

LIVING NORTH

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Education

The growing importance of digital skills in education, and what will the new school year bring?

Planning FOR THE *Unknown*

Amid the ongoing uncertainty created by the coronavirus pandemic, how can schools make plans for their pupils to return safely in September – and how can they support them when they do? We spoke to schools across Yorkshire to find out

AYSGARTH SCHOOL

'How do we look after pupils' wellbeing? In short, by providing time, space, access to the great outdoors and by identifying a sensible approach to technology. How we do this however requires a rather long answer. Never before has there been so much pressure on our children; the age-old complications of being a teenager, the ever increasing competition for schools, universities and jobs and, most significantly, the exponential growth in technology and its related social media and gaming platforms. It is therefore all the more important to ensure that we provide our children with the environment to stay healthy and with the tools and skills to maintain this.

'This starts of course with a healthy work/life balance, for if we cannot provide this for our children when they are still at school, what hope is there for them as they enter the wider world? It is essential that we work to provide a balance of academic and extracurricular activities, of cerebral and physical activities and, of course, a balance of screen and non-screen time. Traditional boarding prep schools provide time for a full education and here at Aysgarth we pride ourselves on the fact that the boys spend half of the day in academic pursuits leaving the other half for creative, physical and enjoyment based activities. Exactly the right work/life balance to enable the children to enjoy their schooling, keep healthy whilst building confidence, and friendships along the way.

'Equally importantly, schools need to ensure that their staff are trained to promote the mental health of those in their charge. Here at Aysgarth, in addition to the curriculum outlined above, we are proud to work in partnership with Teenagers Translated with regard to practical strategies for boys and staff alike. And who benefits? The boys of course, as we look to support them, help them to learn, to build good habits and to have plenty of fun along the way. In the course of the past year we have implemented a 'Steer' programme for every child in the Prep School, we constantly monitor their mental state. Additionally we now offer the boys drop in sessions with our nurse, an opportunity for them to discuss anything that is on their mind.'

