their delivery remotely of small group lessons.





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Students' access to information technology

At the time of the closure of schools, the Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports, Agriculture and Lands conducted a survey to gather information regarding the number of students without access to the internet. The survey also sought to determine the number of students without laptops or other portable devices to facilitate participation in on-line learning sessions. The data received from the survey on 1st May 2020 was noted to be incomplete. Nevertheless, this survey identified important gaps in provision and offered a starting point for the Ministry to begin addressing inequality in access. The baseline data indicated that initially approximately 750 students could not access on-line learning when teachers commenced synchronous lessons.

In response, the information technology teams from the Ministry of Education promptly arranged for 600 laptops from schools to be loaned to students. A further 45 laptops and desktop computers were donated by community groups and businesses. Certain year groups were given priority to the laptops. By 8th May 2020, 450 students were still only able to access paper-based learning materials and 11.5 per cent (533 students) were unable to access and therefore participate in on-line lessons.

A number of staff, students and parents experienced difficulties relating to the reliability of wireless connectivity and bandwidth. In a minority of the lessons observed, teachers and students clearly struggled as a result of unreliable or weak internet connection. At times, this adversely affected the quality of students' learning and the pace of lessons. Students sometimes made use of mobile phones to join lessons but were not always able to participate as fully as others who had access to a laptop or a desktop computer. Due to poor connectivity sometimes there was a delay in communication between teachers and students during 'live' sessions.

It was noted that a minority of primary-age students had yet to gain confidence using the different platforms. They were beginning to mute their microphones as required during lessons but needed frequent reminders to do so. Some students, with frequent reminders, demonstrated an ability to use the 'hands-up' feature of some platforms. However, the requirement to frequently remind the students adversely affected the pace of the lesson and student progress.





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A number of emerging good practices were identified by school leaders, teachers and inspectors.

Microsoft Teams was used successfully at upper primary and secondary-age levels in some schools; allowing teachers to post tasks and engage with individual students about their work. At Prospect PS, for example, in Years 4 to 6, teachers used this platform to post timetables each week and return marked homework to students and their parents. The same platform was used by several other schools not only for learning sessions but also to schedule staff meetings and aid communication between teams of professionals. Microsoft Teams was also used to send links to students which enabled their access to resources which further enhanced their learning. At Sir John A. Cumber PS, the staff developed a school website which provided a single source and quick access point to all on-line resources and working platforms required by the staff and students.

In certain circumstances home learning offered improved learning opportunities for small groups of students. For example, at East End PS, the staff developed a series of one-to-one, short and focused lessons for students who required additional support. A few students who were struggling with reading were given daily on-line sessions. These were very carefully planned to monitor progress and build upon ongoing assessment. These students were making good progress because the sessions were well matched to their individual learning needs. Students were helped to focus on new learning within each session. Similarly, at Savannah PS, in Reception and the Key Stage 1 classes, teachers often divided students into two separate ability groups for on-line sessions, rather than teaching them altogether. The reduced number of students enabled teachers and support staff to give more individual attention to each child.





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Through the staff survey, a number of resources and strategies were identified by staff as being particularly successful. These included:



Establishing 'netiquette' during on-line sessions

This was frequently referred to by teachers during sessions in order to maximise students' engagement. Appropriate to the age of the students concerned, agreed rules were effectively reinforced during on-line sessions.



Making use of assessment software

Software such as 'Kahoot!' and 'Quizziz' to provide feedback to students about their work were found to be effective, interactive and intuitive tools that were appropriate for secondary-age students.



Providing one-to-one sessions for students

These sessions occurred prior to an on-line class or larger group session. This offered 'flipped learning' whereby students requiring additional support could be given individual guidance regarding new concepts in advance of the main session with the rest of the class. This enabled the students to contribute more confidently in the main session because they had some grasp of new concepts.



Utilizing pre-recorded 'YouTube' videos

The development and use of pre-recorded 'You Tube' videos uploaded to private 'You Tube' channels. These could be watched repeatedly by students to consolidate understanding. Teachers could direct the students to use these resources when they were not required to attend synchronous lessons. A few secondary teachers created their own 'You Tube' channels to help students explore course content.



Offering variety to the content of lessons, to reduce students' screen time

Teachers set tasks that required more hands-on practical activity, such as planting seeds, cooking, design technology projects, art and physical education. Teachers also recommended that children should make use of National Geographic (for children) and virtual field trip sites to add variety and alternative stimulation for learning.



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This review highlighted a number of practical and organisational challenges which presented barriers to learning for a significant proportion of students.

It quickly became apparent once schools were closed that some students had no access to the technology needed to access on-line learning. The remedial action of the Ministry of Education, schools and local community groups to provide additional hardware reduced but did not eliminate this challenge. Additionally, the lack of reliable wireless connection or no access to internet provision in some households resulted in inequality of opportunity for students. This, in turn, led to significant variation in students' progress.

An initial lack of training for teachers in the use of specific platforms was a further challenge. This led to stress and worry for teachers as they sought to master new methods and unfamiliar teaching tools in a relatively short period of time.

Most teachers working with younger children adapted timetables for on-line learning to suit the developmental needs of this age range. Sessions were generally kept realistically short to reflect the children's brief concentration span. Since teachers offered a number of on-line sessions for small groups of learners, the teachers' workload

increased significantly. Although mostly conscientious, teachers found that their workload increased significantly due to the multiple delivery of small group sessions.

Surveys submitted by principals, parents and teachers highlighted the need for a clear plan which should address how issues of connectivity, resources, training and 'catch up' could be overcome.

The reluctance of a minority of teachers to deliver regular and sufficient on-line learning sessions for their students presented an ongoing challenge for school leaders and clearly disadvantaged some students.



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Arrangements to support students' health and well-being as part of the home-learning strategy

Student health, safety and welfare was prioritised by the Ministry of Education, Department of Education Services and school staff.

School leaders, teachers and staff from the Department of Education Services and the Ministry of Education were proactive in supporting the practical needs of families during the first few weeks of school closure.

School leaders quickly identified all of the students that were in receipt of free school meals and liaised with relevant agencies and charitable organisations to ensure continuity of support for such families. In one of the primary schools almost half of the school roll met entitlements for free school meals. Staff liaised with parents to identify the support they required. In another primary school 40 hot meals were prepared and distributed to homes five days each week. This was implemented immediately after the announcement of the school closure. This important service was effective. Strong partnerships had clearly been established between government schools, various charitable agencies and members of the local community. On 1st May 2020, the Ministry of Education reported that there were 570 students in receipt of free school meals or similar welfare packages. This constituted 12 per cent of the school community in government schools.

Schools were proactive in distributing important information to families regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, issuing documents on-line from the Health Services Authority, Cayman Islands Government, UNICEF and other bodies.

During on-line assemblies and tutor groups, teachers frequently reminded students about important safety protocols such as washing hands regularly and thoroughly.

School counsellors were available to support students as necessary. Referrals were made in a timely fashion and evidence showed that students requesting support were contacted regularly. Appropriate confidential records were kept. Data kept by the Ministry of Education from 1st May 2020 indicated a gradual increase in the number of students requiring emotional or mental health support from educational professionals.

E-safety was an established priority. With the increased reliance upon the internet and the use of various platforms and social media, lessons aimed at primary school students outlined the importance of responsible use of different software and explained strategies to ensure the safety of all. The e-safety sessions formed part of the existing computing curriculum in the primary years. Content was revisited for students in Key Stages 2 and 3. In the secondary school, the use of tools such as Microsoft Teams provided an effective framework to manage communication with and between students affording an opportunity for peer support.

Inspectors observed a range of lessons including morning assemblies and tutor group sessions. Teachers placed considerable emphasis upon the welfare of students during these sessions. In a Year 11 tutor group observed at John Gray HS, the teacher discussed the students' preparations for end of year examinations and reviewed students' progress in submitting work.





