



Summer Term Newsletter

Reopening of Schools Arrangements

18/6/20

Dear Families,

As you can imagine, planning a return to school and managing a childcare provision for critical workers under these circumstances in such a short time is a challenge. I want to reassure you that everything is being done to ensure we can open our school with the safety, wellbeing and our community needs at the heart of all decisions made. We have worked closely with the local authority, drawn on the Welsh Government guidance and supporting guidance to inform our plans. This has been very time consuming, requiring lots of commitment and dedication. I am exceptionally proud of the school staff who have risen to all the challenges this has presented during these uncertain times. These plans have now been shared with our Governors and we are in a position where these plans can be shared with you all in more detail.

As a school, we are expected as a priority to take over the childcare provision for critical workers that has previously been provided from the hub at Abertillery, Tillery Street. We have been fortunate enough to secure use of the 'Clwb Llan' room adjoined to the school at the Institute to help us facilitate offering our hub provision. This allows us to provide more options with regards to space and support for pupils to be offered on school premises for 'Catch up, Connect and Prepare sessions.' All decisions have had to consider space, staffing, safety, pupils' wellbeing and factors such as siblings, pupils with additional needs and transport. Therefore each school's plan will look very different as we all have unique issues to address. We have considered several options and have worked through various models to try and best support our learners and the community. These plans are continuously evolving to support the changes presented.

To add to the recent correspondence sent out to you through seesaw, here are a few more details regarding the plans on our return to school.

Safety Drop off and Collection

- Hub children to be dropped off to the main entrance. Children will access the 'Clwb Llan' provision and be greeted by the door to the left, through the usual school main entrance. Parents will be able to bring their child to these doors due to the time differences.
- In order to minimise risk, we are asked to prevent or reduce the number of people on premises. In order to best achieve this, families **will be asked not to access the school grounds** further than the bottom of the school steps to ensure safety (other than those families dropping off and collecting children from the hub facility). This would apply to those families where children are accessing catch up, check in and prepare provision. This would also apply through the remainder of the school day.
- This arrangement further enables us to protect vulnerably identified staff and learners.

- A notice of such will be on display on the school grounds as a reminder.
- We have systems in place where a Teaching Assistant will be available to collect and direct your child from the top of the steps each morning.
- KS2 children will go to their usual place of entry, using the social distancing markers.
- FP will be directed to come into school through the main entrance of the building where their teaching assistant will be there to receive them.
- This system will be repeated at the end of the day. I will shortly be communicating staggered start and finish times at 15 minute intervals following transport times being finalised. For example, 08:45, 09:00 and 09:15. The finalisation of these plans will depend on the times for the transport arrangements so I need a little more time to finalise these plans.
- Parents, pupils, staff and visitors will be expected to abide by the 2m social distancing rule on entering and exiting the school area.
- Parents are kindly asked **not to congregate around the school after dropping off or collecting their children**. I understand this may be difficult due to the car park location, which is the reason why we are structuring staggered start and finish times to try to support this.
- Should you wish to pass on a message to your child's class teacher, **it will not be possible to do this at the start of the school day**. The staff supervising will be focusing on the safety needs of your children. Ideally, we would welcome this face to face contact, however we are restricted under these circumstances. Please call the office to leave a message of instruction should you need to communicate with us.
- Your child will be asked not to bring in any bags or unessential items. Any weather dependent items brought into class i.e. coats etc will be stored in the classrooms.
- We are not using cloakrooms to minimise risk of spread of potential infection due to the limited ventilation in such rooms and space considerations.
- Children **will not be required to wear school uniform**. We would encourage you to provide clean clothes every day to minimise the risk of spreading potential infection. Machine washable clothing would be advisable.
- We have ordered extra supplies of hand sanitiser and items needed for ensuring safety.
- Your children will be regularly expected to wash their hands during intervals during the day.
- Your children or staff will not be required to wear PPE unless in the circumstances outlined in the risk assessment i.e. in the event of someone displaying symptoms.
- In the event of this, we have two isolation rooms set up with the PPE equipment necessary to address this.
- More of such considerations are outlined in a detailed risk assessment, which was presented and discuss with school governors on 16th June. This has also has been reviewed by Health and Safety officers and the Local Authority.

