

Risca Primary School

Spring Term Newsletter No 2

Tuesday 5th January 2021

IMPORTANT UPDATED INFORMATION - RETURNING TO SCHOOL JANUARY 2021



Dear Mums and Dads,

By now I know that most of you will be aware that schools have had updated guidance and instructions from the Welsh Government, due to the increased coronavirus transmission and infection rates in Wales. We know that there is now a very real risk that our NHS will be unable to cope with the new levels of infection, and that as a result the coronavirus lockdown regulations were tightened last night. As a result of the Education Minister's announcement, we learned that as from today there will be no face to face 'in school learning' for most children, and therefore learning for most children will be online for at least the next two weeks.

I know that for many of you this may present challenges. As a school staff we were ready to come back to 'in house learning', but we fully understand that presently we have to work together with our community, Local Authority and Welsh Government to limit and mitigate the impact of the virus and in particular the new virus variant which is estimated to be up to 70% more transmissible than the original virus.

As you know, yesterday was a training day for staff, where we were preparing for our new topic, all based around our new school dog Eddie. Having spoken to staff I know that we had some fabulous learning experiences planned. Today, I have asked staff to switch the format of their planning and plan for blended learning experiences for pupils for at least the next two weeks. As a result we will delay our Eddie topic and staff will prepare new topic lessons for children until school re-opens.

As a reminder, we have a Blended Learning Handbook which we have already circulated to all parents. We will circulate that again over the next few days, in order that we all have a clear view of the provision that pupils can expect over the next few weeks.

I know that these times of uncertainty can be unsettling for our community, and I am very aware that messages are changing on often a daily basis. Can I please ask for your understanding at this time. As a school we are often responding to last minute guidance and doing our best to keep everyone informed as soon as possible. However, at times we do not always have all of

the information that we would like and when this happens we strive to keep everyone as informed as possible, given the information that we have.

Be rest assured that providing good quality opportunities for children remains a priority for us, and we hope that your children enjoy the learning experiences that we are now planning for the next few weeks. In terms of re-opening our school for all children, we will continue to be guided by the Welsh Government, our Local Authority and any local health and safety issues which affect our school and our community.

Support for Parents of Key Workers

As you will be aware, school will be open to pupils whose parents are designated key workers. We are pleased to play a part in supporting parents who are playing a vital role in these challenging times.

Our school Hubs will operate on a daily basis and will cover normal school times. Our doors will open at 8.50 and we will close at 3.10. Delayed by our scheduled training day on Monday, our Hub provision will start on **THURSDAY 7th JANUARY**. Pupils will have an hour for lunch. Depending on pupil numbers, which we are currently finalising, pupils will be split into 'bubbles'. Pupils will also be asked to spend playtimes and lunchtimes in their 'bubbles'. As we have no catering facilities on site at present, we kindly ask that all pupils bring a packed lunch. I am sure that you are also aware that a vital part of reducing the transmission of the virus is ventilation, and therefore we ask that all children are sent in dressed warmly. There is no need at the present time for pupils to wear school uniform.

We are currently finalising all of the fine details for Hub children. We will send out information on where to enter and leave the building as soon as the fine details are sorted. Many thanks.

I am sure that you will appreciate that whilst we welcome the opportunity to support key workers at this time, we also want to work with our community to reduce the risk of transmission within school. Yesterday, it was recognised that schools play a part in community transmission and therefore as a school we will continue to work with you to attempt to minimise any risk to pupils, staff and parents, by keeping our Hub numbers as manageable as possible. Therefore we will only be able to accept pupils into our Hubs who meet the strict criteria as defined by Welsh Government. These criteria are:

- Your child must be of school age and registered at a Caerphilly School prior to the schools closing in Dec 2020.
- One parent is a Coronavirus critical (Key) worker.
- Where there is a second parent/adult in the household they must ALSO be a Coronavirus critical (Key) worker and are required to attend their workplace and the child/children cannot be safely cared for at home.

- You reside within the Caerphilly County Borough.

I know that Mrs Wilmore is currently making phone calls to parents who have applied for a Hub place. Mrs Wilmore will be ascertaining your needs and drawing up timetables for the week. I have asked Mrs Wilmore to ensure that all applications fully meet the criteria as listed above, to ensure that all pupils attending meet the criteria. I know that you will all agree that it is important that we prioritise our places for key worker families, to ensure that all of our key workers are able to secure essential provision at this time.

With that in mind, can I reassure you that we are able to work flexibly over the next few weeks. Should you only need a morning or afternoon placement for your child, or part time placement throughout the week, we are happy to oblige. Can I thank those of you who have indicated that you only need part time placements. This is really helpful for us when planning our timetables and rotas. Unfortunately, we are unable to provide full time places for part time key workers. For the next few weeks we want to keep our Hub numbers as manageable as possible in order to minimise the risk of transmission within school and support our community to minimise the risk at home too.

Don't forget, in terms of blended learning, as usual should you have any difficulty accessing your child's blended learning, please contact your child's teacher via See-Saw. All teachers will be more than happy to support you and your child at this time. Should you need to contact school for any other issues, please contact us via e-mail until further notice.

rispa@caerphilly.gov.uk

Once again, can I please thank you for your support and patience. I know that it is very difficult for families to plan ahead at this time, as the information that we are working with is changing very rapidly. Please be reassured that we will work very hard to ensure that you have the latest information from the Local Authority, from us and from the Welsh Government.

Many thanks

Mrs Arthur and Staff