



29th April 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope you are all well and adjusting to these difficult circumstances. I would like to welcome you to our very first remote Summer term!

We have all had to adapt to new ways of working, so I wanted to take the chance to say what an amazing job you are doing supporting your child's wellbeing and learning during this time.

It has definitely been a strange and challenging time, so it is understandable if you and your child feel anxious and frustrated at the moment. We are here for you every step of the way as we figure this all out together.

Our dedicated staff have been working hard to make sure we can continue to provide education for your children. As a school, we have found that we have had to work our way through distance learning with very short notice, however things are evolving more fully now so we have included an update as to what work is available.

We hope you can understand that we cannot deliver the same sort of Education we would when the school is fully open. We have tried to keep everyone's workloads – both pupils learning at home and those in school – comparable, appropriate and realistic during this turbulent period.

We do understand that everybody's circumstances are different, so we would suggest that at least some of the work is completed daily. We do not want pupils to get stressed if they cannot complete all of the work. If you have any concerns or cannot access the information, please contact us at school. We also understand that it is a difficult situation for parents to 'teach' from home. Again, don't get stressed, just support as much as you can.

I would like to reassure you that as long as children are accessing the work, you should not worry about your child falling behind with their learning. Everyone is in the same boat and when things get back to normal, we will make sure we try hard to get everybody back on track.

I have included three key pieces of information with this letter:-

1. How pupils can use their time productively during the enforced school closure
2. A letter from Miss Wilde (Head of Year)
3. Information on 'Supporting your child's Wellbeing'.

We are extremely grateful for all the support we have received so far from the school community and while we can't yet say when we will be able to open the school fully, rest assured that we will continue doing our utmost to keep pupils learning and the school connected.

Mr S Clarke,
Headteacher



1. How pupils can use their time productively during school closure

The school website has a section called 'Online Learning' that contains all of the links and packages that the pupils may need.

Whilst this is a difficult time for all of our pupils, we urge them to use the time as productively as possible to continue their learning.

Work set by teachers will mainly focus on revising knowledge and practising important skills which have already been taught in class. Pupils should be attempting to complete this work. We recommend that pupils try to keep to their school timetable as much as possible.

Work is being set via **ClassCharts** and is also being uploaded onto the **Pupil Sharepoint** of the school website.

Most teachers have set up classes through **Teams** where pupils can access support from teachers and other pupils. Pupils will need to log on via **Hwb**.

All forms also have a Team group where pupils can access support and contact their form tutor or Head of Year.

In addition to this, all pupils should be logging on and completing work on **Bedrock Vocabulary** and **Heggarty Maths**. These platforms provide instant feedback to pupils on their progress.

Picture News resources are also being sent out via Teams, Twitter and the Pupil Sharepoint. These resources will help to develop your child's understanding of the world we live in, posing some interesting and topical discussion points each week for the whole family.

If your child is looking for something a bit different or for additional challenge, we recommend they have a look at the **FutureLearn** courses for 13-19 year olds. These courses are provided by a range of universities. The link can be found on the school website and Twitter page.

As always, if you have specific concerns regarding your child's academic progress or wellbeing, please do not hesitate to contact the school.



Dear Year 8

I am pleased to write to you with some news and some encouragement. It has been strange to spend so much time without seeing you all together. The conversations that I have had by telephone and Teams have been nice and so many of you are working so well that I am proud of Year 8.

We are working on your options for next year. Mr Burden and I have spent time to talk through your choices of subject and we are busy working through the year group so that we can confirm your choices for Year 9. We want to make sure that you choose subjects to help you when you leave school. It is also important that you will enjoy the subjects and achieve great results.

Your form tutors are in touch with you through the Form Teams and I am sure that you will carry on to do your best with the work that is being set by your teachers.

Finally, I encourage you to keep fit and happy by exercising and talking with your school friends.

Kind regards

Miss Wilde.



