

# RICHMOND PARK PRIMARY

## YSGOL PARC WAUNDEW



MAY

2019/20



*I miss you and am often thinking of you all ...*

It really is such a strange time and one in which I miss the children and families I work with on a daily basis. In the 10 weeks of lockdown so far, families have moved home and families have gained new siblings, new pets have been welcomed and many houses have been decorated and gardens tended to with precision. Family members have passed on and difficult circumstances have arisen. Life has gone on and we have so much news to share when we return to school.

I have not rung parents unless there has been a need for me to. I have spoken to many, many of you but I feel that you are busy enough living your lives and hearing from your child's class teacher without having to talk to me too. The **Richmond Park Team** do not wish to be a nuisance. However, in the meantime please know that you are in my thoughts and if you need me, you have my mobile 07530 152382. If you don't get an answer please leave a message as I could be on the line with another parent. *Helen Luff ~ Headteacher*

In my last Headteacher's Report to Governors of Richmond Park Primary, I wrote:

***"We move forward into the Spring term with a determined step, embracing change and working together, as a team, as always."***

Well 'embraced change' we most certainly have. Since closing the school on March 20<sup>th</sup> 2020 due to the COVID-19 virus, words such as pandemic, self-isolating, shielding, quarantine and socially distancing have become new words, prevalent in our vocabulary. These unprecedented times have seen many changes, enforced in order to keep our nation safe and healthy. Whilst everyone has experienced change in some form or another, the main changes for us as educators fall into two areas – working as a team to plan and deliver remote learning and also trying to ensure our children and families are safe and well.

As a school we have welcomed from the Local Authority (LA), guidance on how to *Stay Safe, Stay Learning*. A weekly COVID-19 newsletter from the LA Officers keeps us abreast of changes and advice and in addition a fortnightly, Primary Headteachers' meeting supports us as leaders in moving through the issues and situations that arise. Everyone is in a scenario where they have no prior experience, but I am pleased to say that Carmarthenshire County Council have been both quick to react and also been proactive in their approach. After the first fortnight of confusion and uncertainty, our Education Officers have organised themselves into a dynamic team, listening to Welsh Government protocols and issuing guidance to Heads quickly and effectively. Whilst St. David's Park may be closed, our LA support network are working from home and continue to work with us remotely.

Referring once again to my quote above, I am immensely proud of staff at Richmond Park Primary School as we "*work together, as a TEAM, as always*". I am so grateful for the support and help given to me by Daniel Cooper as Deputy Headteacher. Daniel has led on the digital learning side of things along with Katrina Peters to whom I am also very grateful for her leadership of the Foundation Phase and the staff within. Our leadership team is strong and responsive and whilst we would not wish the pandemic to linger, I think we have found the situation of working in alternative ways exciting and it is a challenge to which we have risen. Whilst I thank Mr Cooper and Mrs Peters in particular, I am thankful to all members of staff for not only the part they have played in keeping in touch with families and setting exciting learning challenges for the children, but for the flexibility and adaptability they have shown in supporting in the Hub and for their own professional learning.

- Our teachers have embraced change and risen to the challenges with which they are faced also and they have supported the working within the Hubs. They also work diligently at home to support our young people and their families. They have embraced new ways of communicating with each other and me through Whatsapp, Microsoft TEAMS, Skype and One Note. They have engaged pupils in learning remotely through various tools via our Hwb platform. Live lessons were delivered initially but unfortunately these have had to be put on hold whilst the Welsh Government draws up 'Live Lesson Protocols', to protect both our pupils and our staff. I know many of you were saddened when these stopped but hopefully, they will return shortly, once guidance is received.
- Our TAs are heavily involved in supporting 'Y Dderwen Hub' and are regular staff on the weekly rotas. They have embraced this new way of working despite initial trepidation. Sarah Heckler (HLTA) and Mel Clarke have been working from home in supporting the well-being of pupils and have been instrumental in working closely with ERW staff in ensuring the welfare of our most vulnerable pupils.
- Our Office Staff continue as much business as possible by working from home. Our Office Staff are tasked with items as and when the need arises.
- Nearly all teaching staff have been or are in the process of developing their Professional Development by accessing on-line courses, webinars and training. This will ensure they develop their skills in readiness for our return to school – whenever that may be...

I am overwhelmed by the response of our parents to this situation and their understanding and patience at this time. Your honesty over the difficulties you are facing has been humbling and I am grateful to those that have given thanks to the teachers supporting them directly. The sharing of successes through home-learning has been heartening and an understanding of our professional role as teachers has also been welcomed. In the recent survey 45 families responded in an overwhelmingly positive way and also suggested some very good ideas for further improvement.

