Cameos and ideas for continuity of school business during Covid-19

Continuity of learning

The response to COVID-19 has dramatically changed our lives. In this challenging context, the education system has been disrupted but remains of central importance.

During this time when most learners are not able to attend settings and schools in person, Welsh Government and its partners are working across the education system in a number of ways to offer support to leaders, governors, practitioners, parents, carers and learners in key priority areas.

The Minister for Education launched the 'Keep Wales Safe. Keep Wales Learning' programme to support education professionals and learners as we respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of this programme Estyn have worked in conjunction with ADEW and regional school improvement consortia and have developed this advice for schools) to support them in continuing with school business. This document is not statutory.

This document forms part of that work and is linked to the activities of the continuity of learning 'Keep Wales Safe. Keep Wales Learning.' programme.

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Focus for cameos and ideas

1. Home-school communication during the closure period

Positive lines of communication between home and school are an essential element of the work of all schools, more so now than ever. Whilst we could never have predicted the outbreak of a worldwide virus, we had already identified the need to improve our communication channels during the academic year and had established these as key ways of working.

The adoption of an online homework platform at the beginning of the academic year allowed us to embrace modern technologies and increase parental engagement.

When school closure occurred, this established way of working was simply tweaked to set appropriate tasks for remote learning. The opportunity for teachers to provide personalised feedback contributed significantly to pupil engagement. We had also embraced Google Classrooms, which has been used extensively as a platform to allow pupils to access additional learning opportunities.

Parents are kept up-to-date with all developments within the school via a school based app, which allows staff to communicate with them via notifications.

Having these digital platforms already established has been key to us being able to communicate effectively with parents. This has then been supported further by tutors, heads of year, pastoral support assistants, the designated safeguarding lead, the co-ordinator for looked after children and the additional learning needs co-ordinator's specific contact with parents. The school has ensured that tutors have contacted every pupil to have conversations with them, firstly about their wellbeing, and then their level of engagement with their learning. The school's vulnerable pupils have had weekly contact, and their parents offered advice and support.

The school's youth worker now offers a support contact service so that any pupils, parents or carers who need to access it can be contacted at any point.

2. Supporting pupils and staff

The school's aim throughout the current challenging period has been to ensure that it retains a team and community spirit, through a planned support programme for parents, pupils and staff. As well as being concerned about the long-term impact that this break in normal school life may have on pupils' learning, staff are generally more anxious that, when pupils return to school, their needs will be greater. This could be challenging for vulnerable staff who lack the energy or the perseverance to reform positive relationships with them in the short term. Therefore, the energy of the staff has been directed to ensuring that they safeguard, involve, and continue to develop the strengths that existed previously within the school community throughout this time.

Pupil support

From the first day of school closure, staff delivered a curriculum for pupils through Google Classrooms and included activities for pupils in all subjects, in all year groups. Staff realised early that formal learning did not meet the extensive specific needs of all pupils at the time, so the senior leadership team and teaching staff adapted many aspects of their teaching: their expectations for engagement; their offer to pupils; an emphasis on fun and mindfulness; and loaning computers to them so that they were able to access tasks online. Staff have ensured that the school's previous drive on effective pastoral care for pupils has been maintained with an area created online with assemblies, house competitions and wellbeing activities.

Mindful that transition for Year 6 pupils joining the school in September will be different this year, the school has created a 'Transition Website' to support them. This includes a filmed journey around the school, and sections on 'getting to know your teachers', specific information, questions pupils may want to ask and fun team-building activities.

Key members of staff have been tasked with engaging actively with the school's most vulnerable pupils. This is escalated depending on how positively the pupils engage with them. Through dedicated family calls, staff are able to engage with the whole family, and not merely with the pupil. Where appropriate, they explain how the voucher system to help with food provision works, and signpost them to dedicated websites that are suitable for their different needs. The school is keen

to ensure that it continues to be caring to its community, getting to know their needs, and to understand and respond to them appropriately and in an equitable manner.

Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the staff has also been a priority for leaders. The responsibilities of senior leaders have been re-defined, to ensure that there is a continuous and strong focus on looking after the needs of the staff. As well as ensuring that staff focus well on maintaining their engagement with pupils and support their learning, leaders have created a virtual coffee morning event for staff. They have organised staff into 'teams' depending on their support needs, and created weekly rewards, mindfulness activities and coaching sessions.

