January 8th 2021

Dear all,

Well it has been quite an eventful week to say the least!! Lots of changes, which have seemed at times to be on an hourly basis, and then I have woken up this morning to hear the news that schools will be closed to most pupils and on-line teaching is to continue until at least January 29th.

I think the Welsh Government are waiting for the data to show the impact of the Christmas and new year break, as well as trying to relieve the pressure on the NHS, especially with this new strain of the virus. Worrying times indeed, and I know many of you were unsure whether you wanted to send your children back at this point if schools had been open.

We will continue to do whatever we can to support you and please do not hesitate to get in touch with school if you need us. You all have the email address of your child’s class teacher, so please get in touch with them about any queries that you may have too. If you do not have the email address, then email me on abarth@hay.powys.sch.uk and I can send them to you.

I have daily meetings at the moment with all heads and the Director of Education, as we all try to steer our way through this current situation, and it does give us a chance to air our views and be a part of the decision process at times. One of the discussions this week has been about the loaning of IT equipment, as we did last year, but because we have been waiting for an update and not sure of how long this would go on for, we do not yet have any information. Laptops have to be reconfigured in order for them to work at home, so sadly it is not a simple case of lending them out now. I know some families have had new computers, thanks to Santa, but I am aware that not all of you will be able to access the learning yet.

If you have a play station or X box in the house, you can use those to access ‘hwb’ and I attach instructions on how to do that. As I said, please email teachers directly, and they will be able to email you work, or print off things if you are really struggling. I will feed back more information on the ICT loans when I know more myself. I am hoping that it is on the agenda for the meeting later today.

There were some wifi dongles available last time too for those who had trouble with connectivity – if you think one of these would help you, please email me.

We welcomed Mrs Patrice Hill to the team on Wednesday, as she started the job share with Mrs Llewellyn in the office. What a time to start a new job, bless her, but I am sure that you will all get to know her soon enough. Her normal working hours, outside of current times, will be a Wednesday afternoon, Thursdays and Fridays.

Schools received an email yesterday from Welsh Government telling us that during this period of school closure, they will be collecting “attendance” data. We will have to complete daily registers to indicate which children access the school provision, but also, which children are actively engaging in home learning. There is a code that we have to enter for children who we do not see at all, or do not engage, so it is even more important that you keep in touch with us. Engaging does not have to mean working on Teams every day, but emailing in pictures and keeping in regular contact with the teacher. We know that not everyone can engage every day, but we would expect everyone over the course of a week to be active in some way.

Next Friday 15th January, there will be no on-line teaching or childcare hub as staff have a training day, which has been planned for several months. As a cluster, we decided before Christmas to alter this from face to face training to virtual, and how glad are we that we did that. FP staff will be looking at maths and numeracy approaches and KS2 staff will be focussing on the new curriculum and what it will look like in their classes.

Please be assured that we are here to help and support you. I will do my best to keep you updated with any information as and when I have it. I will resume my weekly video updates and you will all have a second chance to measure my hair growth!! I will also do weekly stories for all children to access.

Please take care of yourselves and stay safe.

Very best wishes.

Mrs B