Hub Provision

- School will be open week commencing 22nd June for the **hub children only**.
- These children are those already registered for the Abertillery hub provision and have indicated they need a space.
- We have confirmed we can use the Institute wrap around room to help us accommodate hub children so we can provide a service to support the community. There is a potential we may be asked to accommodate children from other schools to share the capacity across the

local authority. We understand the hub provision across the Local Authority at the moment is at full capacity. You can find out further information by contacting the Local Authority.

- The hub provision will be open 08:00-18:00 next week, week commencing 22nd June. To stress, **this is for the children that are already registered only.**
- The following week the hub provision will be available 08:30-16:00, ongoing until the end of term again this is for the children who are already registered only.
- The hub provision will be supervised by St Illtyds staff for familiarity for the children.
- Following further clarification of the guidance by environmental health, the Local Authority has made a decision that children attending the hub can be integrated into their own catch up and check in group. Therefore children who attend the hub provision will be able to engage with the catch up and check in session along with attending the hub. The catch up and check in session they are offered will be for the same time and duration as other children are offered in that they will also receive a three hour session each week.
- Pupils attending the hub **will not** be receiving school meals and will be asked to bring in their own packed-lunches. All waste will be taken home by pupils. Those in receipt of free school meals will continue to receive meal funding to support their packed lunches.

Cohort Groupings and Timetable - Catch up Check in and Prepare

- Your child will receive a three hour session between the times of 08:45 and 12:15.
- We will need to review and be flexible with start and finish times to allow for staggering year groups. We will agree these at 15 minute intervals i.e. Start times 08:45,09:00,09:15 collection 11:45,12:00,12:15. On receiving the transport arrangements, we will communicate the Year Groups for each of these times with you early next week.
- Year groups, Year Reception to Year Six will be split into cohorts A B C and D.
- These groups and times will be communicated with you shortly.
- These groups will not contain more than eight children as per the guidance.
- Where possible, the staff supervising the groups will be kept the same.
- These groups will be spread out over five mornings with children attending sessions for three hours e.g. A Monday B Tuesday C Wednesday D Thursday.
- Fridays will be hopefully used as a morning session focused on transition for our Year 6 learners.
- We have considered siblings as part of this grouping and taken into account transport factors.
- The afternoons will be used for deep cleaning, time for teachers to contact families and continued support for distance learning.
- If you have any queries, please leave a message by telephoning the office and teachers will get back to you during this time.
- Can I respectfully ask you to contact teachers within usual working time. I work with a dedicated staff, who certainly want to support you where they can. However, I am mindful in view of protecting their wellbeing to reduce contact outside of usual school hours 08:30-16:00.
- For any sensitive or emergency matters, please contact the school and ask to speak to a member of the leadership team.

Key Decisions

- The local authority agreement is that schools will not be providing meals for children to minimise risk. Therefore, no meals will be provided and the school day reflects this.
- Each group should be given at least three opportunities to check in, catch up and prepare with their teacher before the end of term. Our system in place will allow for this.
- From Welsh Government guidance, it is likely that this system will continue into September to give you advanced notice. However, we will keep you updated with any announcements as they are made.
- The Local Authority guidance states that where possible nursery provision will be provided but this is not compulsory, so we will do our utmost to cater for this where we can.

SIPS Groupings

- **The groups have been carefully planned and unfortunately parents will be unable to request any changes to these groups or session times.** You will be notified of your child's group and start/finish times and entrance as soon as possible.
- **Group A will attend Monday**
- **Group B will attend Tuesday**
- **Group C will attend Wednesday**
- **Group D will attend Thursday**
- Nursery where possible will attend with their parents for one session over the four week arrangement (Thursday)
- Year 6 – will have a transition opportunity on a rolling programme over the four week period (Friday)

Due to the unpredictable nature of the current situation, it may be necessary to change plans at very little notice; for example due to staff availability, illness or changes to Public Health Wales guidance.

- All pupils will have an individual resource wipe clean wallet.
- Some resources may be shared, particularly in Foundation phase and the childcare provision, but these will be cleaned at the beginning and end of each session and will only be used by children in the group.
- Pupils should not bring anything from home unless it is a packed lunch for the hub provision.
- Regular hand washing sessions will be timetabled throughout each session. Regular handwashing is key to help prevent the spread of potential infection.

Nursery

- The Local Authority guidance states that where possible nursery provision will be provided, so we will do our utmost to cater for this where we can.
- However, it is important to note this is very dependent on staffing levels. e.g. Should any of our staff be absent, we would need to deploy staff to cover other areas of the school.
- Where possible on a Thursday, we will be inviting nursery children in small groups over a four week rolling pattern to come into nursery **with their parents** to catch up and check in with their teacher for a shorter period of time.