When the school re-opens fully, and the much anticipated 'new normal' takes hold, leaders plan to display in the school foyer a vast quilt created by pupils, parents, staff and governors to show what they love about school, what they missed and what they value. This will help the school community to remember, celebrate and not forget its journey through the current challenge.

3. Developing leadership

Four large primary schools have joined in a hub under the direction of the local authority. The catchment is mixed but relatively deprived and the hub itself is in a ward, which is in the 10% most deprived in the Welsh index of multiple deprivation (WIMD). A minority of families within the ward have English as an additional language. The four schools have collaborated closely for a number of years, for example by sharing the monitoring of teaching and learning and sharing improvement priorities.

The headteachers have established themselves as a hub leadership team, following effective practice shared from another hub in the local authority. They share decisions such as admissions for vulnerable pupils. This enables them to share responsibilities and make effective and sensitive decisions collaboratively.

Across the hub, the schools follow a shared safeguarding protocol, which includes guidance on contacting families. Shared processes to contact families include messaging them through a shared app, making phone calls and visiting families whom they are unable to reach in other ways. During doorstep home visits, staff distribute paper-based resources. This enables all families across the four schools to have regular contact and no family is disadvantaged by a lack of contact.

In collaboration with the local high school, leaders have developed procedures, materials and information to ensure that pupils who are transitioning from Year 6 to Year 7 can have as smooth a transition as possible. These include allocating pupils in pre-lockdown friendship groups to common form classes in high school. There are shared points of communication as well as means of communication so that all families across the hub can access paper-based material easily.

Within the hub, pupils from different schools are usually separated to support the principle of social distancing, although strong collaboration between staff at all levels ensures that learning is consistent. Staff share distance learning plans and provision ideas through a shared platform. This has resulted in improving pupils' engagement in distance learning across all four schools. For example, one school implemented a distance learning VE day and noticed improved levels of engagement with all pupils. A shared cluster distance learning day is now planned.

Overall, the effectiveness of shared leadership for business planning has ensured clear communication with all stakeholders, and ensured that pupils across the catchment area have consistent and safe learning experiences, which will hopefully enable them to transition back in to school more smoothly when the time comes.

4. Online teaching and learning

A large primary school of 740 pupils has been repurposed as a hub for children of key workers during the Covid-19 pandemic, whilst continuing to provide pupils from Nursery to Year 6 with effective opportunities for distance learning. Ensuring successful distance learning for pupils, consolidating skills already taught and teaching new skills for the summer term, has presented different challenges for different year groups.

At the start of lockdown, each teacher was responsible for their own class. They were online, answering, communicating and marking throughout the day, and found that they were unable to dedicate the time necessary to plan future meaningful tasks. Uploading work was being conducted during out of hours due to the online communication commitment.

In response to this, at the beginning of the summer term, the school trialled various structures and platforms to reflect the age of the pupils and the communication resources available, while endeavouring to maintain independence of learning wherever possible. Younger pupils continue to be taught in their normal classes. However, the school's Years 4, 5 and 6 teachers are trialling the provision of distance learning experiences as a cohort (three single aged classes) and sharing the preparation between them. The decision to trial

the cohort approach was made to support staff wellbeing and ensure high quality learning experiences. By doing this, there are, on average, over 95 pupils on a cohort online platform. A rota for teaching staff is in place for each year group. Two-hour slots are allocated for each teacher to be on online duty to answer any communication or work issues. They respond to all the pupils within the year group. All other essential classroom tasks are conducted when they are not on duty.

Workload stress and staff wellbeing have improved. Teachers have dedicated time across the school day to provide more immediate feedback to pupils. Teachers are able to plan a high standard of differentiated lessons during the school week. Teachers are responsible for planning fewer curricular areas and are creating better quality and more engaging lessons that can be uploaded to the cohort class for all the pupils to access. The digital skills of staff and pupils have improved, which is a priority in the school's current development plan. For example, staff are creating 'screen records' for the whole year group to explain to pupils and parents how to complete and access their work.

