

St Joseph's RC Primary School

Sully Road, Penarth, CF64 2TQ

Tel: (029) 20702864

stjosephsps@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

www.stjosephsrc.com

Headteacher: Mr Gareth Rein

18th March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Learning at home during school closure

During the past 10 days, we have been planning and preparing for the school to close due to the Coronavirus outbreak. Now that we have a closure date, it is time for us to enact our 'Learning at home' plan. Over the next few pages, I will outline what we intend to do to continue to provide your child with the best possible education whilst the school is closed and why we will be working in this way. We would not usually advocate trying to turn the home into a type of school learning environment, but in this unprecedented time I suggest that we do the best we can to achieve this. This does not mean that I wish for you to set up a classroom in your home, but that we should try to achieve an elementary version of the learning that takes place in a school.

Why is this important?

We have not yet received any advice from the Welsh Government or Vale LA about the length of the school closure, but I expect that it will last many months. The impact of this will be significant. We are aiming to provide the best possible learning experiences for our pupils whilst they are at home.

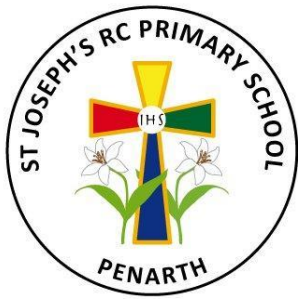
At its most fundamental level, teaching and learning involves three stages.

The first is instruction – when the child is provided with a form of input from which they can learn. This can include teacher instruction, reading, videos or by providing activities and guidance for children to work things out for themselves.

The second stage is consolidation or exploration – when the child completes a task or an activity to help them to think about and further develop their knowledge and understanding of the instruction.

The third stage is assessment – this is when a 'check' of the learning takes place. This involves the teacher and child evaluating what has been learned and what needs to be done next. In truth it is impossible to check a child's learning, but we can make a good guess by looking at their 'performance' through their work.

At St Joseph's School, we are aiming to continue to provide the first two stages of instruction and consolidation on a daily basis. It is much more difficult for us to assess learning remotely, so where possible we will provide activities where assessment is built-in or where it can be checked at home.



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How will we do this?

I would like you and your child to think about St Joseph's School as continuing to operate, but without the school building. Teachers in all year groups will be providing daily instruction and consolidation tasks/activities throughout the time of the school closure. By 9.00 a.m. each day, teachers will share information about the day's instruction and consolidation tasks via your child's **Hwb** account. Please see an FAQs section at the end of this letter for additional information about our Learning at home plan.

Yesterday, we sent home paper copies of pupils' **Hwb** usernames and passwords. Today, we followed this by sending home these details by email to those who did not receive a paper copy or were away from school. We have been using **Hwb** in school for quite a while, but only a minority of pupils use **Hwb** at home on a regular basis. It is essential that you attempt to login to **Hwb** at home today using your child's username and password so that we can be sure that all can gain access before we close. This will be the vehicle for the continuation of your child's education for the period of the school closure.

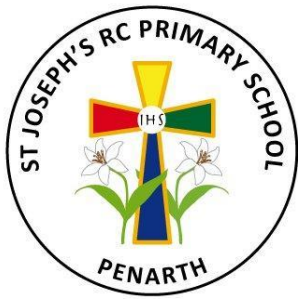
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Please visit our school website to find out how your child can access their learning at home work via Hwb. On the website, go to the menu at the top left hand corner of the page and click the button. The menu will appear and you should then hover over the '**Children**' button. You can either click the button to open the '**Children**' page or hover over the button so that a second menu appears. Either way, please select the '**Class Pages**' link so that you can see the list of pages for all classes in the school.

Select your child's class and this link will take you to a page where you can access the Learning at home folder on Hwb. The folder is only accessible to children in the class. Please do not request access to this folder for yourself as this will be denied for data protection and safeguarding reasons. We suggest that you support your child to bookmark this page as this will be much quicker than going through the procedure outlined above every day.

