St Joseph's Catholic Junior School

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5th January 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Undoubtedly you have heard that the Welsh Government and local authorities have made the decision it is necessary for face to face learning to be delayed until **at least Monday 18th January.** This is primarily because of the strain the NHS is under and also because the behaviour and fast transmission of the new variant in children is still being researched.

It isn’t the start to the new term we hoped for but it is understandable.

As before, school staff will be providing work for home learning. I am sure you can appreciate that this is not ideal and nothing can perfectly replace being in the classroom with school staff and their friends.

We also appreciate that many of you are working and may have more than one child at home. In setting work teachers will try their best to set tasks that are manageable whilst also moving them on.

We will try to strike a balance between provision and expectations, but it is important that children continue with their education albeit in a different form. The education welfare service will be contacting families where children aren’t keeping in contact with school.

I have written some suggestions below which may be worth considering when children are working at home. Take or leave as suits your families. Many of you will have found what works for you from last year.

**Devices** – As parents we are conscious of children not having too much screen time but at this time it is the best way to communicate between home and school.

Please ask if you do not have a device which your child can use to access work. A phone isn’t adequate. There is guidance for accessing HWB on Xboxes and Playstations available. We have iPads we can lend out if needs be and you need one each for your children. This being said, some children will prefer to record their work on paper, that is fine and a photograph can be uploaded to their Hwb account for the teacher to see.

Please refer to the ‘Guide to online Learning’ on our website.

Again, we don’t expect parents to print off lots of sheets, unless this suits you best.

**Routine** – Most children work best in the morning. It is important for children to get dressed as working in pyjamas doesn’t put them in the right frame of mind for learning (we know from pyjama days!) It might seem extreme but could put school uniform on to work and change when finished to segregate the day. As all work is homework at the moment keep weekends free so the work days are defined between Monday and Friday.

**Space to work** – ideally a table and chair as a designated workspace, without lots of distractions e.g. a TV on. Keep their water bottle to hand to stay hydrated. With or without siblings ? Some might work well together and help one another, others may just aggravate one another! Whichever suits them best.

**Independence** – Having a go and keeping in touch with teachers. We do not want to burden parents with having to explain everything. Children can email using their hwb emails for further explanation or children can message their teacher directly using J2message in their HWB account.

 As in school we would encourage children to work with friends on some activities and children keeping in touch with their friends will help them to complete work and also for their wellbeing too. It is better for children to have a go at work every day with our support than wait and do a lot in a block. It is always helpful for teachers if work is uploaded as it is done. 3 pieces of work per child is about 75 pieces for teachers to mark a day and if everyone didn’t upload until the end of the week it is a lot for teachers to catch up on. Also, lessons are planned in a sequence so teachers need to check children understand before they move onto the next lesson.

**Wellbeing** – if you are concerned about your child’s wellbeing and mental health please get in touch for us to support. We have 2 excellent, trained ELSA counsellors in Mrs Green and Miss Ganz who can support remotely and provide additional resources.

**Live streaming** – The directive for Blended Learning states that teachers are not required to live stream lessons currently. Live streaming needs protocols and procedures set in place as safeguarding issues need to be discussed before this happens. I am seeking further guidance regarding this from other headteachers and the local authority and will keep you updated.

Teachers will record a morning video for the children to see them and to explain the work set for that day. This will be accessed through HWB.

**Exercise** – Children need and love to be active. With so many of their physical activities on hold at the moment even a walk or run about outside would be good. Joe Wicks is back on Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays next week apparently, as are many other online activities.

**Learning Activities** – Teachers are prioritising maths and language work initially.

Each class will have a new theme this term which they can research and complete activities about.

RE lessons will be set following the ‘Come and See’ scheme we use in school.

All children can access **Oxford Reading Owl** for reading books and children should make reading part of their daily routine. We are still waiting for the glitches in the new reading scheme to be sorted. Please can children keep a record of the titles and levels of the books they read.

Number bonds (addition) and times tables practice also should be a daily element. **TT Rockstars or TT Blast** are excellent for tables practice.

In school we were tuning into Mass at St. Joseph’s on Wednesdays at 11a.m. Follow the link [www.ktelectronics.co.uk](http://www.ktelectronics.co.uk) and scroll down for St. Joseph’s Church, Port Talbot. Mass is streamed everyday for the Parish, everyone welcome to join online and/or in person when advertised in the bulletin.

**Education City** – we subscribed to this last year but was a bit too much digital overload as well as HWB. We are going to relook at it and re start as it is very good.

Passwords – children have individual passwords for Hwb, TT Rockstars and Education City and a class login for Oxford Reading Owl. Please ask if you need them again.

Please keep in touch and email or text if we can help with anything,

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. C. May

Headteacher