- Over 95% of parents stated that school had supported their child(rens) well-being during lockdown and that sufficient work was provided for children to do at home.
- Over 91% of parents stated that communication had been good or better with none stating it was poor.
- Over 97% of parents stated that if they had had a problem dealing with learning or well-being, it had been dealt with appropriately.
- 80% of parents rated the quality of the learning as good or better.
- With regards to progress since working at home – only 82% of parents felt able to comment with some parents stating they did not know.

Our next steps are to look at the many, overwhelmingly positive comments parents have made about the teachers and share the comments and good practice amongst staff.

We will also look at the suggestions you have made and see which of these can be improved upon.

Lastly, I think we have to acknowledge the pupils who are living in these unprecedented times, often surrounded by adults who do not have answers for them. I am heartened by their resilience and determination and their embrace of the unknown. They are (in the main) enjoying the extended time with their families but are missing school mates, routine and their extended families. We will certainly have to accept the different situations each child has lived through and the varying messages they will have received / witnessed from the adults surrounding them whilst in lockdown. The expectation in the media is that children will have fallen behind in their academic work, that there will have become a greater discrepancy between those that can and those that can't. Some children will be reluctant to return and be out of routine, finding it difficult to rise in the morning and face the challenges that await them. With a minority we will have to repair damage done, rebuild work on well-being and learning that has collapsed but we may have to embrace the new-found confidence and knowledge some will return to school with. What if instead of 'falling behind', this group of lockdown children are actually ahead? What if they return to school with a set of skills learnt in these unprecedented times; skills of resilience, patience, empathy and the value of family (please see article below titled [What if they are ahead?](#)). Without wishing to sound melodramatic I think we would be wise to acknowledge that no single person will be the person they were before the pandemic struck – and as educational practitioners we need to be ready for this.

As yet we do not have a return to school date, but we do know that the situation will not change on June 1<sup>st</sup>. We watch with trepidation as England cautiously return to a semblance of school life next week. We will watch and learn to see what works and what does not. We will embrace the advice of our colleagues from over the bridge and try to ensure that our return to school is smooth and safe. Next week there are a number of meetings planned between the LA and Headteachers to discuss what our return will look like. Will we all return to school at the same time? Will all staff be able to return, or will some still be shielding due to underlying health issues? Will families have confidence in sending their children back to school? If we are to respect social distancing how on earth do we manage that in a school of nearly 230 pupils? Will school open and look just as it did before we closed? There are many questions to answer but 'when will we open?' is the question uppermost in both the minds of parents / carers and staff.

Safety is paramount and it goes without saying that this will lead our planning. However, no two schools are the same with regard to the buildings and the staff and of course the children. What will work for one school may not work for another and we have been encouraged by the Welsh Government to look at the unique aspects of our school. All I can do at this stage is assure you that I will do my very best to lead the school to a point where children can return to an environment that is safe and welcoming and hopefully to staff that are familiar to them.

On a positive note, I think this pandemic has given some families more time to spend together and appreciate each other. It has brought communities together in their united fight against COVID-19 and in protecting the NHS. It has allowed people like us in school to explore new, virtual ways of working and encouraged some staff to embrace the technology always present but not necessarily needed until now.

With regards to staff:

- We said a fond farewell to Lowri Caswell and Elin Davies who have left their posts at Richmond Park. They did not receive the usual send off but we did our best under the circumstances. Thank you also to Mrs Caswell who supported in Y Dderwen Hub before leaving us.
- We welcome Miss Elin Griffiths who has joined our staff in very strange times. Miss Griffiths has thrown herself in wholeheartedly, ringing Year 6 parents and introducing herself to families including the children. We thank her for her efforts and acknowledge her role as part of the Richmond Park Team.
- Nathan Howells has also returned to us from his Welsh Language sabbatical and we welcome him back into Year 3. Croeso Mr Howells.
- Melanie Clarke TA has returned to work after experiencing significant damage to her ankle.
- Mr Williams (Caretaker) remains off work due to ill health as does Mrs Nicola Davies (TA) and Mrs Denise Comey Jones (TA) – We wish them all the best and hope they are on the road to recovery.
- In the absence of a Mr Williams – an interim caretaker has been arranged last week. This will ensure some of the more pressing jobs around the school, that were on hold, will be completed and the school can start preparing for the recovery stage.
- I am delighted to report that there are no reports of staff having contracted coronavirus.
- I have taken on the Strategic Headship of Ysgol Glanyfferi (Ferryside Primary School). Ferryside forms a soft federation with Richmond Park Primary and I will effectively be working there for the equivalent of one day a week. This means that Richmond Park will receive funding from Ferryside Primary for my time and skills. Richmond Park has a very strong team of staff and a very strong leadership team in particular so I am hoping that this arrangement will have limited negative impact on Richmond Park and will indeed have some positive outcomes too.

