

## Update

I hope that you are well and that you are able to continue to successfully juggle a very different life and existence. We realise that with well over 1500 pupils, some of whom live in more than one family set-up, that daily life and experiences are very different for all.

We have at least, for the largest part of the past few months, had lovely weather and I hope that all families are taking advantage of the great outdoors to soothe the mind, body and soul!

We realise that some families are experiencing greater anxieties and stresses than others and, consequently, the overall wellbeing of various families will also be different and more challenging. This is the case for our staff and their respective families also.

What we probably need to do, under the weight of worry, is to accept that we can only control what we can control. As Desmond Tutu once wisely said, "There is only one way to eat an elephant: a bite at a time."

The school's wellbeing strategy, formulated well before the pandemic, acknowledges how different people are affected by the different facets of wellbeing, namely:

- Physical **wellbeing**
- Emotional **wellbeing**
- Economic **wellbeing**
- Environmental **wellbeing**
- Social and spiritual **wellbeing**
- Financial **wellbeing**
- Occupational (work/education) satisfaction and **wellbeing**

The pandemic and lockdown will inevitably test us all and it is recognised that some children, parents and our staff will be suffering from the negative impacts - directly or indirectly related to the above aspects of wellbeing.

We are also aware that:

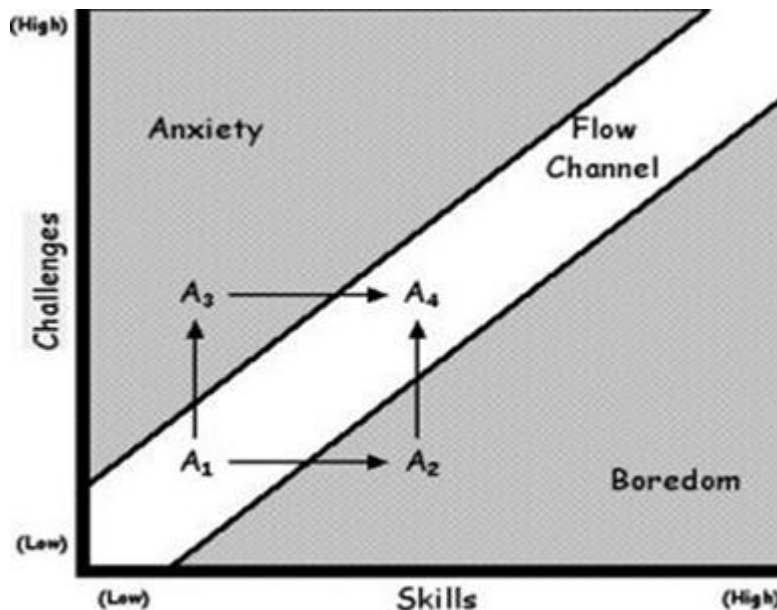
***Wellbeing is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy."***

*However, we also understand that wellbeing is a much broader concept than moment-to-moment happiness. Although wellbeing does include happiness, it also includes other things, such as how satisfied people are with their life in its entirety, their sense of purpose, and how in control they feel of 'their now and their future'.*

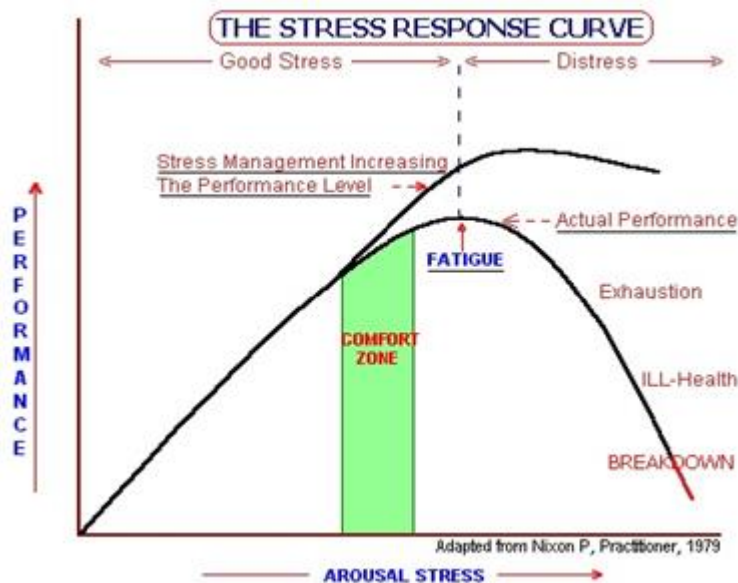
Clearly, the pandemic situation means that all of us will feel that we lack control and that our sense of purpose is being challenged.