The school has maintained effective communication with pupils and parents through a daily register. Any lack of communication flags up concerns that are addressed in weekly phone calls. These are recorded on a central communication log for monitoring the safeguarding of pupils.

The school has received positive feedback from parents on the way it has facilitated distance learning in year group cohorts. They have praised staff for the quality of the learning, the encouragement of pupils online and the marking of work in a timely manner. They appreciate that there is always a teacher available to support and guide their children.

5. Use of FlipGrid to promote pupils' wellbeing, community and to develop distance learning

Open communication is a key principle to ensuring people's wellbeing. The sudden school closure as a result of Covid-19 meant that everyday face to face interactions ceased without prior notice.

Having seen the effect a 'Teams' meeting had on staff – the happiness at seeing one another and the general lifting of mood, the headteacher realised that it was really important to provide something similar for the pupils, within a safe environment.

The school had already been using FlipGrid since it became part of the Hwb tenancy in March 2019 – three classes out of five had embedded it well into daily practice. The other two classes were using it to a lesser extent.

In the school's experience, pupils have very few inhibitions about communicating using this forum so staff were confident from the outset that the same would apply during this period of distance learning.

During the first week of school closure, two classes actively used FlipGrid – it is now being used in all classes in a range of ways.

Staff had all already received in-house training and been encouraged to use this Hwb feature, so were all familiar with creating grids. All of the school's grids normally have at least two co-pilots. The remote learning grids have all teaching staff as co-pilots so that they can all contribute and interact.

All classes have set up a 'Remote Learning FlipGrid'. Pupils can check-in daily if they wish and leave a response. Staff provide prompts and questions to support them.

All staff are encouraged to leave messages as well – interestingly, the view count is highest on the staff videos and the pupils have commented favourably about this. Parental feedback states that the pupils enjoy seeing staff as well as their peers.

Staff are creating videos to model and introduce new topics and they are recording the first video as an example. FlipGrid also has an effective screencast feature that has been successful in helping staff to create content and in teaching pupils how to use the range of online features.

Some staff are teaching short sessions via FlipGrid so that pupils can watch the videos before completing tasks on google Classrooms.

In the foundation phase, staff are recording themselves to support the teaching of phonics, for example. This personalised teaching seems to be more beneficial than sending pupils links to generic YouTube videos. Younger pupils, in return, are recording themselves completing their phonic tasks.

Pupils are sending their teachers responses showing them completing a practical task. For example, Year 2 and Year 3 were sent sunflower seeds and lots of them sent in 'How to Plant' FlipGrid videos. Some teachers are using it to film themselves giving instructions. Another example is a teacher reading in fancy dress because the book is about dressing up. Teachers are reading story stimuli, recording them and sharing them when setting pupils a task, for example.

Year 2 and Year 3 have a 'FlipGrid book club' where they all read an online book and then record a review. More than 300 FlipGrid videos have been recorded since 23 March. Around 35% of pupils are now recording videos.

One of the reassuring things about this experience has been that some of the school's most vulnerable pupils have been recording videos. The school's latest Grid is a 'Shout-Out grid' where pupils can leave a message for someone from the school community whom they are missing. This has been particularly valuable!

6. Strengthening a school community

This community school is at the heart of a tight-knit village. The school community had become fractured, which was impacting on its ability to work collaboratively to improve outcomes for pupils. Achieving rapid progress to address key issues across the school was initially a challenge due to the need for leaders to create cohesion and direction for all in its community. With the arrival of Covid-19, a new sense of purpose and urgency appeared, with the school taking a strong drive in leading its community.

A sense of community, collaborative working and communication systems became the key focuses. The high standard of staff teamwork and distributed leadership was further strengthened using both formal and informal virtual methods of staff communication. While existing digital communication systems are used for communicating with parents and the wider community, this daily virtual communication across the school community was quickly established to support learning, wellbeing and safeguarding for staff. An accomplished use of ICT has resulted in efficient and timely communication taking place with all stakeholders, ensuring that everyone came together to support the pupils, their learning, progress and wellbeing and to support the community. Virtual contact with school and staff is easy and responses are clear and swift.