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Similarly, at Savannah PS and Prospect PS, assemblies both attended by more 100 students, included good opportunities for students to demonstrate leadership skills and share their feelings about their current learning experiences. To promote students' well-being several teachers conducted brief devotions at the start of on-line sessions. Inspectors observed how students at the Lighthouse School, Sir John A Cumber PS and Theoline McCoy PS participated enthusiastically in the singing of Christian choruses and reciting prayers. This created a positive ethos and a conducive environment for learning. In the primary school assemblies the use of achievement awards provided recognition for students who made good effort and completed assignments on time. In secondary school tutor and house group sessions, the teacher benefited from the support of students who helped share information with their peers who were unable to attend the on-line session.

This review and data received by the Ministry of Education indicated that the number of students not attending on-line lessons nor submitting class work was significant.

On 1st May 2020, four per cent of students were 'unaccounted for'. This term, 'unaccounted for' varied in interpretation between schools but was generally used to refer to those students or their parents who had not attended on-line sessions nor had their parents responded

to phone calls, 'What's App' messages or other communication efforts. School leaders had started to liaise with truancy officers to address this concern and had begun to re-establish contact with some of the students.

However, this intervention process was slow and hampered by the inaccuracy of school records relating to contact addresses and telephone numbers. At the culmination of this review, the number of students 'unaccounted for' reduced and more students were beginning to engage in on-line learning. School leaders and staff used an effective televised public video message on Cayman Islands Government TV to try to further reach out to parents and engage their support during this continuing period of home learning.

Although admirable that school leaders were involved in the facilitation of provision of free school meals for vulnerable children, several principals reported that this was very time consuming when they also had the important task of overseeing the establishment of home learning protocols for their staff and students.





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The role of school leaders and the Department of Education Services in monitoring the quality of home learning

Arrangements to monitor the quality of home learning were variable. Many school leaders faced significant challenges in ensuring good attendance for on-line sessions. Most teachers recorded attendance for these sessions but not all. There was insufficient accurate monitoring of student attendance for each session. Likewise, the submission of completed work was not always systematically documented.

There was an appropriate focus upon improving students' access to home learning in the initial stages and upon ensuring technical difficulties were addressed. School leaders soon recognised the need to monitor and review the quality of on-line learning offered by their teachers. Where leaders quickly defined clear expectations for their school communities, home learning was established without delay. In good practice school leaders were clear about the balance of required synchronous and asynchronous sessions to be taught each week and senior leaders quickly became involved in the monitoring process. Certain platforms facilitated effective monitoring procedures. For example, Microsoft Teams and Google Classroom allowed school leaders to see work submitted by students and teachers' feedback. At Layman Scott HS, the senior management team conducted virtual 'walkthroughs' each week to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. They also developed a virtual lesson observation tool to capture examples

of good practice as well as areas for development. Senior leaders provided written feedback to staff. Although a similar arrangement was in place at the Lighthouse School, in the early stages of home learning, this was not yet established in most schools. Some school leaders were slow to introduce arrangements to monitor standards. Some considered it inappropriate to commence monitoring on-line learning whilst teachers were still coming to terms with remote teaching and lacking confidence. This led to some inconsistency in teaching quality and there were missed opportunities for teachers to collaborate and share best practice.

All schools have an assigned Senior School Improvement Officer (SSIO) who is responsible for monitoring the performance of the principal. The SSIO supports the principal in leading and managing the school and ordinarily assists in monitoring standards. Following the closure of schools in March 2020, the SSIO's supported the co-ordination of activities to help ensure students' welfare and well-being. A few principals would have welcomed more support from their SSIO during the early establishment of home learning. SSIO's have the opportunity to promote the sharing of best practice across schools but this was not evidenced during the review period.



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Arrangements to track students' participation and engagement in home learning

From 1st May 2020, the Department of Education Services gathered information regarding students' attendance. This data was collected each week through submissions made by principals. A review of those submissions, however, identified some inconsistencies in the data collected. At the beginning of the process, for example, a few schools included Reception-age children within their submission but others did not. Also, it was identified that there were factual errors in the submissions made by certain schools. It was then decided to remove the data relating to Reception-age children because that age group was not of statutory school age. This meant that the first data set collected on 1st May 2020 could not form a reliable baseline by which the Ministry of Education could monitor the impact of policies and actions. In the second information collection on 8th May 2020, all Reception-age children were removed from the data set and the previous errors were amended. Data relating to Reception-age children was gathered separately and submitted initially for all schools from 15th May 2020.

Furthermore, the criteria used by the Department of Education Services to record attendance required review. The definition of student attendance, for example, was open to variable interpretation. It stated that a student was to be recorded as 'in attendance' if each student had at least one 'engagement session' with their teacher per day. For students working off-line the students would be marked as 'present' if a teacher had made contact by a telephone call, 'What's App', or if the student or parents provided a response to an e-mail. As a consequence, the reported level of attendance given in the data submitted by principals on 8th May 2020 provided an insight into the number of students that had attended one or more sessions in the day in question but not to all sessions they were required to attend each day.

On examination of this discrepancy and in discussion with principals it became evident that actual attendance of students throughout the day was lower than the reported figure and was at times as low as 65 per cent in certain classes. On 8th May 2020, the overall average 'daily attendance/contact' with students was reported as 84.6 per cent. This meant that an average of 15.4 per cent of all students were noted to have been absent from all lessons. Based on the total number of students of statutory school age submitted for this period this suggests that there were over 700 students not attending a minimum of one session each day on average during the period in question. By 15th May 2020, the levels of attendance were reported to have improved to an overall average of 88 per cent.

School leaders referred persistent absence to truancy officers but there had been slow progress in addressing poor attendance to the full available range of classes.

The focus initially had been on finding students that were judged to be 'unaccounted for'. Overall, schools reported that, as of 8th May 2020, there were 75 students who were 'unreachable by all available communication means'. Schools reported that the inaccuracy of contact information and changes in family circumstances during the pandemic served as significant factors in limiting communication with those families. The arrangement to keep records up to date across all relevant educational agencies and facilitating access across agencies required review to help ensure immediate contact with parents and children in such circumstances.





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Support for vulnerable students and those with special educational needs

Following the closure of schools due to COVID-19, all school leaders implemented a breadth of arrangements to support vulnerable students and those with special educational needs. In the staff survey, 65 per cent of staff agreed that there were good arrangements in place to support their most vulnerable students. Additionally, most parents indicated that when they needed guidance or information, it was easy to get in contact with their child's teacher. At the Lighthouse School, staff created 'social stories' that they shared with students to promote their understanding of COVID-19 and to alleviate the anxiety that accompanied the pandemic. The staff also developed and disseminated useful tips to parents on self-regulation strategies for children with special educational needs.

All schools were proactive in providing emotional support for students and their families.

At Clifton Hunter HS, for example, during a Year 9 virtual meeting, a counsellor shared useful tips with parents on wellness and coping strategies during lockdown. Some school leaders created support groups in Microsoft Teams and facilitated group sessions with the school special educational needs co-ordinator, counsellor, psychologist, speech and language therapist, school inclusion specialist and homeroom tutors to support students. Additionally, live sessions with support staff were accommodated in Microsoft Teams to support students with additional learning needs. In many instances, school leaders recorded on-line lessons so that students who missed lessons could access these at a later date.

School leaders were persistent in their efforts to secure resources for students who did not have technological devices so as to allow them to participate in on-line learning. Although there was much success in this regard, some students were unable to access on-line learning due to the lack of appropriate devices or internet access.