Supporting your child's wellbeing

You might be noticing signs of increasing anxiety in your child as they're spending more time indoors and outside of their normal routines. These might include:

Pupils aged 3-6 years:

- Regressing to behaviour they've outgrown, such as thumb-sucking or bed-wetting
- Showing greater fear at being separated from you
- Tantrums
- Trouble sleeping

Pupils aged 7-10 years:

- Expressing sadness, anger or fear
- Sharing false information that they're hearing from their peers or seeing online
- Wanting to talk about coronavirus all the time
- Not wanting to talk about the current situation at all
- Having trouble concentrating

Preteen and teenaged pupils:

- Acting out – this might include things like picking fights with you or with siblings or abusing alcohol or drugs
- Becoming afraid to leave the house
- Distancing themselves from their friends and family
- Exhibiting intense emotions but being unable to talk about what they're feeling



Take care of yourself

It's really important right now to take care of your own physical and mental health. Children are very perceptive, and they react to what they sense from the adults around them.

Here are some things you can do to help keep yourself healthy:

- **Connect with others** – maintain relationships with people you care about through phone and video calls
- **Exercise** – take some time every day to move. You could go for a walk or run. You'll also find lots of fitness videos online for everything from yoga to dance. Find something you enjoy and that makes you feel good
- **Eat healthy meals** – try to keep a well-balanced diet and drink enough water
- **Get some sleep** – being anxious or worried can have a big impact on your sleep. If you're struggling to get a good night's sleep, try to develop a calming bedtime routine – for example, do 10 minutes of yoga or listen to calming music. There are also apps you can download that provide guided meditation to help you get to sleep more quickly
- **Turn off the news** – it is important to keep up to date, but the 24-hour news cycle can make you more anxious. Limit your exposure to the news to only a small amount of time, just enough to know what the latest government guidance is
- **Do things you enjoy** – now that we're all spending more time at home, we can finally take up that hobby we've always meant to learn. Try baking or gardening or learning to knit. These are also great activities we can share with our children
- **Set goals** – it is easy to lose track of the days in our current situation, so it can be helpful to set daily and weekly goals to give us a sense of control and purpose. Examples might be setting a goal of walking for half an hour at least 3 times this week or reading a new book
- **Connect with the outdoors** – depending on where you live, it may not be possible to spend time outside. If you don't have a garden or terrace, you can still open a window to let some fresh air and sunlight in. Put a comfortable chair by the window so you can look outside and get some air as you read a book
- **Talk to someone** – during this difficult time, sharing with family and friends how you're feeling and what you're doing to cope can be helpful for both you and them. There are also helplines you can call for support – we've included a list at the end of this pack

How to talk to your child about what's happening

No matter how calmly you manage the current environment, children are likely to be anxious, so it's important to talk to them about what's happening.

For younger children

Children pick up bits of information from their friends, from the news and from listening to adults talking around them – but they can misunderstand what they're hearing.

- **Deal with the news head-on and talk about it openly and calmly, giving them the facts**
 - Give them age-appropriate information – take a look at:
 - [BBC Newsround hub](#) – regularly updated with information and advice
 - [#covibook](#) – for under 7s
 - [Children's guide to coronavirus](#) – a download from the Children's Commissioner to help explain the situation to children



- Teach them how to know if information they find on the internet is reliable. Explain how some stories on social media may be based on rumours or inaccurate information
- Encourage them to take breaks from listening to or reading the news – overexposure isn't helpful

➤ Encourage questions

- This will give them the confidence to reach out, if they have anything to ask
- Be reassuring but honest when answering questions – it's ok if you don't have all the answers
- Be ready to answer the same question over and over – children tend to repeat themselves when they're feeling uncertain or worried, so you might have to answer the same questions more than once as they seek extra reassurance

➤ Be a role model

- Recognise and manage your own worries first
- Be open about your own feelings and let them know it's normal to be concerned – for example, let them know you're also finding the news a bit worrying and what you're doing to stay calm

➤ Explain how our body's immune system protects us

- It's constantly working against germs without us knowing. We can't and don't need to control this process
- Explain that we're taking precautions against this particular germ because it's a new one which our bodies haven't come across before
- Remind them how important it is that they eat healthy food, sleep and exercise, as this helps to fight germs
- If it helps, reassure them that the effects of this virus on healthy young people are very mild

➤ Keep doing your bit to help children reduce the spread of germs

- Remind them to maintain good hygiene like bathing daily and wearing fresh clothes
- Encourage them to sing 'happy birthday' twice when they're washing their hands

For older children

Older children will have the same anxieties about their own health and that of their family and friends as younger children but they're also likely to feel socially isolated, and worried about the result of school closures on their education and what life will be like after the pandemic is over.