As a result of the high standards of communication, families are engaging well with the school, and nearly all pupils are consistently participating in the daily learning opportunities provided. Maintaining careful records to monitor pupil engagement has enabled staff to

intervene early through an established system of initial messages and communication, using a school-wide template, followed by telephone calls from a senior leader. Through this approach, several families have received an individual tailored approach to distance learning and wellbeing support, including assistance for vulnerable pupils and families. Interest and enthusiasm towards distance learning from the pupils are credited to the commitment and input of staff in engaging families and their children. Parents, governors and members of the community acknowledge the support offered by the school and staff, and the positive impact this is having on the local community during this period of uncertainty.

The impact of Covid-19 on this school is demonstrated by a collective renewed sense of purpose and direction, supported by strong communication and collaborative working, with pupils and their learning as the key focus. There is a renewed sense of community, with the school demonstrating to everyone that, by moving forward, reviewing and changing, they can get through this together.

7. Childcare Hub

At the Hub, the childcare provided for the children of key workers and vulnerable pupils is going well. The strong communication links between all cluster schools via weekly 'Teams' meetings and a virtual group using another digital platform has been a strength, along with the contribution of the local secondary school in timetabling the daily rotas and the tireless work of the cleaning, catering and caretaking staff.

Morning sessions within the Hub are dedicated to structured learning, where pupils from key stages 2 to 4 concentrate on the learning materials provided remotely for them by their schools, with Hub staff working as facilitators. For foundation phase pupils, where accessing online Hwb resources is not suitable or practical, all cluster schools take it in turns to provide a fortnightly grid of rich learning and structured play opportunities for the staff to select and tick off once completed. To support the facilitation of learning and pupils' individual educational and behavioural needs, all schools have shared their one-page profiles and made them easily accessible for the staff within the Hub.

The afternoon sessions are based around planned childcare activities, which range from varied sessions such as sport with the 5x60 officers, forest schools, cooking, music, dance and coding. These sessions are timetabled with staff from all schools sharing their expertise. This has allowed opportunities for valuable provision to enhance pupils' wellbeing and skills.

The Hub has also benefited from generous donations of things such as Easter eggs for the pupils from members of the local community and businesses. Staff and pupils are grateful for these.

8. Distance learning provision

One secondary school has produced a digital booklet, which provides guidance to parents, pupils and staff on how distance learning will work for members of the school community. The booklet is divided into five sections: Pupil Wellbeing, Staff Wellbeing, Digital Learning, Professional Learning, and Communication.

Each section provides guidance for teachers on how that aspect of the provision works for the school community and contains links to related resources that are embedded. For example, the 'Pupil Wellbeing' section contains a link to view a Wellbeing, Health and Support Book, which has been created by staff and made available to all pupils. The 'Digital Learning' section contains links to learning plans for every subject and each year group, which have been uploaded onto the school's website. In developing its approach to distance learning, staff from the school anticipated the needs of those pupils who were digitally disadvantaged and in the first instance have provided them with hard copies of work and resources that have been sent home.

The 'Professional Learning' section sets out clear expectations around what staff are expected to do in terms of their professional development whilst working from home. This includes links to leadership training for middle and senior leaders. The 'Staff Wellbeing' section includes a communication tree, which ensures that line managers speak to all the staff they are responsible for at least once a week.

9. Effective communication between school and home

One primary school has used a range of innovative ways to ensure effective communication with home and the community.

Weekly digital slideshows: Compiled using photographs and messages that have been sent via a dedicated email address showing what the pupils and staff have been doing that week, including birthday messages for the forthcoming coming week.

Smart digital assembly videos: The headteacher and staff use the format of their normal weekly whole school assembly to produce a virtual assembly.

Website staff videos: Two fun videos were made to connect with pupils. The first was changing the words on a well-known pop song to relate to the virus and the other was passing the Easter egg virtually on Easter Sunday.

Digital check-ins: Consisting of fortnightly class meetings with groups of pupils and their teacher, with a learning support assistant.

Digital P.E. sessions: Sharing weekly PE sessions by a member of staff in their garden.

Digital daily welcome: The teachers produce digital daily welcomes for the pupils explaining the work for the day ahead.

Digital presentations set on a class reading book: Initially a video of a member of staff reading a book, now changed to using a digital presentation with flipped voice recording after putting the pages onto the slideshow. This is used for sharing a reading book in the foundation phase with linked comprehension questions and phonics at the end.