Across settings, school leaders, teachers and counsellors also co-ordinated the distribution of free school meals or food vouchers to needy students and their families. Specialist teachers and support staff were assigned duties to assist families as necessary and this review found evidence of frequent, persistent efforts by staff to reach parents of all students, including parents of students with special educational needs. Some families have been difficult to reach and a few had not been able, at times, to participate fully in supporting their children's education. Staff used a range of communication methods but there was irregularity in responses from families, at times. Innovative approaches by government school staff included the work of occupational therapists, for example, who recorded their sessions for individual students and sent these as video files to parents. The use of tracking records by staff, including specialist staff such as speech and language therapists helped senior leaders monitor the regularity of contact with individual students. Principals and teachers assisted in this process by establishing communication with vulnerable families and encouraging full participation in learning by students and their parents. Despite these efforts, staff reported at times low and falling levels of attendance to the sessions being offered.



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Support for vulnerable students and those with special educational needs

Inspectors noted that staff had made extensive efforts to tailor sessions to the distinctive needs of students and these were appropriately aligned, when necessary, to the individual education plans prepared for each child.

Despite the best of intentions, there were several challenges in successfully meeting the needs of students with special educational needs in an on-line learning environment. Although virtual sessions were organised for students, those with profound and multiple learning disabilities experienced difficulties engaging virtually due to attention and cognition challenges. Nonetheless, staff were creative in mitigating some of those challenges.

School leaders at the Lighthouse School, for example, reported challenges such as the inability to provide therapeutic hands-on goals to students in home settings. Nonetheless, staff devised strategies to mitigate some of the challenges. For example, staff created prerecorded videos to share with families about occupational and speech and language therapy related skills and activities.

At Clifton Hunter HS, the special educational needs (SEN) team had been diligent in tracking students with additional needs and senior leaders reported that almost all students on the SEN register had been contacted. However, the number of students without access to computers meant that some students were still relying on paper-based work packs and this situation was compounded by issues related to pick up and collection. As a consequence, the progress and well-being of students with special educational needs across most schools was a notable cause for concern raised by school leaders.



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Matching tasks to the different learning needs of students

Learning packs that were distributed just after the closure of schools were aligned to the curriculum and some content was offered which addressed the differing learning needs of students within each class. However, the majority of the on-line lessons observed, were delivered through whole class teaching. Some teachers' plans included differing tasks to meet the range of learning needs in lessons. However, for the most part, students completed similar activities regardless of need or ability.

Many teachers were still trying to effectively meet the range of students' needs in the on-line learning environment. Those teachers who were more confident with the use of on-line platforms were able to create channels in Microsoft Teams to provide targeted support to students of different levels of ability. In these settings support staff were at times effectively utilised to provide targeted support to individuals or small groups of students. Good examples of the provision of targeted support to students with differing learning needs were observed in on-line support classes facilitated at the Layman Scott HS and West End PS. Here teachers and support staff provided one-to-one and small group support to students. Staff were skilled in the use of questioning to support students to understand and apply concepts. They provided multiple opportunities for students to practise skills and to demonstrate their learning. As a consequence, students made good progress in these lessons. Similarly, in a Reception class at Theoline McCoy PS, the teacher created a separate channel for a group of students of similar ability. This group was supported by the teaching assistant while the teacher worked with the more advanced students. At Red Bay PS, all

students with additional needs were supported digitally through the I-Ready on-line program that consisted of daily lessons and tutorials linked to each child's current academic level. These lessons were well matched to meet students' varying learning needs thus increasing opportunities for their success in the on-line learning environment. Furthermore, the school's specialist teachers also connected with students in the Google classrooms and continued to provide specialist support to those students to whom they are assigned.

Addressing the varying needs of students has always been challenging for some teachers in regular classroom settings, and this has proven to be even more difficult in an on-line learning environment. In the majority of observed on-line sessions, the more able students made at least satisfactory progress but progress was more variable for the less able.

Teachers' ability to match lesson content and tasks to the needs of students will create greater purposefulness to lessons and lead to more involvement of students in their learning. Consequently, school leaders have an increasing role to rigorously monitor the quality of curricular planning and lesson delivery to ensure coherence and progress for all students in the on-line learning environment. School leaders should therefore include an analysis of provision for different learners in the on-line learning environment as a priority for future professional development.





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Prior to the advent of COVID-19, some schools were regularly utilising on-line learning platforms. These included Everest, IXL, Oxford OWL, Raz Kids, Seesaw and I-Ready among others. As a consequence, schools such as Layman Scott HS, Red Bay PS and Theoline McCoy PS were better positioned to transition to on-line learning fairly quickly and with minimum dislocation. This, however, was not true for all schools as some experienced initial challenges adjusting to the daily rigour of on-line learning.

Notably, most school leaders were sufficiently proactive in identifying staff who required support transitioning to on-line learning and quickly organised professional development opportunities to upskill staff in the use of various on-line learning platforms. Over the course of the home learning review, inspectors noted that some teachers demonstrated greater confidence and competence in the use of on-line learning tools than others. Furthermore, although most teachers reported that they were competent in the use of on-line learning platforms in the teachers' survey, several indicated that they lacked the required skills to successfully promote learning in the on-line environment. Most students indicated that they had a good understanding of the different platforms in use to support home learning.

Once the initial challenge of access to appropriate technological devices was resolved for many students, a majority demonstrated satisfactory competence and confidence in the use of on-line platforms.

It was encouraging to see in, some instances, students offering helpful suggestions to teachers regarding screen sharing or the sharing of 'YouTube' videos during on-line sessions.

It is important to note that, in the comments section of the survey, some teachers highlighted the potential confusion that students and parents faced due to the breadth of on-line learning platforms being used. Other challenges included internet connectivity issues such as the internet bandwidth that affected the playing of videos and audio. It is also useful to note that students and teachers utilised a range of devices to access on-line learning. These included tablets, I-Pads, laptop and desktop computers and mobile phones. The type of device used sometimes impacted the quality of students' on-line learning experience. For example, some phone screens were too small for students to view resources properly.

The data within the Ministry of Education COVID-19 Pandemic 'Snapshot of Educational Provision' indicated that for the week ending 8th May 2020, 83.4 per cent of students were accessing on-line learning. This increased to 92 per cent for the week ending 15th May 2020. The percentage of students only accessing paper-based learning decreased from 14 to seven per cent over the same period. The percentage of teachers delivering on-line classes increased over the reporting period. This rose from 94.5 to 100 per cent. These positive developments should create impetus for the upskilling of all staff in the use of on-line platforms and for the establishment of clear guidelines regarding the expectations and minimum requirements for virtual learning within government schools.



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Inspectors observed over 40 on-line lessons across all 16 government schools. Additionally, a number of pre-recorded sessions were reviewed to inform this report. Across settings, teachers demonstrated varying levels of confidence and competence in the delivery of on-line learning. In the more effective lessons, teachers skillfully manipulated tools such as Microsoft Teams to promote students' learning. At Layman Scott HS, for example, the teacher of a Year 7 science lesson was adept in the use of tools in Microsoft Teams. He was able to switch between platforms, used search engines to clarify concepts with students and accessed 'You Tube' videos to help reinforce students' understanding of key concepts. Similarly, a Year 8 science teacher at Clifton Hunter HS utilised on-line quizzes to check students' learning. In other effective lessons, teachers used a range of other media tools to enhance the learning experience for students. Most teachers demonstrated satisfactory subject knowledge and some provided opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning. In a few instances, teachers were less confident and required support to successfully navigate the on-line space. In the weaker lessons, teachers talked for too much of the lesson, the pace was slow and this limited the progress made by students.

Overall, however, a majority of teachers were enthusiastic in their delivery of lesson content and were able to transfer that enthusiasm to their students who for the most part displayed high levels of engagement. Positive relationships were evident between staff and students and this gave students the confidence to ask for clarification when needed. Almost all students were respectful and well behaved when participating in on-line learning.

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All teachers had established and shared clear expectations for on-line behaviour and often issued timely reminders to students. As a consequence, almost all students were positive in their interactions with teachers and their peers. At the school on Little Cayman, for example, the teacher used praise throughout the on-line session to engage all participants. In most classes observed across all schools, the students took turns and concentrated well during tasks. Students were beginning, under the teachers' direction, to become adept at muting their microphones, sharing their screens and using the 'thumbs up' sign to indicate their understanding of lesson concepts. Only a few students were distracted by activities in their home environment but all were quickly redirected by their teachers and parents.