In addition to the steps above:

- **Reassure them** that when more guidance comes from the school about how grades will be awarded, you'll share this with them as soon as you have it – you could also check that they understand the information you've received so far, in case there are any points of confusion or worry that the school could help to clarify
- **Encourage them to maintain social ties** – relationships are especially important for older children, so give them room to keep in touch with their friends
- **Equip them with accurate information** – for example:
 - [Mythbusters](#) from the World Health Organization
 - [Data visualisation pack](#) from Information is Beautiful (regularly updated)



➤ Share tools to help them manage anxiety

- YoungMinds: [practical steps to take if you're anxious about coronavirus](#)
- Mind: [how to take care of your wellbeing when staying home](#)

If your child struggles with higher levels of anxiety

Some children are naturally more anxious, such as those with existing phobias or obsessive-compulsive disorders. The current situation can make those anxieties worse.

- Get them to do activities such as counting, ordering and sorting tasks which can help them calm down
- Encourage them to use relaxation techniques such as controlled breathing
- Look out for obsessive or compulsive behaviours and try to get ahead of them early by challenging unhelpful thoughts and assumptions
- If you're worried about your child's anxiety, **YoungMinds** is a charity dedicated to children's mental health. They've opened a [parents' helpline](#) for confidential, expert advice. You can reach them at 0808 802 5544

Helplines and websites for children and young people

If your child would like to speak with someone confidentially, there are helplines and websites specifically for them.

ORGANISATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
Shout Free, confidential support via text, available 24/7	Text SHOUT to 85258 in the UK to text with a trained crisis volunteer who'll provide active listening and collaborative problem-solving
The Mix Free confidential telephone helpline and online service that aims to find young people the best help, whatever the problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Call 0808 808 4994 for free (11am to 11pm daily)• Access the online community• Email The Mix
ChildLine Confidential telephone counselling service for any child with a problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Call 0800 1111 any time for free• Have an online chat with a counsellor (9am to midnight daily)• Check out the message boards



How to make home learning work for your family

We're realistic about what pupils will be able to do during this period, and we want you to be too.

You're not expected to become teachers and your children aren't expected to learn as they do in school. Simply providing them with some structure at home will help them to adapt.

The following tips are designed to help you create a positive learning environment at home. See what works best for your household.

- **Create and stick to a routine if you can. This is what children are used to.** For example, eat breakfast at the same time and make sure they're dressed before starting the 'school' day – avoid staying in pyjamas!
- **Involve your children in setting the timetable where possible.** It's a great opportunity for them to manage their own time better and it'll give them ownership
- **Check in with your children and try to keep to the timetable, but be flexible.** If a task/activity is going well or they want more time, let it extend where possible
- **If you have more than 1 child at home, consider combining their timetables. For example, they might exercise and do maths together – see what works for your household**
- **Designate a working space if possible, and at the end of the day have a clear cut-off to signal school time is over**
- **Stick the timetable up on the wall** so everyone knows what they should be doing when, and tick activities off throughout the day
- **Take stock at the end of each week.** What's working and what isn't? Ask your children, involve them too
- **Distinguish between weekdays and weekends, to separate school life and home life**
- **Give them chores** to do so they feel more responsible about the daily routine at home
- Ask them to **help you cook** and bake
- Accept that **they'll probably watch more TV/spend time on their phone** – that's ok but you might want to set/agree some screen time limits



Where to turn to for help

It's okay to not be okay. We all need someone to talk to sometimes. If you feel overwhelmed, at risk of abuse or experiencing financial need, there are people you can call on for support:

Foodbanks

Neath	Tuesday and Friday	2pm-4pm
Cwmavon	Wednesday*	10am-12pm
Ystalyfera	Wednesday and Friday*	11am-2pm
Vale of Neath	Thursday*	10am-12pm
Pontardawe	Tuesday and Saturday	10am-12pm
Port Talbot	Friday*	1pm-3pm
Resolven	Friday	10am -1pm

*check as there maybe changes due to COVID 19.