10. Communication

The aim has been to be as supportive to families and the school community as possible and to keep the school at the centre of the community, albeit virtually.

Staff communicate daily using social media. Separate groups have been set up, so that there is no deluge of information sent to all members of staff if it is not necessarily pertinent to their role. Staff are sharing queries, supporting each other emotionally, uploading podcasts from education and discussing rotas. A weekly staff meeting through 'Teams' clarifies key messages and allows staff to discuss issues in a more detailed manner.

The headteacher speaks to all parents on a fortnightly basis and asks for feedback on distance learning, social media posts and staff communication, as well as offering support in any way possible. Teachers contact their families once a month by phone, and whenever necessary using 'Class Dojo'. The monthly phone call is primarily to speak to pupils and offer encouragement around their work. Social media is being used to share learning, successes and anything that could support parents at home.

Pupils are contacted daily using 'Teams' and 'J2e'. Teachers offer feedback to pupils throughout each day.

The governing body meets through 'Teams'. In the only meeting so far, not all governors were able to access the meeting due to technical issues. However, the school keeps governors informed on all matters by email. The likelihood is that further formal meetings, such as a finance committee meeting, will be by video. The aim is to meet as governors once a month.

11. Student and parent welfare

By using the 'J2e' or 'One Note' online systems, teachers monitor tasks that are submitted by pupils on a daily basis. Literacy and numeracy tasks are set on a weekly basis, and cross-curricular challenges are set every two weeks by placing them on 'J2e' or creating paper copies for those who want them.

During the sixth week of being at home, it was noticed that pupils were generally completing fewer of the tasks each day. This was obvious among the pupils who, during previous weeks, had completed several tasks a day. Parents were contacted and it was confirmed that either the pupils or parents had hit a brick wall and felt stressed due to isolation or due to trying to achieve a balance between life, work and family.

It was felt that adding to the stress by introducing further tasks would not be beneficial at this time. Instead, the school introduced a week of wellbeing tasks. It emphasised the need to take half an hour a day without devices or interruptions in order to spend time completing activities as a family, such as cooking. In addition to family activities, there were fun tasks for pupils, such as transforming their parents, which would put a smile on their faces.

These tasks have had a very positive response from parents and pupils. The school has received messages of thanks from parents, and all pupils prepared messages of thanks for their teachers which were presented in the form of a video.

The school has seen an increase in pupils' response to the tasks that are set once again, and intend to continue with this practice by holding a wellbeing week every three weeks in order to ensure that the continuum of home learning continues.

Professional learning for staff

- Training was provided for all teaching staff on distance learning systems and procedures before the school closed and during the school closure period.
- A climate has been created based on experimenting and being creative in order to create high quality digital teaching and learning resources.
- Video clips were provided to support and train staff, in order to aim for consistent provision of a high standard across the curriculum.
- Clear structures of regular departmental, pastoral and line manager meetings have been established through 'Teams' in order to share good practice, support each other, monitor current provision and plan for improvement.
- Digital packages of good practice have been provided, which include examples of resources, evidence of feedback and samples of pupils' work in order to continue to support and develop staff professionally during this time.
- Good practice is shared with the challenge adviser in weekly meetings in order to share departmental and pastoral systems across the local authority.

New curriculum 2022

- As a pioneer school, planning and experimentation when preparing for the new curriculum for Wales continues. For example, a digital 'Humanities' project, which has been developed jointly between the primary and secondary sectors, is being completed during this time by Year 6 pupils in the cluster.
- The school responds to requests for support and advice from other schools in preparing for the new curriculum for Wales.

Monitoring work

- The school has continued to use systems to identify points and positive comments for pupils who respond to tasks and submit work. By doing so, parents who use the app are able to get a daily overview of pupils' achievements.
- A monitoring spreadsheet is used for staff on a weekly basis in order to gain an overview of pupils' achievements across the years.
- A questionnaire was carried out for parents and pupils, asking for feedback in terms of provision. As a result of the response, the school has adapted its systems and procedures regularly.
- In order to support pupils from all backgrounds, regular telephone calls are organised from members of the senior management team and heads of progress and wellbeing.

