



Headteacher's Report to Governors

SPRING TERM 2020

LOUISE JEFFORD



Headteacher's report to Governors - Covid-19 Pandemic

Managing the immediate change of routine with the closure of schools due to Covid-19 has been extremely challenging. There are several steps Eastern has taken already to ensure that we are able to maintain a sense of organisation and direction in order to best support staff, pupils and their families.

Staffing

Currently, school is operating as a childcare type setting for few pupils. A rota for staff is shared on the HWB platform with all staff members. 2 teaching assistants are responsible currently for delivering lunches to vulnerable families, as they have a sound knowledge of the locality – this will change in coming weeks (see FSM lunch model later)

Register of children attending

A daily register of pupils is kept – essential workers (guidelines from Gov.uk) register their child for childcare online before 8:00pm allowing time for staff to be informed of the following day's register. One vulnerable family have had opportunity to use school child-care daily, which has allowed staff to ensure their safety and wellbeing. 7 children in total have accessed school childcare.

Working from home, voluntary working questionnaire

Staff working from home has largely been successful. There are, however, several issues raised due to staff returning to work and union involvement over expectations placed upon its members. It is an enormous positive however, that the school team continue to work as always and are facing some unique challenges in an engaging and cooperative manner.

Working from home and the use of HWB has been a blessing in many ways, as communication has been seamless for some; although there are still complications regarding pupils accessing work from home set by class teachers and teaching assistants – these will be ironed out in time; initial reports however, are very positive.

There has been some confusion over a questionnaire sent by the Local Authority, although most staff have been able to complete it confidently and offer help in other areas throughout the authority.

Providing childcare over the Easter holidays

Although Childcare over the Eastern holiday break in the school calendar had been organized in-school with a staff rota and a register of very few pupils; the local authority moved to a 'Hub' model. This means that families who require childcare due to their essential work will move to Ysgol Cwm-Brombil. Staff had initially offered to be placed in a rota for managing this; however due to union involvement it has been easier to deploy our agency teachers from BEST. Both teachers have offered to undertake the holiday work at Ysgol Cwm-Brombil which will mean that they receive pay. We feel that these teachers putting themselves forward deserves a recognition of gratitude from Governors.

How are we communicating with the school community?

School has quickly organised a variety of ways to communicate with staff, pupils, parents, the local authority and outside agencies such as Human Resources.

Staff to staff (other than direct phone calls)

Email

All staff are in regular contact via HWB emails. The headteacher starts a new e-mail thread at the beginning of each day to inform staff of daily expectations and a wellbeing check in.

Throughout the day, all staff can use this thread to keep an up to date check on events and what each member of staff is currently working on. This is organised in a similar way to a staff meeting. The headteacher contacts individual staff when necessary, depending upon any pupil/school concerns or to check in on personal wellbeing.

The email thread is then closed with a daily summary of events and a general, overall plan for the following day. The headteacher ensures that the school day ends with a friendly, positive message.

School mobile phones

Staff are also able to contact the headteacher and deputy through school mobile phones. The headteacher and deputy can either answer phone calls or text messages in a more immediate fashion.

There is also a social network of communication between staff which supports wellbeing.

Staff to parents

Texting service

School is using the text to parents (teachers2parents) service to deliver whole school or large group messages.

Mobile phone

The headteacher and deputy can send text messages or make phone calls to individual parents using a school mobile phone.

Microsoft Forms

The school uses an online 'form' to gather information from parents for instance, organising in-school childcare or packed lunches.

Eastern Cares

The school has set up an "Eastern Cares" group with the purpose of supporting vulnerable pupils and families who may cause us concern or worry, for instance; single parents needing support through self-isolation, complex domestic arrangements, accessing and supporting their child's learning and those children who are supported by Children's Services.

In short; any families we feel need a little extra support from school.

Support booklets

All parents have been provided with a support booklet to help with learning at home and strategies to help manage behaviours.

School has sent links of supportive websites to parents.