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At several schools, students were dressed in their school uniforms for on-line lessons and this helped to promote, at times, a purposeful learning environment. Most students were on time for lessons in the virtual space. Additionally, some teachers played educational videos as a filler for students who logged on early or were waiting for their peers to join the lesson.

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Despite the examples of effective teaching observed on-line, overall, there was still too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Additionally, teachers did not always take sufficient account of the individual needs of their students in the on-line environment.
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Where the sessions were asynchronous, the progress made by students was similarly variable. Good progress was dependent upon the level of support provided to students to complete set tasks and also upon the degree of timely and formative feedback received on submission of their work. Further improvement in these areas would help ensure all students make at least satisfactory progress in their home learning.



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Inspectors reviewed the curriculum plans from all 16 schools. Overall, the timetables and lesson plans were noted to be well matched to the requirements of the Cayman Islands National Curriculum. Following the closure of schools in March 2020, the home learning packs were predominantly focused on the teaching of English, mathematics and science. By 4th May 2020, however, the teaching focus had widened to include regular content for physical education, information technology and Spanish in almost all primary schools. In secondary and post-16 examination classes much of the content was directed towards preparing students for forthcoming external assessments. In some primary schools there was a delay in the introduction of on-line learning in certain foundation subjects. Music, for example, was not a consistent feature of provision in all primary schools across the islands. At Edna M. Moyle PS, the introduction of a physical education lesson for Key Stage 1 children was a welcome addition to the curriculum. Students participated enthusiastically in a range of movements under the guidance of their coach. At West End PS, the students' on-line learning experience was enriched with the addition of Spanish and physical education facilitated by specialist teachers.

Remote learning presented a new challenge for teachers as they sought to address the wide variety of students' needs. Although accustomed to providing for a range of abilities within school, teachers found this more difficult in a remote learning setting.

It was sometimes noted during on-line sessions that there was a tendency for teachers to set tasks and learning goals with the whole class in mind, without the usual regard for the differing abilities of their students. Furthermore, in sessions where teachers used Zoom or Microsoft Teams, teachers occasionally spent a long time talking and working through explanations or texts. Teachers recognised this tendency and there was evidence in the range of recorded lessons and 'live' sessions that practice was improving over time as staff and students became more confident using the available platforms.

In best practice, whole class sessions for larger groups were succinct and focused. The teacher introduced a concept and led a brief question and answer discussion to check students' understanding. Tasks were set and students were encouraged to log-out of the on-line class to work independently. For example, in a Year 4 class at Prospect PS, after listening carefully to the instructions as a large group, the students were then required to work individually off-line. On completion of the task, they submitted their finished work through Microsoft Teams. Having received and analysed the submissions, in best practice, teachers gave prompt and detailed feedback. In a few schools, particularly for the youngest children, it was good to observe that teachers organised their on-line sessions into separate small ability groups to more accurately personalise the learning.



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Assessment

Within the on-line learning environment, most teachers used a variety of strategies and activities to promote students' engagement in lessons. A majority used engaging starter activities to revisit prior learning or to help students make connections with new learning. However, in a minority of observed lessons on-line, sessions were characterised by too much teacher talk. In other instances, students responded to the teacher's questions with chorus answers so it was difficult to ascertain those who knew and those who did not know answers. Furthermore, some teachers did not give students sufficient wait time to think through and frame their answers.

A majority of teachers created effective opportunities for students to assess their own work and that of their peers. This was largely achieved through screen sharing and by the use of probing questions. Other teachers utilised Google Classroom to upload worksheets, PowerPoint presentations and past papers for students to practise at their own pace. Notably, in one observed professional development session, a teacher explained how her students uploaded stories to the message board in Google Classroom. Students were able to post comments about what they liked regarding their peers' stories and how they could be improved. Through dialogue, guided questioning and quizzes teachers were able to gauge the level of students' understanding in lessons and to clarify misconceptions. In most sessions, students were given ample opportunities to interact with their peers and the teacher. Additionally, in the majority of observed on-line lessons, most teachers encouraged participation

and input from all students. Many students at the high school stage completed assignments and uploaded these to Everest where they were marked by teachers and returned with written feedback. Teachers also rewarded students for their efforts with merit points. In a Key Stage 1 on-line English lesson at Theoline McCoy PS, the teacher shared pre-prepared motivational signs with colourful pictures and comments such as 'nicely done!' to praise students for their efforts. This created a supportive learning environment where students were comfortable taking risks. In many lessons, teachers provided tailored instruction for students to master key concepts. Some teachers also provided regular feedback to students through the use of apps or direct phone calls.

Additionally, teachers provided feedback to students on their completion of the home learning packs. This process was less effective partially due to the practical challenges of submission of the work by students and the difficulties experienced by staff in ensuring the timely dissemination of feedback to the students.

Of the Years 11 and 12 students who completed the home learning survey, a majority indicated that they received regular feedback from teachers about their work. Additionally, most parents indicated that their children received sufficient feedback. A majority of teachers reported that they had opportunities to provide regular feedback to students who were learning from home.



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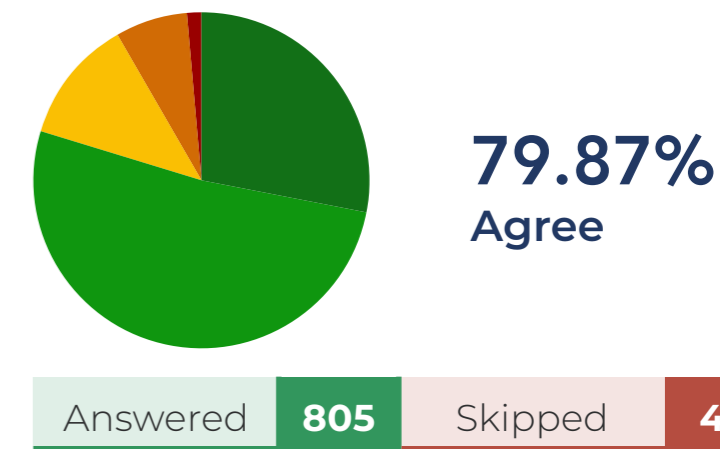
Student survey

Parent survey

Eight hundred and nine parents completed the on-line home learning survey using 'Survey Monkey'. Parents were asked to answer questions in relation to their eldest child currently attending one of the government schools. There was a broadly even distribution across school year groups with slightly fewer returns from parents of children in either Reception or Year 12. The survey was completed by parents of almost all government schools, with particularly high returns from parents of children attending Clifton Hunter HS, John Gray HS, Layman Scott HS and Savannah PS. **The responses from parents are shown in the tables below.**

1. There are good arrangements in place to support my child's home learning.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	28.32%	228
Agree	51.55%	415
Neither agree nor disagree	11.93%	96
Disagree	6.83%	55
Strongly disagree	1.37%	11