The Salvation Army

Based in Skewen , they are delivering food parcels if anyone is in need .

Contact details are 01792 324376.

Resolven Foodbank

Get in touch prior to Friday to arrange a time slot. They will deliver if a family is self isolating.

Contact via Facebook page or 07756763664

Pontardawe Foodbank

They will deliver food parcels.

Contact details 07565 711311 on Tuesday or Saturday 10-12 or 07970 968120.

Neath Foodbank

Tuesdays and Fridays 2-4pm Contact details 0753425650



We will assist you by accepting e-mailed vouchers providing they give clear instructions as to who they are for, so we can provide **pre-packed** food bank parcels that can be handed out quickly. We cannot under any circumstances assess clients on site. **Only clients referred to us by e-mail will receive food.**

feedthehungry@hotmail.co.uk

<http://neath.foodbank.org.uk>

Dulais Valley foodbank

Contact details, ring 01639 700928 each Monday between 9am and 5pm. Parcels will be ready for collection at 12noon on the Tuesday.

Age Concern meal delivery

2 course for £5 plus small delivery fee.

For:

Over 70s, over 50s with pre-existing medical issues or mobility issues, vulnerable clients who are struggling to access food. Delivering to: Aberavon, Baglan, Central Port Talbot, Cwmavon, Fairfield, Goytre, Margam, Sandfields, Velindre.

GAS/ELECTRIC INFORMATION

If you have a prepay meter and are self isolating, contact your provider and they will send you out 2 weeks worth of gas/electric or if you have a smart meter they will top you up.

British Gas 0333 202 9802

EDF 03332005100

EON0345 052 000

N POWER 0800073 3000

SCOTTISH POWER 0800 027 0072

NPT Safe and Well

NPT Safe and Well is our free service to support vulnerable residents who have been told to self-isolate but don't have any family, friends or neighbours to call on for help.



We will arrange for a trusted volunteer to help with daily living tasks such as food shopping, collecting medical supplies, posting mail and any other reasonable tasks.

It has been set up in response to those who have been identified as medically vulnerable by the NHS. More than 4000 residents living in Neath Port Talbot have been told to self-isolate for 13 to 16 weeks to lower the risk of contracting the coronavirus. NPT Safe and Well will ensure everyone has someone they can turn to for support during this period.

All of our volunteers have been instructed to follow Government guidelines on social distancing and they will NOT ask for any payment. NPT Safe and Well is a free service.

To access the service, contact us on 01639 686868

Mental health

ORGANISATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
Mental Health Foundation Provides information and support for anyone with mental health problems or learning disabilities	Website: www.mentalhealth.org.uk
Mind A mental health charity	Phone: 0300 123 3393 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm) Website: www.mind.org.uk
PAPYRUS Youth suicide prevention society	Phone: 0800 068 4141 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 10pm, and 2pm to 10pm on weekends and bank holidays) Website: www.papyrus-uk.org
Samaritans Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair	Phone: 116 123 (free 24-hour helpline) Website: www.samaritans.org.uk
SANE Emotional support, information and guidance for people affected by mental illness, their families and carers	Website: www.sane.org.uk/support
YoungMinds A charity dedicated to children's mental health	Phone: Parents' helpline 0808 802 5544 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4pm) Website: www.youngminds.org.uk



ORGANISATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
Cruse Bereavement Care Support for grief and bereavement	Phone: 0808 808 1677 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5pm) Website: www.cruse.org.uk

Domestic violence

ORGANISATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
NSPCC Child protection charity	Phone: 0808 800 5000 for adults concerned about a child (24-hour helpline) 0800 1111 for children (ChildLine's 24-hour helpline) Website: www.nspcc.org.uk
Refuge Advice on dealing with domestic violence	Phone: 0808 2000 247 (24-hour helpline) Website: www.refuge.org.uk