Parents to staff

Facebook

Understandably, to glean information about school; many parents have accessed the school PTA page to post questions. One of our PTA parents was working hard to respond and answer worries and queries. Some questions and concerns however, could not be answered easily and so in order to provide support to all parents, school has set up a Facebook page. Here, users can post questions and messages – moderated and monitored closely by SMT. All staff have been reminded that

although we are reaching out to support parents in a different role, we need to retain a professional approach, considering school will one-day resume as 'normal'.

Parents to headteacher

Parents can contact the headteacher with concerns or for support using the school mobile phone.

Communication between pupils and teachers

Pupils in classes from Year 1 to Year 6 can email teachers using their work email address. Most pupils have joined an email 'group' which means that they all receive the same email from class teacher at the same time. Younger nursery and reception pupils are not expected to email their class teacher, and so practical, hands on games and classwork is shared over the school Twitter account.

Food for families

Pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) have a 'grab and go' bag which contains sandwiches, crisps, a drink (water or milk), a sweet (cake or biscuit), and a savory item (sausage roll or sausage). Initially, each family grab-and-go bag was delivered by staff – 80 lunches in total. It was noted that not all families required their school lunch and so school sent parents a questionnaire in order to identify those families who require a packed lunch. Generally, 32 lunches are delivered daily, one of which is collected at school.

*Update; we have provided 2 extra lunches for one of our vulnerable families – 2 ex-pupils who have moved onto comprehensive school had not been receiving lunches, and so school has stepped in to provide lunch for these children.

Further; school lunches will move to a payment model in the coming weeks – families with children eligible for free school meals will receive money direct into a bank account, totaling £19.50/week per child – a considerable increase on monies allotted by other local authorities. We are confident that all families would be able to feed their children adequately with this sum, although remain trepidatious that every family will spend the money on food or goods for the children.

Safeguarding

A number of vulnerable families are being supported with 'Eastern Cares' program. This has already proven a great support to many families who are glad to have contact and a friendly voice to talk with and a kind ear to listen.

There remains a sense of high vigilance surrounding 3 families and the headteacher is in regular contact with social workers and support agencies to ensure all pupils are cared for and safe.

Daily registers are provided to staff on an in-school rota, and all staff follow social distancing guidance where appropriate.

ALN

Pupils with additional learning needs are supported through our Eastern Cares program. This ensures that pupils in need of most support are contacted by a dedicated member of staff. ALN pupils have been provided with learning tasks to undertake at home including Wellcom, Language Link, High frequency words amongst other strategies. Work packs are currently being updated and can be delivered along with school lunches.

Pupils with a statement of educational need are supported through Eastern Cares program and teaching assistants who are continuing with IEP targets by delivering work to the door or checking in on SUMDOG or readtheory to set targets and challenges.

Home learning

Although in its infancy, there have been some short-term successes in pupils learning at home. Fundamentally, the school had invested heavily in SUMDOG platform. This is an online computer game system which allows pupils to play learning games together online – challenging each other on times tables, spelling or reading activities. Some classes have also been using a website called [readtheory.org](https://www.readtheory.org) to support reading comprehension.

Nearly all pupils access HWB to communicate with teachers and a plethora of tasks has been provided for younger nursery and reception age pupils via the school Twitter account. Parents have been encouraged to share pictures on Twitter of their children learning, which has been of huge

benefit in promoting wellbeing! (It is lovely seeing the children and what fun learning activities they have been up to!)

We have plenty of ideas for developing home learning over the coming weeks; in the meantime, pupils are being supported very well with our use of websites and online learning.

Staff Wellbeing and mental health

Managing the change currently is an insurmountable task. Many staff are struggling with new and worrying emotions, and not least the headteacher who has been advised by medical professionals to self-isolate due to underlying health issues. In order to manage the slew of emails from the Local Authority, staff and parents, it has been necessary to find blocks of time to 'switch off.' Which has become ever more difficult.

Staff often rely upon the headteacher and senior managers to 'have the answer' at the tips of their fingers, and at times this is unfeasible. We would suggest that an email goes to all staff from Governors which salutes their hard work, and dedication to a job which in recent weeks has totally changed; which also acknowledges the complex nature of the headteacher role; and recognises the need for patience and care. We are convinced that this would be a good start to promote well-being and positive mental health. It is important that all staff know that someone is thinking of them also. We are all in this together.

Take care everyone and stay safe.