- A personal tutor/assistant contacts some pupils on a daily basis in order to support their progress and wellbeing.
- Laptops or similar equipment have been provided for families for whom the lack of digital equipment has been an obstacle.
- The school has established a technical helpline and general helpline for pupils and parents.
- The school's staff use 'Assignments' within 'Teams' as a manageable way of collating work and provided pupils with timely feedback and support.

Wellbeing procedures

- The school has established a technical helpline and general helpline for pupils and parents.
- The school provides laptops and Chromebooks for families for whom the lack of digital equipment has been an obstacle.
- Regular telephone calls are held with the families of pupils with additional learning needs, in order to provide them with support and advice. External agencies are used, where necessary, to provide specialist support.
- Morning announcements are shared with staff on a daily bases in order to establish a supportive pattern for them.
- Specific members of staff make weekly telephone calls and receive feedback from the families of pupils who are eligible for free school meals and vulnerable pupils.
- The school has used support staff to contact those families that do not have access to the internet or digital equipment and who receive paper copies of work. The purpose of the telephone calls is to:
  o Check that they receive work regularly
  o Suggest that they store their work methodically by subject until their return to school
  o Explain the different methods available for sending work to members of staff.

12. Maintaining pastoral support

During the Covid-19 lockdown, the school has seen a decline in the mental health of some of the pupils, parents and staff. Maintaining the pastoral support for all remains a key priority and is a responsibility shared by all staff.

The headteacher has an effective system for keeping in regular contact with the staff to check in on their wellbeing and the wellbeing of pupils and their families.

The assistant headteachers support the staff with daily messages including encouragement, humour and congratulations to lift their spirits and make all staff feel included. This has been effective in ensuring that there is always somebody there to help and support them.

As well as providing learning for the pupils, the teachers are in contact with parents to check that they are able to access the work provided, and to give them the opportunity to discuss ways in which they can support their child at home. If teachers have not had contact from the family within a week, they will try to make contact via phone. They pass on any concerns to the family liaison officer and the headteacher to follow up as required.

The pastoral support counsellor offers emotional support from home via telephone, email, and dedicated forms of social media. Check-in texts and emails are sent weekly to remind parents, pupils and staff that support is available.

Pupils who are unable to access the work online receive a printing and delivery service.

Pupils with additional learning needs are carefully monitored via emails and phone calls. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) continue to attend school for their wellbeing and to maintain their routines. ASD pupils unable to work online have been given textbooks and specific school materials and resources.

Pupils who receive speech and language support have been offered online virtual sessions via the family liaison officer.

Vulnerable pupils receive home visits, checking they are well and able to access the work. They have also received packs of craft materials.
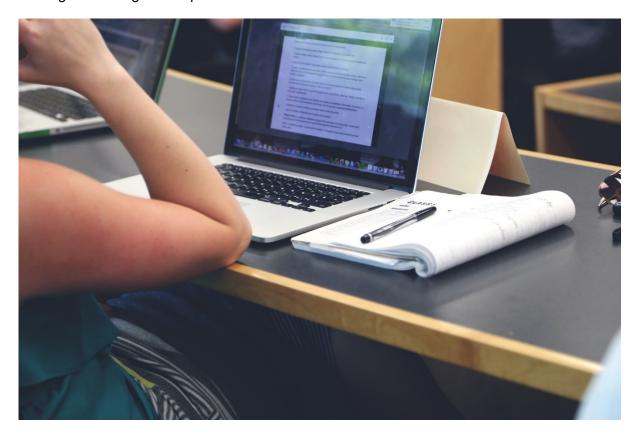
The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) has daily email or phone contact with parents, putting pupils' minds at rest concerning the work or dealing with any of their fears.

Staff have a chosen 'buddy' as an extra support network and, if issues arise or there are concerns, these are passed on with consent.

There have been several conversations to ensure consistency in terms of planning so that all staff have an equitable workload / home life balance as far as possible. The school is also in regular contact with staff living on their own and those in isolation.

The school has made a conscious effort not to overburden parents with copious amounts of work, and ensured there are physical and creative activities planned each week for the wellbeing of the pupils. In some cases, wellbeing activities are set to meet the specific needs of individual families and their children.

Feedback from staff, parents and pupils strongly suggests that these measures are helping to mitigate the negative impact of the Covid-19 lockdown.