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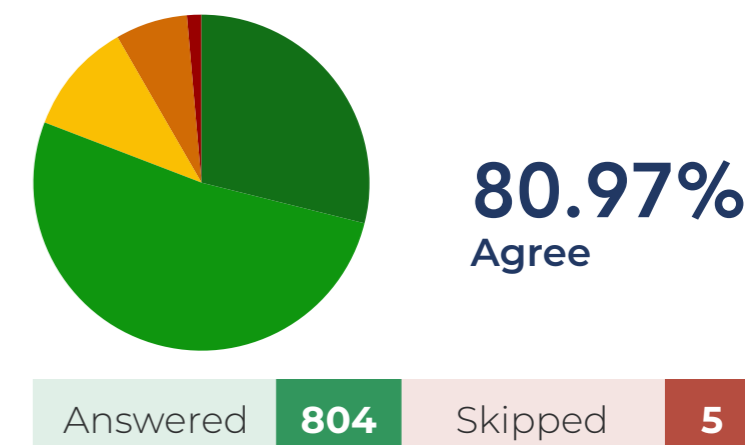
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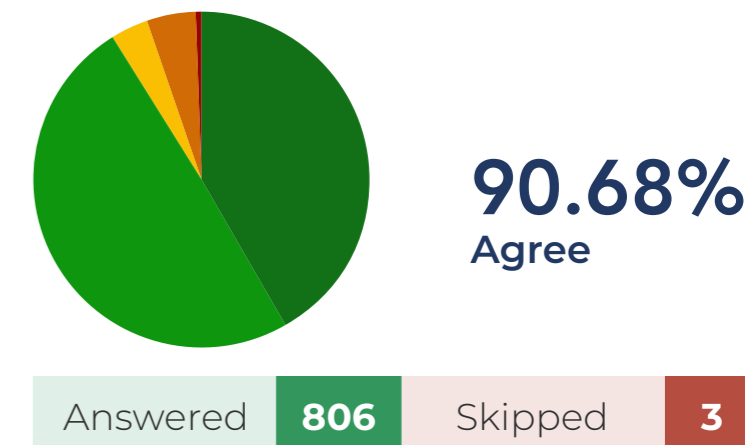
2. I have been provided with the necessary on-line and paper-based resources to support my child's home learning.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	29.10%	234
Agree	51.87%	417
Neither agree nor disagree	10.82%	87
Disagree	6.84%	55
Strongly disagree	1.37%	11



3. When I have needed guidance or information, it has been easy to get in contact with my child's teacher/s.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	41.18%	337
Agree	49.50%	399
Neither agree nor disagree	3.47%	28
Disagree	4.84%	39
Strongly disagree	0.37%	3





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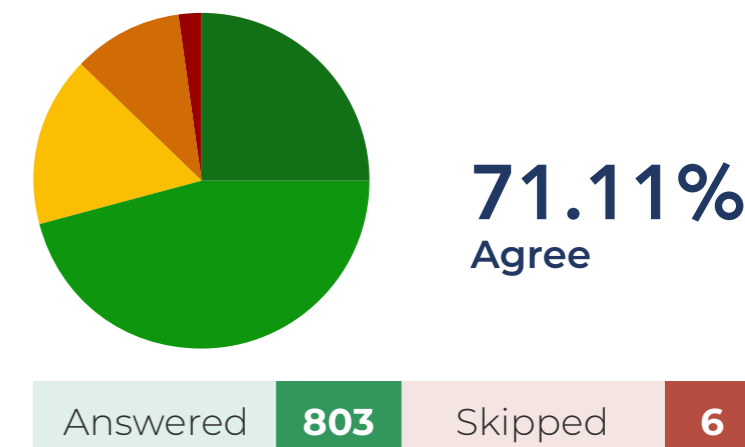
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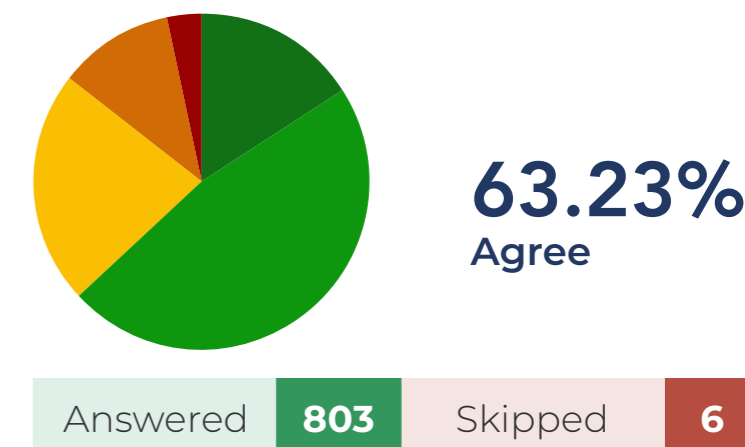
4. My child is receiving sufficient and regular feedback about his/her work.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	25.03%	201
Agree	46.08%	370
Neither agree nor disagree	16.31%	131
Disagree	10.46%	84
Strongly disagree	2.12%	17



5. I believe that, in the current circumstances, my child is making good progress in their learning.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	15.90%	128
Agree	47.33%	381
Neither agree nor disagree	22.48%	181
Disagree	11.18%	90
Strongly disagree	3.11%	25





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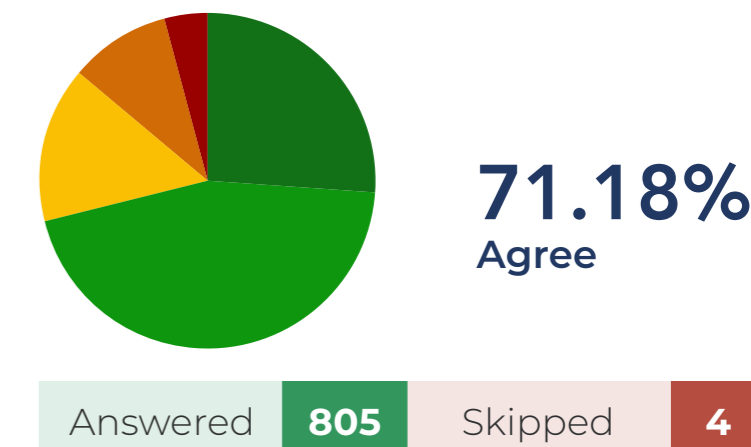
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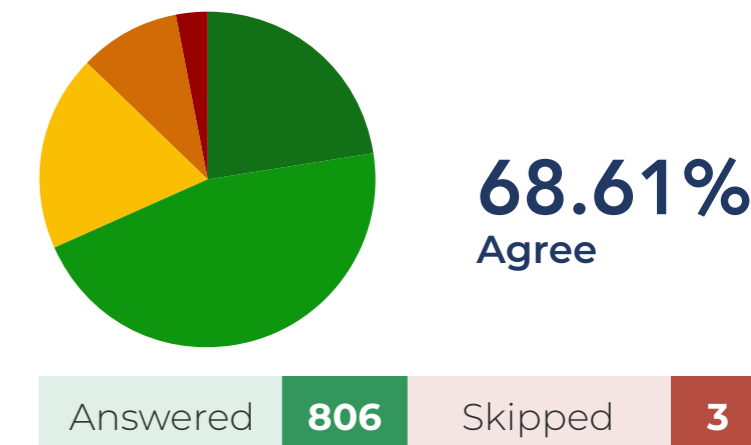
6. On-line classes are taking place regularly.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	26.34%	212
Agree	44.84%	361
Neither agree nor disagree	15.03%	121
Disagree	9.69%	78
Strongly disagree	4.10%	33



7. There is a clear strategy in place regarding home learning and this has been effectively communicated to parents.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	22.70%	183
Agree	45.91%	370
Neither agree nor disagree	18.86%	152
Disagree	9.68%	78
Strongly disagree	2.85%	23





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Comments made by parents

Around 450 parents added a comment to their submission. A few who had children attending both primary and secondary schools added information regarding the quality of provision they experienced from both schools. A number of similar themes evolved from the comments made by parents.

- a) There was a **clear appreciation of the work** of many class teachers and school leaders. Parents recognised the challenges school leaders had faced in responding quickly to significant national policy decisions. Most stated that their children’s teachers were doing a good job in very difficult circumstances.
- b) Although many parents stated that they felt stressed and sometimes overwhelmed with the challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, the **regular communication and support** from teachers was appreciated.
- c) A significant proportion of parents’ comments related to **technical problems** they had faced in supporting on-line learning. These included a lack of access to appropriate devices, technical issues, problems with connectivity and unfamiliarity with the variety of platforms being used at different schools.
- d) Parents commented that, in the first few weeks, as **teachers were gaining confidence in delivering home learning**, provision was sometimes irregular and not always effective. As time progressed, parents judged that the provision improved although there remained a need for a **clearly defined, planned and structured digital learning strategy** across all government schools.
- e) Parents of primary-age students expressed some concern that the transition to home learning occurred at a time when schools were still gaining familiarity with the **new primary curriculum**. Parents stated that a clear strategy to address gaps in learning needed to be communicated at the earliest opportunity.
- f) A few parents were particularly concerned about the perceived lack of progress being made by their children. Some indicated that they were considering making a request for their child to **repeat the school year**.