I will sign off now and wish you all well. Apologies to parent Governors who have heard already, much of what I have just said in my Newsletter to Governors.

Please stay safe all of you and I hope to see you all again in the very near future.

Kind regards,  
Mrs Luff - Headteacher

# What we are doing to support our families

## **Weekly welfare calls**

Weekly Welfare Calls are being made by each class teacher and also Mrs Jenkins, our HLTA. All parents have been given my mobile number should they need to get in touch for some reason.

## **Y Dderwen Hub**

Some pupils are accessing Y Dderwen Hub. Those that are not accessing the Hub have this facility signposted to them if they meet the entry criteria.

## **Social Media**

Through our School Website, Twitter and Facebook accounts and individual pupil Dojo accounts, access to activities, resources, support groups etc have been publicised. Mr Cooper leads on this and is very effective at responding to parents' needs whether this be from direct messaging in Facebook or through a 'vibe' of a conversation thread. Thankyou Mr. Cooper!

## **SpeakR**

Sarah Heckler our HLTA has been in contact with all Key Stage 2 pupils via a personalized email via SpeakR. This is to focus mainly on their well-being and not their learning. Many children find this very beneficial in keeping in contact with school and regulating their anxiety. This work from Mrs. Heckler and now Mrs Clarke too has been invaluable – thank you Mrs. Heckler and Mrs Clarke! If your child has not accessed Speakr then please ask your child's class teacher for the access details – there will be a message waiting for your child if they have not yet logged on...

## **Work packs**

Activity work packs have been sent out to children whose families do not have ready access to the internet.

## **HWB**

All pupils have HWB logins and passwords.

Teachers are putting additional work/activity packs linked to a topic onto J2Homework / Flipgrid every three weeks.

Parents are able to access their pupils work via the pupil login. We have also recorded short videos, to tell a story, sing songs, to explain a task etc.

For pupils unable to access e-learning due to lack of home resources/home equipment. School are looking into lending/loaning devices and dongles to pupils – again this is under guidance and direction of the authority. The first set of ICT Hardware is being collected by parents tomorrow – Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June.

## **EMAILS**

Parents/teachers are also in contact via email - where the learning pack has also been sent out and user guides for HWB have been sent out to parents.

## **Teachers2Parents**

Updates and messages are being sent via Teachers2Parents texting service. We use this app to contact parents en masse or individually to let them know about changes, pertinent information such as changes to Free School Meal Funding or share with them that one of Mr Macey's (TA) quizzes are available for completion.

## **LA Staff**

The Family liaison officer is available to support parents and pupils as is the Educational Psychologist and various other professionals we have had cause to refer families to. We are also continuing to work closely with Social Services in supporting families known to them.

## **Staff**

A Whatsapp group is used to share pertinent information regarding certain children – this allows us to share information quickly with all relevant staff quickly and efficiently.

Daniel Cooper, Katrina Peters and I have used video link up via TEAMS to host Senior Leadership Meetings since early lock down to share information and discuss ways in moving forward as a school and ensuring the well-being of pupils, families and staff. These have been excellent and very worthwhile for all parties involved – I certainly benefited from them. A big thank you to Mr. Cooper and Mrs. Peters.

Mr. Cooper and Mrs. Peters have also had TEAMS meetings with their Key Stage staff, cascading information shared in a Senior Leadership Team meeting. This has worked well and allowed all staff to have a voice.

## **Sharing ideas**

It has also been wonderful having colleagues from other units within Carmarthenshire sharing ideas, resources and training they access. It's a real shame it has taken 'Covid' to happen for us to do this. This is an area we must keep going after everything gets back to normal.

## What if they are ahead?

*I read an article on a blog by American Jaime Ragsdale about the angst parents are feeling right now. Parents are questioning "How are we going to make sure they're getting what they need? How are we going to make sure they're prepared for next year." You are questioning whether you're doing enough or not, you're wracking your brains trying to figure out how to incorporate lessons into your day while the children run around and you run behind on your workload. You're staying up at night worrying if all of this means that your children are going to fall behind—with friends, with school, with life. I understand your concerns but the words this lady spoke struck a chord and I felt it would be useful to share because it asks us to pause in the madness and think about things differently for a minute. It says:*

**"What if instead of 'behind' this group of kids is advanced because of this?"**

**Let's talk about helping our kids during social distancing.**

"Hear me out.