13. Keeping in Touch

As the period of lockdown was extended, one of the key issues for a headteacher has been to find ways of supporting the wellbeing of staff, pupils and families and communicating with them effectively. Here are some of the things the school has done.

Leadership

The leadership team took the decision that, since life has changed beyond all recognition, the leadership had to adapt quickly. Adopting a team approach to running a school meant redefining the responsibilities of the team, supporting them to acquire quickly the necessary knowledge and prepare effective systems to guide through the coming months. Traditional areas of expertise were replaced by seven new areas of focus:

- In-school provision
- Remote provision
- Wellbeing
- Exam grade awards
- Supporting vulnerable pupils

- Health, safety and risk assessment
- Ongoing contingency planning for the return to normality

When the school closed, seven senior leaders were ready to take on their new areas of responsibility and were ready to engage with staff, pupils and parents to ensure an effective transition to the 'new role'.

Communication

Staff, pupils and families needed information presented clearly and accurately to inform their decisions. Messages and guidance from local, regional and national government have been applied in a way most relevant to the context of the school and are communicated effectively to all stakeholders.

Clear channels of communication have been set up that can be updated easily. Examples include setting up new webpages for each year group in school to access work, and a single 'Covid-19' page with regular updates, rather than sending out different letters or social media posts every day. From a staff perspective, everything is driven through the responsibility areas mentioned above with new dedicated areas of the intranet under these headings. A regular update email is structured in the same way so that people can find information they need quickly and they can see when it has changed.

'Virtual Staff Briefings' are held every Monday morning, attended by over 70 staff, through the video conferencing facilities on 'Teams'. This helps them all to come together and share important notices. Meetings for the curriculum, pastoral and governor teams are organised in the same way. For example, more recently, each department has a 'private channel' in 'Teams' to share information and then to meet individually with the headteacher to discuss their grade predictions for GCSE and A Level qualifications.

Wellbeing

Systems were set up to keep in contact with the most vulnerable pupils by phone on a weekly basis, keeping a shared log of calls made and any concerns raised.

Pupils have engaged in learning through 'Teams', and have been supported through this medium. The 'Year Group' teams established have been useful for pupils to 'check in' with each other and with pastoral staff. They engage in a wide range of activities to maintain their wellbeing, such as creating a play list on a given theme, sharing photographs from their daily

exercise, carrying out a reflection exercise, sharing experiences and so on. There are bespoke 'Teams' set up to engage with dyslexic pupils, autistic pupils and pupils with other additional learning needs (ALN). The school provides younger pupils with a 'story telling' session twice a week for them to 'kick back and relax' whilst they listen to a member of staff reading a story to them!

The headteacher has maintained an 'open door policy', responding promptly to emails from staff and requests from parents through social media. Staff keep in touch with each other through a staff 'Team' where the physical education department also posts daily exercise videos for them, and where the weekly virtual 'pub quiz' is held!

The beginning of the summer term brought with it a sense of routine, subject teachers setting work for their classes, and pastoral staff thinking about how to engage pupils in their learning. Equally, lockdown continued to prove an isolation challenge, and continued engagement with staff and pupils to 'check in' with them and to see how they are doing remained important.

It was found useful to encourage all staff and pupils to complete a quick questionnaire to evaluate their own wellbeing, to help inform strategy and to address individual issues as they arise. Brevity was the key here, to provide a quick and accurate snapshot, which can be repeated regularly to test and adjust processes accordingly.

The four questions asked were as follows:

- Name – this was deliberately not an anonymous survey
- A rating (1 to 10) of your wellbeing
- What are you finding particularly challenging during this period of self-isolation?
- Is there anything school can do to support you more?

The results from both staff and pupils showed that support strategies are generally working well. Every member of the community who scored their wellbeing at less than five was contacted to check in with them and to let them know what help is available should they need it. The responses from staff are summarised in a word cloud and show that their focus has necessarily changed in response to the situation.

There are many things that can be done to support staff, pupils and families at this time, but it is clear that one of the most important is keeping in touch with them, letting them know that there is someone there for them, and providing them with the tools and support they need to work in a new way.

14. Governance (1)

Members of the governing body of a large semi-rural primary school are supporting the active eco school by holding paperless meetings. They chose to create a Hwb Network for the organisation and management of documentation, supported by the regional governor support team.

