



YSGOL GYNRADD A MEITHRIN STRYD SIORS GEORGE STREET PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL

Wainfelin Road, Pontypool, Torfaen NP4 6BX

Thursday 28 January 2021

Dear parent/carers

I am writing this update on the eve of the Welsh Government's three-weekly review of the current lockdown. I am sure that you will be eager for news of the plans for a return to school. I have no prior information about the contents of tomorrow's briefing but it seems highly likely that it will be several more weeks at least before schools in Wales resume something approaching normal operation.

I know that very many families are working extremely hard to support children with home learning while also managing jobs, meeting caring responsibilities, perhaps dealing with illness at home and of course dealing with the current restrictions. Many staff in school are in a similar position and none of us underestimates the challenge of this task. I should like to say how grateful we are for all of your efforts and that we recognise the difficulty supporting home learning presents. Thank you.

CALLS HOME

In order to provide additional support where needed, we are monitoring the engagement of all pupils with home learning. We do this by looking at the work children upload to Seesaw and their attendance in live sessions in key stage 2.



Where pupils appear to be struggling, a member of staff who normally works with your child in school will ring you to check if we can offer further help. For example, some families have needed assistance with logging into Seesaw, perhaps because of missing access codes or unavailability of equipment. In most cases as a result of a brief chat together we have been able to help resolve these problems. Other families have been in particular difficulty because of work patterns or illness and staff have been able to reassure them about expectations and to provide a friendly shoulder.

In every instance, our contact with you at home will be sensitive and supporting. We know how important it is for children to continue learning but also what a challenge this can be. Please remember that, for younger children in particular, short activities that can fit around your daily routines are of real benefit. Ten minutes sharing a story is always worthwhile. For older pupils, who may work with more independence, it is worth checking how carefully/thoroughly they are completing tasks and encouraging them to do fewer things well rather than to tick off lots of tasks at speed. Less often is more.

Short periods of time each day practising key skills provide genuine benefit for children's learning and can be tackled whenever opportunity allows. For example, ten minutes rehearsing letter sounds, reading, counting, learning number bonds, practising tables, improving spellings (especially of commonly used words) etc are all simple activities that can be fun if kept short and repeated often. Just as valuable is a short walk or some time spent outside together that can help as a diversion and provide a break for everyone.

HUB OPERATION AND HOME LEARNING

We are running four separate groups for vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers who are attending face-to-face learning in school. In order to manage this provision safely, teachers and teaching assistants currently spend at least two days each week in school. As you can appreciate, it is very difficult for staff to meet this commitment, to provide live sessions, plan and prepare work for home learning and be readily available to respond to and comment on pupil's work through Seesaw.

We are very fortunate to have a hard working team who support one another to get the job done well. However, the demand at the moment to provide in-school and at-home learning simultaneously is clearly a very challenging one. In order to manage this workload sustainably, I am advising all parents that staff will only be able to engage with pupil's Seesaw activity on those days when they are not already providing face-to-face learning for pupils in school. Please note that because of teacher's time in school there have been some changes to the timing of next week's live sessions (timetable below).

I have enormous respect for the commitment and professionalism of our team in George Street who I know are going above and beyond to provide the highest quality of teaching and support we are able to in the current circumstances. I know that they will continue to do so into the future.



PARENT FEEDBACK AND COMMENTS

In previous letters I have invited your feedback about the school's work so that we might adjust what we are currently doing where a clear benefit can be achieved by doing so. I am grateful to a number of parents who have found time in the last week to share their views by email. It has been very heartening to receive such detailed positive and constructive responses which have been shared with all staff. Thank you.

If you would like to provide feedback please do so by emailing the address at the top of this letter or contacting the school office during normal school hours.

A few parents have also made comments via Seesaw. Could I please ask all parents/carers not to make personal comments using this platform. While your child's Seesaw account provides a secure channel it is intended for your child's use and, as such, is not the right place for parents and staff to hold a conversation that is then visible to your child. Your child's class teacher is always happy to discuss any individual issues with you by phone; please just contact the school office and I guarantee that we will arrange for them to call you in person. In addition to enabling a dialogue between adults only, a phone call with staff in school provides a much clearer means to share and address any matters you may wish to raise.

LIVE SESSIONS	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6
w/b 01.02.2021 Monday 1 st	10.50 Check in/weekly planner	10.10 Check in/weekly planner	11.00 – 11.30 Penfro 11.30 – 12.00 Caerdydd Check in/weekly planner	09.30 Check in/weekly planner
Tuesday 2 nd		10.10 Literacy		09.30 Literacy
Wednesday 3 rd	10.10 Maths session		11.00 - 11.40 Literacy/Forest School session	
Thursday 4 th	10.50 Literacy session	09.30 Maths	11.00 – 11.30 Penfro 11.30 – 12.00 Caerdydd Maths Bingo session	10.10 Maths
Friday 5 th	10.50 Check out/assembly	09.30 Check out/assembly	11.00 Penfro 11.30 Caerdydd Spellings/Check out/assembly	10.10 Check out/assembly

Kind regards,

A. Brasington