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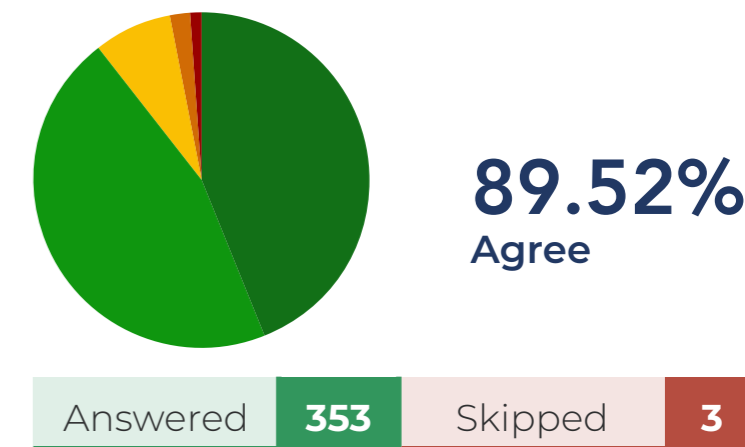
Student survey

Teacher survey

Three hundred and fifty-six teachers completed the on-line survey. This accounted for just over 40 per cent of all teaching staff employed by the Ministry of Education and Department of Education Services. The survey opened on 23rd April 2020 and closed on 8th May 2020. Submissions were received from each of the 11 primary schools and five secondary or post-16 institutions. A greater number of surveys were received from teachers working in John Gray HS, Clifton Hunter HS and Savannah PS. There was a broadly even return from primary and secondary school teachers. **The responses from teachers are shown in the tables below.**

1. The school has good arrangements in place to support students' remote learning.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	43.91%	155
Agree	45.61%	161
Neither agree nor disagree	7.65%	27
Disagree	1.98%	7
Strongly disagree	0.85%	3





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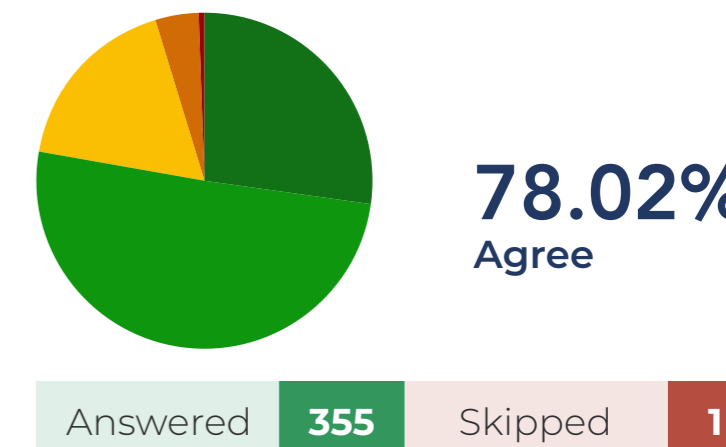
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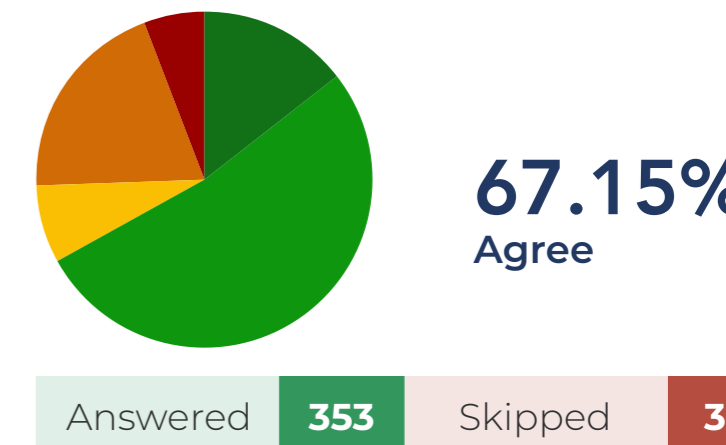
2. I feel that I am competent in the use of on-line learning platforms.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	27.32%	97
Agree	50.70%	180
Neither agree nor disagree	17.46%	62
Disagree	4.23%	15
Strongly disagree	0.28%	1



3. I have received training which has equipped me well to deliver on-line learning to my students.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	14.45%	51
Agree	52.70%	186
Neither agree nor disagree	7.37%	26
Disagree	19.83%	70
Strongly disagree	5.67%	20





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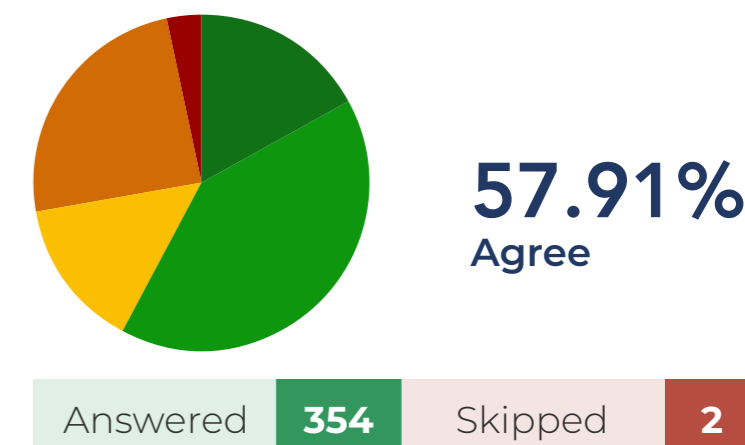
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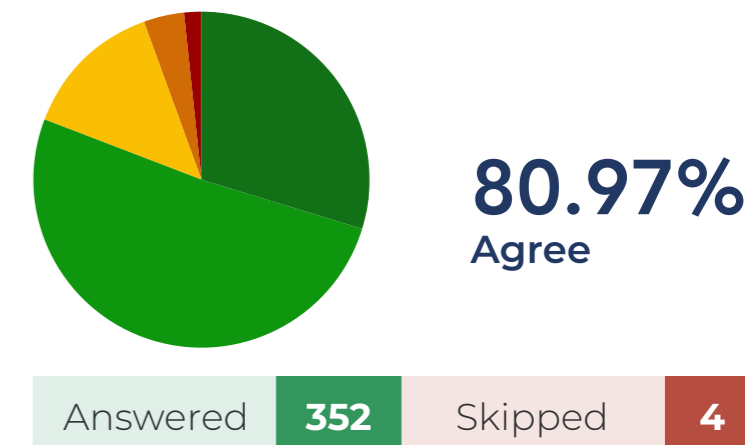
4. All of my students have access to learning materials or on-line resources which provide appropriate levels of challenge.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	16.95%	60
Agree	40.96%	145
Neither agree nor disagree	14.41%	51
Disagree	24.58%	87
Strongly disagree	3.11%	11



5. I have opportunities to provide regular feedback to students who are learning from home.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	29.83%	105
Agree	51.14%	180
Neither agree nor disagree	13.64%	48
Disagree	3.98%	14
Strongly disagree	1.42%	5