- We are also very aware of the need to support our new nursery starters and will try to accommodate a visit or virtual meeting where possible.

Transport

- Transport to school is currently being reviewed and I am awaiting further information from the Local Authority. Where possible families are asked to be able to bring and collect their children from school. However, I have stressed the safety implications for many of you, in walking your child to school.
- **Social Distancing for pupils-** The Operational Guidance states: *In primary schools, we recognise that it is not practicable to expect learners to maintain consistent social distancing of two metres. Staff should however seek to ensure some distancing between learners. This is based on medical advice and evidence which suggests that the risk of infection and transmission for children is likely to be lower. Practitioners should recognise that younger learners will not be able to maintain social distancing at all times. For primary school aged children, schools and settings may wish to consider allowing small, consistent groups to mix. These groups should remain consistent as changing the membership will increase the risk of transmission.*

Therefore, we have set out our classrooms in a way that encourages social distancing as much as possible but with careful consideration to the impact this may have on pupils' wellbeing. As far as possible, children will be given opportunities to interact meaningfully in a group setting through careful seating plans. Maintaining social distancing in interactions during free play or break offers more of a challenge and we will be making as much use of the outdoors as possible during these activities to minimise risk.

We will shortly be sending out videos of the adjustments made to our classes. We are very mindful of the impact of all this on our learners. We are using child friendly social distancing markers in the form of characters and trying to keep the environments as inviting as possible.

Safety Matters

The staff have been working very hard to prepare the school, following robust safety guidance which the children's needs at the forefront. We have tried to make the environments as friendly and inviting and safe as we possibly can. The school systems and adjustments have been checked by the local authority, health and safety who have drawn upon recommendations from Environmental Health. We understand this is an apprehensive time for you in deciding whether to return your children to school but I wanted to reassure you, all that we can do has been done and we will continue to do so.



Cleaning

- The school is currently being deep-cleaned and will continue to be cleaned in the afternoons in this way. All areas will be extensively cleaned at the end of each session. All class resources will be cleaned before and after use and multi-use areas will be cleaned at regular intervals during each session, especially high touch surfaces.

Attendance and Wellbeing

- We understand that the decision to send your child to school will be a difficult one for many of you. Some of you may choose not to send your child and I can assure you that there will be no penalties for this decision.
- I understand the time being offered is short in comparison to the children's usual time in school. However, I can assure you this time will be meaningful, meeting the wellbeing needs of your children and provide your child a chance to reconnect with friends, teachers and their school community.
- This is also an ideal time to help them prepare for the adjustments they will experience in September.
- I would urge you to ask any questions that you may need to know in order to make your decision to send your children back to school.
- We have captured your concerns and considered carefully your responses which have been considered during our planning process.

- I know we have asked you to indicate if you are planning to return your child to school in a previous survey. However, many of you, for good reason required further information before making a final decision.
- If you indicated you are not returning your child to school or were undecided, but have now changed your mind. We will be planning a space for your child in the event of this so will share a time slot for all YR to YR6 learners. **However, if you have changed your mind please could you inform your child's class teacher using seesaw or call the school so we can ensure sufficient staff are on premises to accommodate numbers. I would ask you to do this before the end of the week next week so we can make sufficient plans.**

Continuation of Distance Learning

- Distance learning will continue and we hope you will all continue to support your child's engagement in this. This is vital for those not planning on returning in June also.
- Teachers will continue to support distance learning. However, please be mindful they will not be contactable during the mornings as they will be fulfilling their commitment to supervise in school.
- We have been asked about providing virtual learning. However, just to note there have been some objection to this from unions as it is not always practical for staff to live teach. There are also safeguarding concerns and considerations that have been raised. However, we are exploring options of pre-recorded materials, explain all videos and other sources to help teach techniques for teaching and learning to support you and your child learning from home.
- It is likely the need for distance learning will continue into September. Therefore, staff will be exploring these options and having some dedicated time focused on preparing teaching and learning plans and resources towards the end of term.
- We are also mindful that children will want to know about their class plans for September. This will be shared with families in the next newsletter before the end of term.

I would like to thank you all for your patience at this time. I appreciate that it is an uncertain time and I will update you as soon as I am able with the promised further information.

Kind Regards

**Mrs K Forrest Mackay
Acting Headteacher**