Recently the governing body moved to 'MS Teams', which has enabled them to hold meetings virtually. The agenda has focused primarily on the wellbeing and welfare of pupils and staff during this time.

Governors receive updates on the support for, and engagement of, staff and parents for distance learning. The governing body and staff are keen to continue with the pioneer curriculum work they are undertaking with staff working collaboratively via MS Teams, Hwb and file sharing. The governing body is provided with updates from the senior and middle leaders that are invited to join the virtual meetings. Staff share their screen and provide governors with short presentations on progress and activities undertaken. Staff have been sharing successful distance learning activities with other schools.

The headteacher provides governors with an overview of safeguarding arrangements and the strategies in place to continue the care for vulnerable pupils and children of key workers, as they are a hub school. The safeguarding governor has been updated on the changes in approach to monitoring and engagement with families at this time.

The governing body is able to work collectively on documents and plans to continue the work of the committees via virtual meetings and sharing of documents. Several policies have been reviewed.

As a hub school, the chair of governors keeps in touch with the headteacher to discuss the practicalities of staff allocation, health and safety and wellbeing of all that attend the site. This information is then fed back to the governing body via email and at virtual meetings.

15. Governance (2)

Two weeks before school closure, the headteacher and chair of governors worked closely together and met with both the senior leadership team and staff to prepare to move to distance teaching provision. The business continuity plan was updated and implemented, and an emergency strategy group was formed, which included the chair of governors.

In the week leading up to the closure, the chair of governors provided all governors with an email update of the actions the school had and intended to take, with a breakdown of provision for each year group and the online facilities being utilised.

In the initial stages of school closure, the headteacher and chair of governors communicated daily to ensure that school response to the changing situation and communication with the wider school community was co-ordinated.

The chair of governors sought support from the regional governor support team to hold a full virtual governing body meeting, seeking advice on most appropriate platform to use to ensure access and inclusion for governors.

One month into the school closure, the headteacher and chair of governors communicated with all governors via email, providing them with a comprehensive update of the actions the school had taken and outlining the next steps for the school.

Six weeks into the closure, a virtual meeting of the full governing body took place, which followed an agenda that reflected the urgent business for governing bodies to consider as set out in Welsh Government guidance. Governors were updated according to these items and provided with a full picture of actions the school had taken and plans going forward whilst the school remains closed. A particular issue had arisen from the new online teaching format, which was discussed, and it was agreed to form a governor sub-group to explore solutions and policy to address this issue.

Plans to continue with the sub-committee and full governing body functions virtually were agreed. Update information will be provided to governors regularly, in between virtual meetings.

16. Professional learning opportunities for staff as a result of the local authority's response to the Covid-19

In partnership with the local authority, a hub for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) was established at the local authority's special school. The local authority's inclusion and ALN manager assumed overall responsibility for the hub, led on a daily basis by the school's headteacher with two primary headteachers. The additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) from a local secondary school supports the school's leaders to provide a sustainable and effective leadership model.

Staffing included teachers and teaching assistants from the special school, supported by staff from the local authority's primary and secondary specialist resources bases. This

collaboration has allowed staff from a variety of settings across the local authority to develop and enhance their specialist pedagogy for supporting pupils with the most complex needs. Teams within the hub have been established to ensure a balance of experience and knowledge.

As a result of the repurposing of schools, professional learning outcomes for staff have included opportunities for them to:

- work with pupils with the most complex needs
- discuss, implement and refine specialist approaches to play and learning
- try out approaches that will support the implementation of the curriculum for Wales
- build upon each other's experiences to find innovative ways to address the ALN reforms, including undertaking annual reviews, child protection case conferences remotely
- make valuable links with teachers, teaching assistants and school leaders that will be accessible long after the hub closes

The outcomes and experience can be summarised in the quote from the ALNCo at the secondary school:

"The opportunity to support and lead within the special school hub has been immensely important to our professional development and understanding. A shared vision has allowed us to develop joint frameworks to sensitively and support successfully the local authority's most vulnerable learners whilst developing skills, strategies and relationships, which foster a shared understanding of job roles, expertise and professionalism. This has been a valuable and precious opportunity in the face of adversity and challenge."