The following images and charts may assist us in understanding and realising that when we are presented with unexpected, unplanned, unprecedented times and experiences, we can all find ourselves entering the various domains as exemplified below. The more that we feel challenged with experiences outside of our experiences, the more we may feel bored, de-

motivated, anxious and, at our worst, we may feel utter panic and despair.



From *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (page 74)



Therefore, we recognise the importance of getting outdoors as much as possible as physical exercise helps us greatly in managing the chemical responses within the body associated with stress and anxiety.

We have been overwhelmed by the many messages of support from our families and we thank you for your good wishes. We have also had a small minority of families concerned about children becoming demotivated with remote learning.

Our analysis reveals that well over 50% of pupils are not engaging in the distant learning being provided by teachers. In some subjects and classes, engagement with the work is below 10%. Many parents are telling us that we are setting too much work.

It is clear that different pupils are not only experiencing different home-life expectations, they are also relaying different messages depending on how they are feeling and how motivated, or not, they are with distant learning.

This is no surprise and our message from the start conveyed that we anticipated different and differentiated outcomes, for different reasons.

We urge parents not to worry and assure you of our commitment to resume high quality teaching as and when it is safe to do so. Please find below some of our plans for the future, given that it is highly unlikely that we will have any meaningful and prolonged face to face contact with pupils until September; even then, this will be different to what we have been used to and is likely to continue until a vaccine is developed and widely available.

### **Teaching: what we are unable to do**

We are unable to expect, and neither are our teachers permitted to use, for example, 'Zoom' or other similar technologies to deliver live, real-time teaching to classes, groups or individuals. This is because:

1. There are no policies, procedures, safeguarded resources, ICT equipment or statutory guidance or legislation for this type of teaching. This is simply not something that we are going to enter into as a school as a knee jerk approach to emulate a school-based experience.
2. Our teachers' homes are private; their family lives are private and we do not have any expectations for them to engage with live, interactive, online teaching which carries unknown and untested risks and without appropriate legislation, planning, technologies and training to facilitate this. Unlike some higher educational institutions, younger children and, until now, secondary school teaching and learning has never been resourced to deliver in this way.
3. There are emerging cases where teachers in other schools, who have engaged in technologies to provide teaching via, for example, 'Zoom', have suffered from hacking, which has led to pupils and teachers being exposed to explicit and upsetting material.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/may/07/zoom-hacker-streams-child-sex-abuse-footage-to-plymouth-children>

4. Our teachers have very different personal and family circumstances; many have young children and they are unable to push their own children to one side to deliver 'live' lessons.
5. Video footage is merely demonstrative and there are already many such demonstrations available online via educational forums, which have been compiled professionally; we do not expect our teachers to construct videos in real time or otherwise in their private homes.
6. In the same way, your homes are private and we have no right of access to the homes of pupils and parents and this would breach your right to privacy.
7. Should Welsh Government, responsible for state education in Wales, decide that schools need to be resourced, trained and funded to provide remote teaching, to mitigate against a future pandemic, clearly, we will engage fully with these plans in due course.

### **Teaching and Learning: What we are able to do and will do until schools can reopen fully:**

1. Our teachers will continue to set work online via the forums already established. There is plenty of work being set and there is no reason for any child to state that they have no work to do. The school's website also cites how best to learn informally until formal learning in school can take place.

