



YSGOL HEN FELIN

LEARN LAUGH GROW | DYSGU CHWERTHIN TYFU

GELLIGALED PARK
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8th January 2021

Dear parents/carers,

Once again, I would like to thank each and every one of you for following school advice and for trusting that we are making the right decisions for you, your child and our staff. Unfortunately, we have already had 30 staff test positive for the virus, which has put our staffing structure under a significant level of strain during the autumn term. Therefore, it is even more concerning that the new variant of Covid-19 is spreading much quicker than before. In view of this, I would like to provide you with some information and guidance following recent updates in this ever-changing landscape. The following information is sent directly from the Director of Education for RCT:

- All children, with the exception of high priority vulnerable learners and the children of critical workers, will continue to access remote learning until the 29th of January. If rates of infection have not reduced by this time, schools will continue with remote learning until the February half-term break
- Only high priority vulnerable children and the children of critical workers will have access to on-site education in schools along with learners undertaking essential exams and assessments until the 29th of January (or until the February half term if rates remain high).
- Schools are not more unsafe now or pose a higher risk for teachers and children. However, the new variant of Covid-19 is far more infectious and is leading to increased numbers of people falling ill and being hospitalised.
- For GCSE, AS and A level learners, a decision has been made to cancel the spring term assessments that were planned to take place between 22th February and 23rd April. Revised assessment arrangements for the award of these qualifications in summer 2021 will be put in place shortly and further information will follow in due course.
- **Special school staff that provide intimate personal care for children with complex medical needs will be included as part of the priority list for vaccination to ensure that the most vulnerable are kept safe.**

From Monday the 18th of January, schools will continue to provide education for the children of critical workers on school sites. Eligibility has changed slightly and will only include the following groups of workers:

- Health and social care workers (including care home staff).
- Public safety (emergency workers) and national security workers.
- Education and childcare workers.
- Food and other necessary goods workers (please note this is an additional category)

If you have explored all possible childcare options and genuinely have no other alternative and have to work, then please advise the school by **Midday on Wednesday the 13th January** of your requirements for the week commencing the 18th of January by completing the attached link:



https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=Ug4_TzS3ZEGUCRtgHRR5k1MbqJSadqRAsdNIWN8m8EdUM0JXQ1lyOFdZS1A2VlIROEpaTU5NRzJYVS4u

Please note, places will be capped to ensure the health and safety of your child and school staff during this concerning period. If we receive applications in excess of our safe capacity, places will be prioritised for critical workers, with the remaining spaces allocated on a part-time basis to those meeting the high priority vulnerable learner criteria.

Government directive: stay at home

As we are currently in a national lockdown, the First Minister has announced that we should only leave our homes for the following very limited purposes:

1. Shopping for essential food and medicines
2. One form of exercise a day (a walk, a run) alone or with members of your household only
3. For a medical need or to provide care or support for a vulnerable person
4. Travelling to and from work only if absolutely necessary

I urge all families to follow this advice to fight the battle against Coronavirus!

Keeping in touch

Your child's teacher will contact you on the following days to check on their wellbeing. They will also offer any support you require for distance learning:

- Friday 8th January
- Wednesday 13th January
- Every Monday from 18th January

Please stay in touch with us. Upload photos of activities you have been completing at home to the school twitter page and hashtag your child's class [#YHFclass], or email them to the school and we will upload on your behalf: admin.ysgolhenfelin@rctcbc.gov.uk.

Vaccination for school staff

Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education in Wales, has today announced that special school staff that provide intimate personal care for children with complex medical needs will be included as part of the priority list for vaccination to ensure that the most vulnerable are kept safe. We are hoping that this will support us to return to some level of normality at the earliest opportunity, where we will be able to re-open to all pupils.

Minimising Risks

All previously issued guidance still applies. Further advice about Coronavirus can be found at: <https://gov.wales/coronavirus-covid19>



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Further information on vulnerable groups and social distancing can be found on the Public Health Wales website at <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/information-for-the-public/>

Our expectations for learning at home

As a school we are offering the following distance learning activities:

- Weekly class timetables of suggested activities shared via Twitter
- Makaton sign of the week
- Fitness activities shared on Mondays
- Literacy/Communication challenges shared on Wednesdays
- Numeracy challenges shared on Fridays
- Suggested websites to access online activities/games
- ...and we will continue to upload other teaching & learning ideas to the school twitter page

Week beginning 11th January we will be offering the following:

- Attention autism live sessions [3x times a week] via zoom

Week beginning 18th January we will be offering the following:

- Sensory story live sessions [2x times a week] via zoom
- Makaton workshops for parents/carers [weekly] via zoom

However, we are realistic with our expectations of what you are able to do in the home setting. These are very unusual and unprecedented times.

Please remember:

- Our children may be scared at the moment. They see and hear a lot, even when we think they don't.
- Their routines and structures are disrupted. They will feel tension and anxiety from the adults around them. It is a completely new situation for us all.
- Children may expect the weeks ahead to feel like the summer holidays; we know that they will feel very different.
- They may react to all this by changing their behaviours and showing behaviours you have never seen from them before. This may be difficult for you and your family but it is natural and to be expected.
- Your child just needs these feelings to be acknowledged, and to be reassured that you understand that life is just that bit less predictable at the moment.

Under these circumstances, home learning may well add to this anxiety and stress – for them and for you. In that case, be realistic with the expectations we place on our children. Your child needs to be reassured, comforted, and made to feel secure during this period of uncertainty.

So, please don't argue or fall out about any of the learning ideas we have provided. Instead, enjoy spending time together. You may want to watch a film, share a book and talk about it, bake and cook together, paint pictures, play board games, travel the world via Google Maps, go on virtual tours of



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museums and zoos, look at old photos and tell stories about family members, some of whom your child may never have met.

Please remember, your child's emotional and mental wellbeing – and yours – is far more important than anything else. How they felt during this time will stay with them for the rest of their lives, far longer than any worksheet or online learning task.

However, for some children, a learning routine may be exactly what they need. They may thrive on structure and routine. They may be bored or anxious about not learning. They may be desperate to feel connected to their school friends or staff. They may enjoy learning online and fly through tasks. In this instance, if you require more support from school staff, please contact us.

It is important to remember that all schools, all children, are in the same situation at the moment. With our care and reassurance our pupils will all be ok. When we get back to school, after celebrating being back together again, we will look forward to picking up from where we left, ensuring we meet the needs of each and every child at Ysgol Hen Felin.

We would like to thank everybody for their patience at this time, and in view of how quickly the situation is changing, we will keep you updated in a timely manner.

Stay Safe!

Aron Bradley
Headteacher