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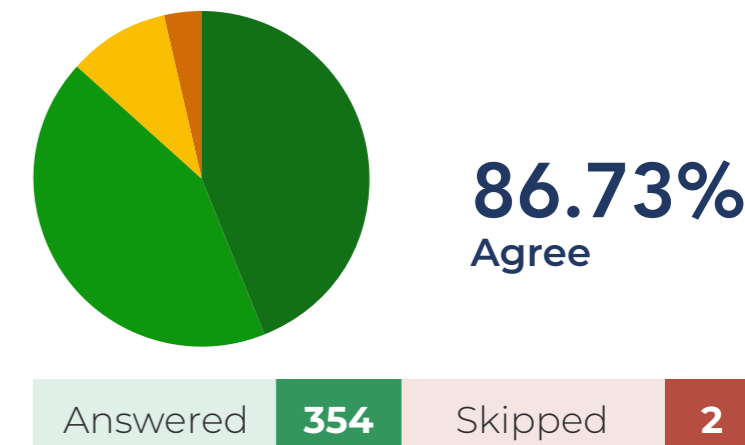
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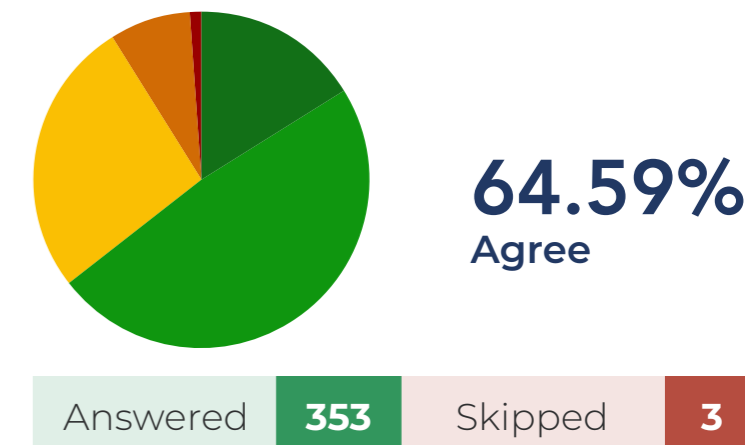
6. On-line classes are taking place regularly.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	44.07%	156
Agree	42.66%	151
Neither agree nor disagree	9.89%	35
Disagree	3.39%	12
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0



7. There are good arrangements in place to support our most vulnerable students.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	16.15%	57
Agree	48.44%	171
Neither agree nor disagree	26.63%	94
Disagree	7.93%	28
Strongly disagree	0.85%	3





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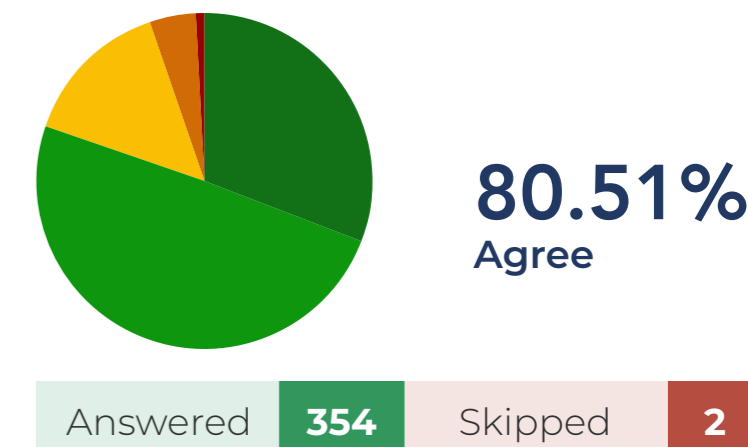
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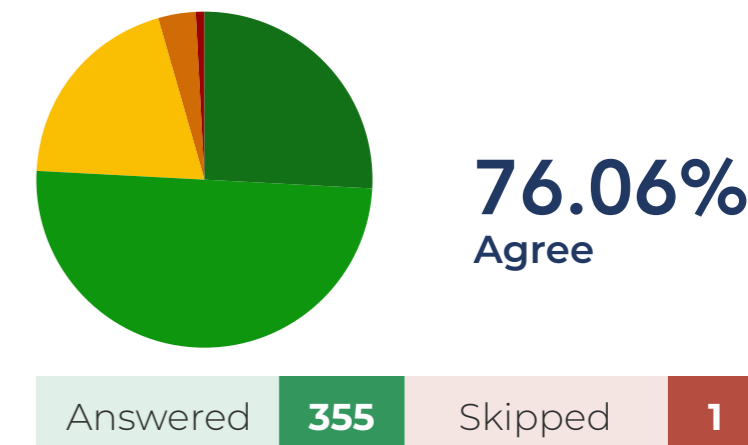
8. There is a clear strategy in place regarding home learning and this has been effectively communicated to parents.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	31.07%	110
Agree	49.44%	175
Neither agree nor disagree	14.41%	51
Disagree	4.52%	16
Strongly disagree	0.56%	2



9. School leaders are able to track and monitor the quality of teaching/support provided remotely to students.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	25.92%	92
Agree	50.14%	178
Neither agree nor disagree	19.72%	70
Disagree	3.66%	13
Strongly disagree	0.56%	2



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Comments made by teachers

Approximately 320 teachers added comments to their submission. A number of common themes emerged.

- a) Teachers expressed an **appreciation for the many parents who had worked collaboratively** with them to support the delivery of the lessons each day. Teachers empathised with parents who were attempting to maintain their own work commitments whilst also supporting their child's home learning. They also appreciated that there were sometimes challenges associated with conflicting demands for the use of devices and also ongoing technical difficulties.
- b) Since the transition to home learning occurred very quickly, albeit with an earnest response from schools and the relevant education agencies, many teachers stated that **technical problems had hindered** meaningful engagement with students from the onset.
- c) Although a variety of digital platforms were sourced, a few teachers felt they were **insufficiently trained** to use them and therefore they lacked confidence in delivering lessons through these means.
- d) **Marking work and providing feedback** was challenging and time consuming. Not all teachers were aware of the various software tools in use in certain schools to support assessment.
- e) The **delivery of lessons was sometimes hampered** by;
 - irregular student attendance at on-line sessions;
 - lack of reliable internet access;
 - home environments which were not always conducive to effective teaching and learning either for the teacher and/or the student;
 - a relatively low submission rate of completed tasks by students;
 - the fact that most of the on-line sessions were delivered to the whole class group. This presented some difficulty in addressing the wide range of learning needs in each class.
- f) A few teachers stated a concern for their own **emotional well-being** as a consequence of the workload associated with delivering home learning. Some felt overwhelmed by the current circumstances.





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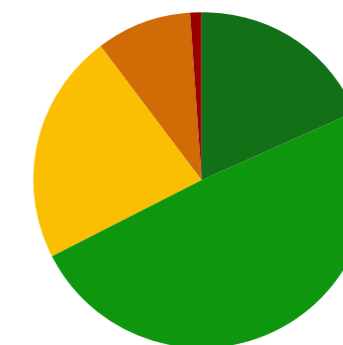


Student survey

The survey was completed by Year 11 and 12 students who were preparing for their external examinations at the time when schools closed. **One hundred and nine students from these year groups completed the on-line survey.** This represents approximately one fifth of all students from these year groups. Forty-two per cent of submissions were from students at Clifton Hunter HS, 40 per cent were from CIFEC, 13 per cent were from Layman Scott HS and four per cent from John Gray HS. **The responses from students are shown in the tables below.**

1. There are good arrangements in place to support my learning from home.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	18.52%	20
Agree	49.07%	53
Neither agree nor disagree	22.22%	24
Disagree	9.26%	10
Strongly disagree	0.93%	1