2. Teachers will acknowledge work completed and will mark work where it is appropriate to do so. This will not involve marking fully all work completed, if this is not required and where pupils will not need to redraft and improve the completed work.
3. Some of the work can be self-assessed by the pupil; this is already embedded practice across the school and research evidence illustrates that pupils benefit from this approach, where it is relevant and appropriate. Teachers are sending self-assessment sheets to accompany completed work, where this is appropriate.
4. We will be preparing **paper-based learning resources over the next few weeks to provide to all pupils in a range of subjects. We recognise that pupils are accustomed to paper-based, 'concrete' and 'visual' resources. We are aware that online learning is demotivational for many and we will ensure that pupils and parents are able to 'see' what is expected and required to enhance progress, and mitigate against regression in learning.**

### **Parents: What you can do until schools are able to fully open**

1. We are very fortunate with our surroundings in the Vale of Glamorgan. We have many areas of outstanding beauty on our doorstep. We urge all children and families to spend time outdoors every day and exercise every day. Children should undertake at least an hour of physical outdoor activity, for example, walking, cycling, running, etc. can offset potential anxieties - even in your garden. (Think Captain Tom!) Physical activity is particularly important, above all other activities, unless there is a medical reason preventing it.
2. Encourage and reward reading, reading and more reading. This prevents regression and develops literacy. The school's website has research-based evidence of the importance of reading. It is important for parents to understand:  
*"What really separates those with high and low level performance is the content of long-term memory, coupled with the acquisition and application of, well understood sophisticated vocabulary and this is why reading a wide range of materials is so important."*
3. Play board games; encourage your child(ren) to undertake home tasks and activities including: cleaning, cooking, suitable forms of DIY, gardening, planting and growing seeds, sewing, arts and crafts, building Lego, constructing jigsaws, painting, learning a new language online or via recorded materials. All of these practical activities are far more motivational for many pupils and are a great way to stimulate and hone the body and brain.
4. Take time to talk to your children about a positive future and plan to do small and simple things which do not necessarily involve any financial outlay. There are many opportunities to change the future for the better, including saving the planet and helping other less fortunate. It is well recognised that to help others is the most beneficial way of raising self-esteem and to develop a sense of purpose.
5. Encourage your child(ren) to get out and help others. There are many community schemes where children can safely assist with helping others. This could include: doing shopping, walking a dog for someone unable to do this, cooking for others, making cards and sending them as good wish gestures.
6. Encourage your child(ren) to keep socially connected to friends and family - via secure and safe forums - using technology. This can include engaging and sharing school-work and projects, but, mostly, to keep in touch socially and emotionally.

### **Teaching: what we will do when your child returns to phased and staggered schooling:**

1. We will continue to provide home-learning resources as we are aware that it will be some considerable time before large-scale classes can resume.

2. Assess all children to establish their literacy and numeracy levels; consider any regression relative to age and any positive progression relative to age. We will then implement intervention programmes to assist pupils with intensive learning.
3. Assess pupils' wellbeing and the impact of the pandemic and assist with devising a wellbeing programme based upon our philosophy of:  
*We recognise that high performance, success and happiness requires healthy resilient young people with **positive mindsets and positive outlooks**, which are **solution focused**.*

*The need to develop pupils' understanding of the fact that life is **complex and can present difficult and adverse circumstances, events and situations which can be managed well with education, opportunities, support, and a determined approach focused on finding better ways with the right resources.***

**Finally, this well-known poem provides some reflective thinking!**

***Children Learn What They Live***

***by Dorothy Law Nolte, Ph.D.***

*If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn.  
If children live with hostility, they learn to fight.  
If children live with fear, they learn to be apprehensive.  
If children live with pity, they learn to feel sorry for themselves.  
If children live with ridicule, they learn to feel shy.  
If children live with jealousy, they learn to feel envy.  
If children live with shame, they learn to feel guilty.  
If children live with encouragement, they learn confidence.  
If children live with tolerance, they learn patience.  
If children live with praise, they learn appreciation.  
If children live with acceptance, they learn to love.  
If children live with approval, they learn to like themselves.  
If children live with recognition, they learn it is good to have a goal.  
If children live with sharing, they learn generosity.  
If children live with honesty, they learn truthfulness.  
If children live with fairness, they learn justice.  
If children live with kindness and consideration, they learn respect.  
If children live with security, they learn to have faith in themselves and in those about them.  
If children live with friendliness, they learn the world is a nice place in which to live.*

***Mrs Thomas  
Headteacher***