"What if they have more empathy, they enjoy family connection, they can be more creative and entertain themselves, they love to read, they love to express themselves in writing.

"What if they enjoy the simple things, like their own backyard and sitting near a window in the quiet.

"What if they notice the birds and the daisies the different flowers emerge, and the calming renewal of a gentle rain shower?

"What if this generation is the ones to learn to cook, organize their space, do their laundry, and keep a well-run home?

"What if they learn to stretch a dollar and to live with less? What if they learn to plan shopping trips and meals at home.

"What if they learn the value of eating together as a family and finding the good to share in the small delights of the everyday?

"What if they are the ones to place great value on our teachers and educational professionals, librarians, public servants and the previously invisible essential support workers like truck drivers, grocers, cashiers, custodians, logistics, and health care workers and their supporting staff, just to name a few of the millions taking care of us right now while we are sheltered in place?

"What if among these children, a great leader emerges who had the benefit of a slower pace and a simpler life. What is he or she truly learn what really matters in this life?

"What if they are ahead?"

## We are so proud of you ...

A huge well done to **Kaiden** and **Freya** for thinking of others during lockdown. We are so proud of them and their generosity towards others.

**Kaiden** (Yr 4) raised £200 for the NHS by holding a raffle for a bird's house which he made. He spent the £200 on necessary supplies such as food items and toiletries for the NHS staff at Glangwili Hospital, Carmarthen. Well done Kaiden.

*The photo shows the moment of delivery to staff at Glangwili.*



**Freya** (Yr 5) has been baking scones all day each Tuesday in order to raise £500 for charity during lockdown. Freya makes scones to order and delivers her cream teas in the community. Well done Freya, once we are back in school, I may just have to place an order...

*The photo shows Freya celebrating her achievement of raising £500.*



**Well done both of you!**

## FREE SCHOOL MEALS

Free School Meal payments are now made directly to parent's bank accounts (apart from in a minority of cases) and this has been the case since 4<sup>th</sup> May 2020. Any parents still experiencing difficulty in organising this payment should ring me directly on 07530 152382 and I will attempt to support you in sorting it out. I have supported a number of parents who were having difficulty with the online application and / or who did not have email addresses. It is important that this is sorted in order for you to receive the money directly into your account to purchase food.

## SECONDARY TRANSITION

Like you, we are concerned about those children due to transition from Primary to Secondary school. We usually have in place, carefully thought out transition plans preparing them for their next stage of schooling. What we do know at present, is that the transition will take place but it will be a Carmarthenshire wide response and not ad hoc plans between primary schools and their secondary counterparts. Until we have greater clarity about returning to school, further planning for transition cannot take place. Queen Elizabeth High School and Dyffryn Taf have shared some transition materials with parents and I am sure this will increase in the next few weeks. We will not have the usual Leavers' Assembly or the Year 6 Concert. We will not have the usual PTA Leaver's Disco but we will try to arrange something depending on the situation and guidelines for the community and social distancing.

Hoodies: Last week I asked parents if they wished to purchase a Year 6 Leavers' Hoodie – this order has now been placed and approximately half of the class will receive a hoodie at some point in the summer term. I will contact those parents separately once they are ready.

## CONTACT DETAILS

Could I ask all parents and carers who may have moved house or changed their telephone details to update me please – a text will do with the child's name and any change of contact details I need to alter. We need accurate information and also rely on correct mobile numbers for contacting parents via our Teachers 2 Parents system.



Speakr makes it easy for us to communicate directly with your child and support their well-being and emotional state through frequent light-touch interactions that build up a rich picture of children's changing feelings. Whilst Speakr has been predominantly a school tool taking twice daily snapshots of children's well-being, we can still use it whilst children are at home.

Either Mrs Heckler or Mrs Clarke are logging on to SPEAKr daily and will respond to your child's comments or concerns. It also helps your child 'keep in touch' with school. I also check in most days and respond to those children contacting me directly. So, if your child wants a chat, please direct them to Speakr and we will respond!

If you do not have the log in details for your child please ask the class teacher via a DOJO message.



# ClassDojo

**CLASS DOJO is a key information sharing tool that we use ...**

**If you are not signed up to it please let me know or the class teacher when they ring you. We need to have ALL parents signed up and accessing DOJO please.**

## Headteacher Contact Details

Remember if anything is concerning you please get in touch with me directly as the school office phones are not being manned.

Telephone: 07530 152382

Email: [helen.luff@richmond.ysgolccc.cymru](mailto:helen.luff@richmond.ysgolccc.cymru)

*I imagine that as plans are agreed I will be in touch far more often with information pertaining to school opening.*