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

Wainfelin Road, Pontypool, Torfaen NP4 6BX

Thursday 18 March 2021

Dear parent/carers

It is wonderful to have all of our children back in school this week. After such a long time since the school was last full it is exciting to have the usual buzz and tempo of activity reignited. Children in key stage 2 are enjoying reconnecting with their friends and with staff and are genuinely delighted to return. Following our experience with the return of our foundation phase children, I am sure that our older pupils will also readjust to school routines swiftly and settle comfortably over the next two weeks.

I am sure that as parents/carers this has been a long wished for return too. As teachers and as parents ourselves we do understand how challenging the recent months of home learning (or emergency education as I know some prefer) have been. Your efforts have been enormously valuable and are heartily appreciated. I certainly hope that all of our pupils can continue to benefit from the increased teamwork between home and school that has resulted from this situation.

### COMIC RELIEF



The BBC will be holding their annual Comic Relief Appeal this Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> March. We will be supporting the event in school by inviting all children to arrive in school in non-uniform but wearing something red on the day. This can be as little as a jumper or a hair bobble or a full head-to-toe red outfit. There is absolutely no need to buy anything to wear for the occasion.

Classes will also be holding a comedy hour on Friday afternoon to round off the week on a fun note. There is no better time than now to promote laughter and we are keen to get the children laughing as much as we can. So it's time to polish up on a few jokes before Friday ready to share with others and spread some smiles and laughter around the school.

Families wishing to donate to the appeal can do so using the following link:

<https://donation.comicrelief.com/>

### IMPORTANT – CHANGES TO WEDNESDAY AFTERNOONS NEXT HALF TERM

In line with WG operational guidance and the school's COVID-19 risk assessment, all staff and pupils are required to remain in designated contact groups or 'bubbles' throughout their time in school. This is essential to reduce the risk of viral transmission and to minimise the number of pupils and staff having to self-isolate in the event of any positive case. The guidance on this has been strengthened further since the autumn term so that we now no longer have the flexibility for staff to work across year groups and facilitate the necessary time for teachers to plan, prepare and assess pupil's work in line with their terms and conditions.

In order to safely maintain bubbles, teachers will carry out their planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) activity on Wednesday afternoons next term. As a result, all pupils will need to be collected from school by 12.30 p.m. on **Wednesdays from 21<sup>st</sup> April**. This will not impact on the first Wednesday of next term

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(14<sup>th</sup> April) as staff will utilise time on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> April when pupils will not be in school as this is a planned INSET (non-pupil) day.

This is not a decision that I or the school's governing body have taken lightly. Throughout the current pandemic we have continually sought to minimise disruption and to maintain a high standard of provision. The commitment and dedication of staff has been unwavering over the last year and I know that our community has tremendous respect for the unstinting effort they have been making. However, we have to balance the desire of staff to keeping the school running 'as normal' with the requirement to maintain the security of our bubbles. Equally, sustaining the high standard of teaching and the rich quality of experience that pupils in George Street enjoy depends on teachers being able to plan and prepare appropriately.

A similar arrangement to this has been in operation in most schools in Torfaen since foundation phase pupils returned in February. This term we have avoided this situation thanks to the goodwill and professionalism of staff. However, ensuring the continuing safety of all of our pupils and staff remains my paramount duty and it is necessary to make sustainable arrangements to enable teachers to carry out their roles safely and effectively when we return after Easter.

In line with the government's careful easing of restrictions we will continue tracking the rates of infection locally and the possible impact of changes. We will review this temporary arrangement for Wednesday afternoons in the week beginning Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> May. The school's governors and I are hopeful that if infection rates remain low and the vaccination roll out (including for staff) continues at pace we may be able to adopt a different approach as the summer term progresses. In any event, we will keep families/carers up to date with future plans.

Please note that afternoon Nursery pupils will not be affected by this arrangement and can attend on Wednesday afternoons as usual.

All staff will be in school as usual on Wednesday afternoons and you will be able to contact the office with any queries should the need arise. We will also provide suitable home-learning activities on Seesaw for all pupils to access during the time when they would normally be in school. However, we do understand the demand that home-learning has placed on all parents/carers over recent months and there is no requirement for any pupil to complete specific activities. Please use your own discretion to choose what you wish your child(ren) to do bearing in mind your particular circumstances and priorities.

Further details of these arrangements, including lunch and pick-up times will be provided at the start of next term. I am informing parents/carers now so that you have as much advance notice as possible to plan accordingly. In the meantime, parents/carers of critical care workers who wish to discuss **specific exceptional circumstances** that could prevent them from collecting children on a Wednesday afternoon are invited to contact me directly via email at [head.georgestreetprimary@torfaen.gov.uk](mailto:head.georgestreetprimary@torfaen.gov.uk) or on the number above before the end of this term.

### **BREAKFAST CLUB**

Breakfast Club will restart at the beginning of the summer term on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> April. Pupils should arrive no earlier than 8.30 and be supervised before entry to ensure that they remain socially distanced from others not in their bubble. Pupils will be admitted one year group at a time and socially distanced in the school hall during the breakfast sitting.

Kind regards,

*A. Brasington*

Mr A Brasington