Hwb

Hwb is a wonderful website and collection of online tools provided to all schools in Wales by the Welsh Government. It has an amazing range of resources including Encyclopaedia Britannica and also access to Office 365 with free online versions of Word, PowerPoint, Excel etc. You can even download these software apps for free. Some of the tasks and activities that teachers set over the coming months will be based on Hwb. We suggest that you support your child to explore the wide range of packages that Hwb provides and spend lots of time looking through the J2E platform as it is a brilliant resource.



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How can I best help my child?

Please try to keep a routine at home. Access the Learning at home folder at the same time each day and complete the activities in the same order. For instance, complete the English skills work first and then the maths and then either Domain, RE, ICT or Welsh work. This will help your child to know what is expected of them and will help them to continue to make progress with their learning. We will take care to provide an appropriate amount of work each day and each week so that your child can keep up with their tasks.

If you are able to support your child with their work, this will be helpful. We know that many of you will be continuing to work at home over the coming months, however, and we aim to support you by providing work that children can complete with a good degree of independence. This will be more difficult for children in the Nursery and Reception classes, but over time your son or daughter will learn to access some of the videos and activities without support. They can probably already do this at home with some apps and websites on a tablet or laptop.

Showing gratitude

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our wonderful and dedicated staff. These are very worrying times for all of us and, although there is a lot of reassurance that children are a low risk group for the new Coronavirus, this is not the case for some of the adults who continue to work in schools each day. As well as carrying out their job of educating your children, there has been the more important job of keeping them safe and reducing the risk of anxiety and fear. They have done this superbly and the school has been an oasis of calm and purposefulness throughout the past couple of weeks. St Joseph's is a truly excellent school and we will continue to be so whilst our school building is closed.

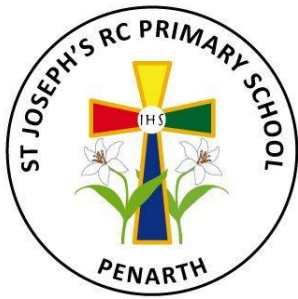
Finally

I wish to thank our pupils for the fortitude that they have shown during this unsettled time. Whilst we currently have no way of knowing just how well our Learning at home plan will work, I wish to thank you in anticipation of your support in helping us to continue to provide the best possible education for your children.

I wish you good physical, mental and spiritual health during this difficult time. May God bless you and your families.

Yours sincerely,

Gareth Rein
Headteacher



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FAQs

Will I be able to contact the school during the period of closure?

Yes. Our admin staff members and senior leadership team will be continuing to work whilst the school building is closed and you can contact us via email: admin@stjosephsrc.com.

Will I be able to email my child's teacher for advice or to ask a question?

Yes. Teachers will be available via an email address that is specific to your child's class. These email addresses have already been provided via the slips of paper or emails that included the Hwb username and password. If you have lost this, the address is very simple. Use your child's class name and then the school domain. Take care not to use spaces or additional punctuation.

e.g. Nursery@stjosephsrc.com or Year3@stjosephsrc.com

Teachers are expecting to receive emails directly from pupils and parents. Please take care not to send too many emails to teachers. They will be working very hard each day to prepare lessons for your child and will not have the time to reply to multiple emails each day. If individual pupils or parents do send a lot of emails, I will contact them to ask them to limit their requests.

What form will my child's instruction take?

We will mainly use videos to provide instruction. These could be videos made by your child's teacher or your son/daughter might be directed to an online video via a web link. Teachers will take care to ensure that the videos are relevant to the learning goals and are suitable for children.

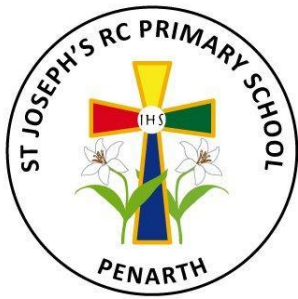
We will also provide links to online activities that provide instruction and tasks. These will be very useful as they often provide immediate assessment and will allow your child to repeat the activity as required.

What tasks or activities will my child be asked to complete?

This depends on the age of the children and the learning goals for the 'lesson'.