67.59%
Agree

Answered

108

Skipped

1



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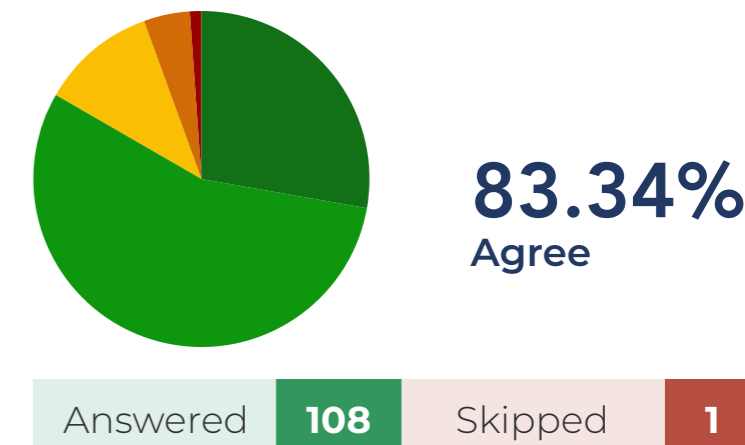
Student survey



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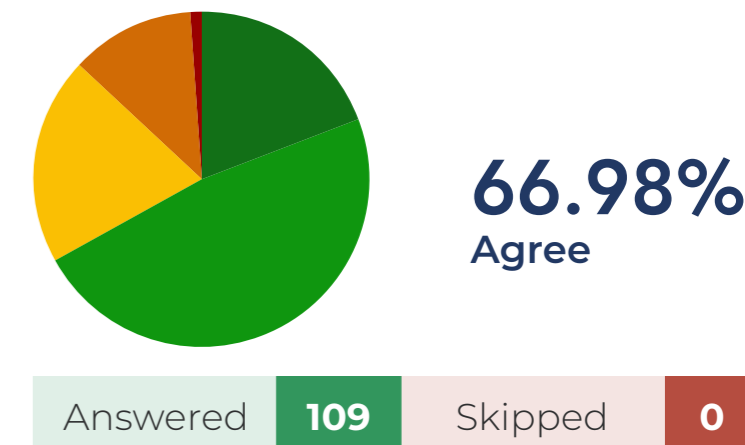
2. I am able to communicate with teachers when necessary to support my learning.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	27.78%	30
Agree	55.56%	60
Neither agree nor disagree	11.11%	12
Disagree	4.63%	5
Strongly disagree	0.93%	1



3. I am receiving regular feedback from teachers about my work.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	19.27%	21
Agree	47.71%	52
Neither agree nor disagree	20.18%	22
Disagree	11.93%	13
Strongly disagree	0.92%	1





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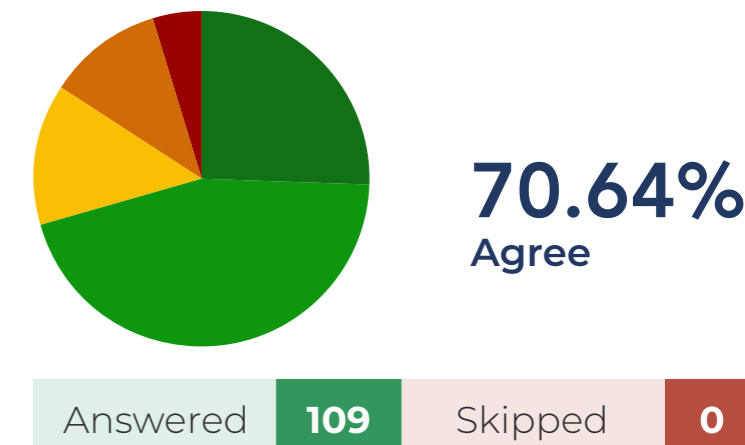
Student survey



Student survey

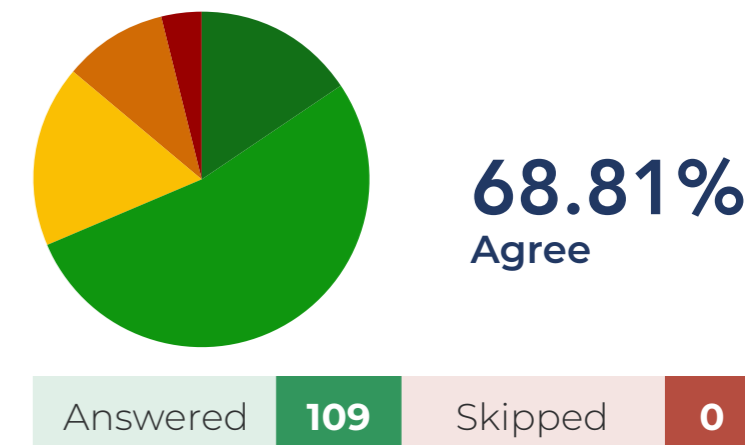
4. I have a good understanding of the different platforms in use to support home learning.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	25.69%	28
Agree	44.95%	49
Neither agree nor disagree	13.76%	15
Disagree	11.01%	12
Strongly disagree	4.59%	5



5. When I experience technical problems I have received the necessary support from my school.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	15.60%	17
Agree	53.21%	58
Neither agree nor disagree	17.43%	19
Disagree	10.09%	11
Strongly disagree	3.67%	4





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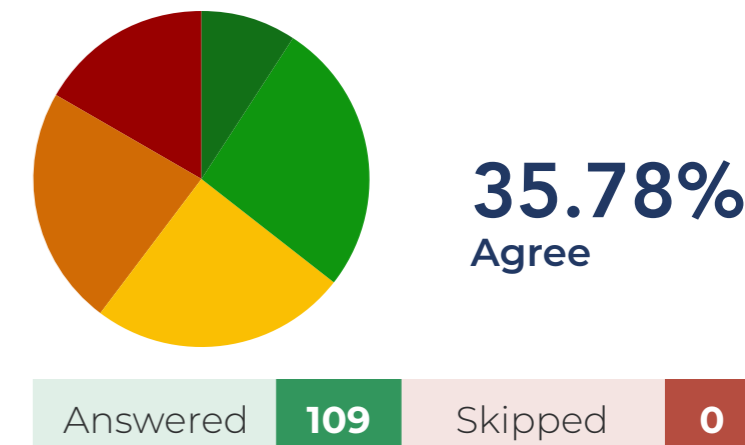
Student survey



Student survey

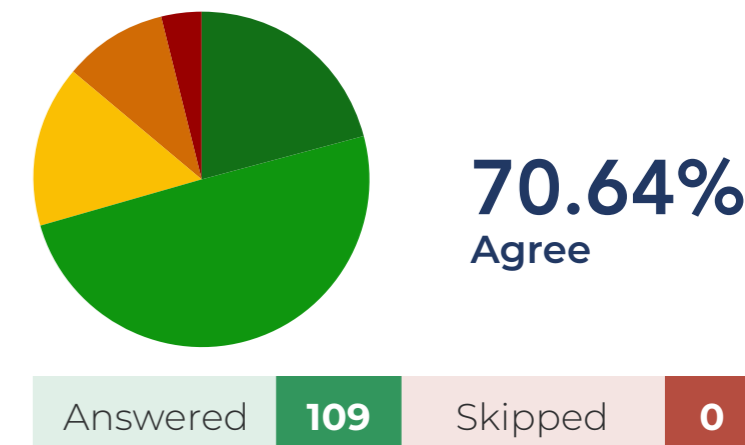
6. I feel well prepared for my examinations later this year.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	9.17%	10
Agree	26.61%	29
Neither agree nor disagree	24.77%	27
Disagree	22.94%	25
Strongly disagree	16.51%	18



7. I have all of the resources I need to support my learning at home.

Answer Choices	%	Responses
Strongly agree	21.10%	23
Agree	49.54%	54
Neither agree nor disagree	15.60%	17
Disagree	10.09%	11
Strongly disagree	3.67%	4





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Comments made by students

Fifty-three students added comments to their submissions and a number of common themes emerged.

- a) Many students stated that they wished to return to school as soon as possible. They **appreciated the efforts of their teachers** but did not feel they were making as much progress working from home;
- b) **Technical problems** including unreliable wireless connectivity and distractions in the home, hampered their ability to concentrate and complete set tasks;
- c) Students felt **ill-prepared for their forthcoming external examinations**. They were unsure about aspects of the syllabus and revised examination requirements.





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