Examples

In Nursery, children will be asked to watch a video and sing a song or join in with a physical development activity. They might even be asked to write their name with the support of an adult, but most tasks will not require recording.



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In other Foundation Phase classes, we will ask pupils to read books or to complete a task following instructions provided in a video. There will be times when children are asked to record by writing letters or words on a whiteboard or sentences in a book. We have provided these for pupils to take home to support them with such activities.

Children in Years 3 and 4 might be asked to complete work in an exercise book by using an instruction sheet that can be viewed online. They might also be asked to visit a website to complete an online activity.

For pupils in Years 5 and 6, we have sent home Expressive Writing sheets that pupils should complete following the instructions provided in a video that will be made by a teacher. Children will also be asked to write an account of the events of Holy Week.

In all classes from Year 1 to Year 6, we have sent home workbook pages from the Maths No Problem scheme that we use in school. Teachers will direct children to watch videos that provide instruction about the maths concept they will work on that day or week. Your child should then complete the workbook page accordingly.

Will my child be able to send their work to their teacher?

Maybe. Teachers will provide such instructions for each activity. It will not be possible for teachers to provide individualised feedback for every child for every piece of work.

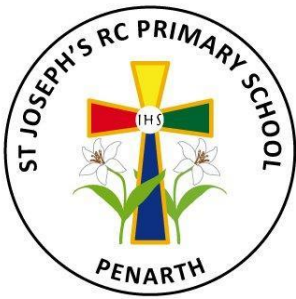
Will my child receive a broad and balanced education whilst the school is closed?

Yes. We are aiming to provide instruction and activities for most areas of the curriculum. This means that we will provide work for RE, English and Welsh, mathematics, science, humanities, ICT and PE. It will be more difficult to provide work for art activities as we don't know what resources children will have in each house. Where possible, we will provide instruction in drawing and art appreciation/history.

What if my child can't keep up with the amount of work provided?

Our plans have been written with the aim of helping your child to continue to make progress in their learning over the coming months. If possible, please try to ensure that your son/daughter completes the tasks set each day. It is not a problem if a few days are missed, but try not to let your child miss many days as it will be impossible to catch up.

If there is too much work or your child has many difficulties in completing the tasks, please let your child's teacher know. This is new territory for all of us and your feedback will be welcomed. As stated in the letter, we are aiming to provide activities that are suitable to the children's age in the amount of work as well as the level of difficulty. We are aware that



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many parents will be trying to juggle child care whilst working at home and that those in 'essential roles' will continue to work long hours throughout the period of the school closure.

Can I set my own learning goals and tasks for my child?

Please try to ensure that your child completes the set learning activities each day, but if they want to do more and you are able to find more for them to do then please go ahead and provide your own extension tasks. This might be a great way of keeping them busy each day and, if you are able to work with your son/daughter, you will be able to have a great time together.

What should I do if the school owned Chromebook breaks or doesn't work?

Please talk to your child about the importance of looking after the school's device. We have given out all of the Chromebooks owned by the school and we will not be in a position to provide a replacement during the closure period. If possible, please try to get the device repaired, although repair shops might also have closed during this period. Your son/daughter could continue to access the learning materials via a phone or tablet, but they might not be able to complete some of the tasks.

What should I do if my child appears to be stressed or anxious?

You know your son/daughter better than anyone else. What usually helps them will hopefully help during this time. It is likely, however, that the confinement period will result in added pressures to children and their parents. If you require any assistance in this regard, please email admin@stjosephsrc.com and we can arrange a time to chat over the telephone or help to direct you to services that might be able to help you.

All classes in St Joseph's School meditate each day. We also say prayers at various times during the day and pray the Examen a few times each week. Not only will the routine of saying these prayers and meditating help to comfort children, we hope that they will help children to maintain their relationship with God during this very difficult time. We suggest asking your child how they meditate and joining them each day for this very special time. This helpful guide for parents will help you to know about why and how we meditate in school and how you can do this at home. There is even a free WCCM app that you can download to that provides a meditation timer and opening prayer.