



Eastern High / Ysgol Uwchradd y Dwyrain

Eastern Community Campus / Campws Cymunedol y Dwyrain
Trowbridge Road / Ffordd Trowbridge
Cardiff / Caerdydd CF3 1XZ
Tel / Rhif Ffôn: Cardiff (029) 2079 2751
Email address – info@easternhigh.org.uk
Website – www.easternhigh.org.uk
Head teacher: Armando Di-finizio

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Dear Parents/Carers

Well here we are again, still in the same position since I last wrote. I always envisaged we would have been returning in one form or another from June 1st, but unfortunately, that is not going to be the case. I still don't have any definite date for our return, but I am hoping that there will be some phasing back into school before the summer break. Even if we were just back long enough to re-induct the staff and the pupils, that would be fantastic.

During the closure, I have to take my hat off to our staff. They have pulled out all the stops to ensure teaching has continued to be delivered via online learning, and the amount of additional fun activities and competitions organised has enabled us to maintain the friendly and welcoming ethos our school has always aimed for. A special mention has to be given to our librarian, Mr. Emery, who along with Ms. Cowan, has organised our book drop-offs. Thank you to all who have donated children's books to the school and we have also received many donations from external companies. Mr. Emery has personalised all the books to ensure that the books suit the current reading ages and tastes of individuals and so far has organised the delivery of just over 1300 books to 370 students over the last 4 weeks. We will continue to do this next term.

In addition to this, our tutors and Head of Houses have continued to make regular calls and emails to ensure everyone still feels connected with the school. The provision for key workers (NHS) and vulnerable students continues to be run centrally by the Council at Cathays High School and is staffed by members of staff from all of the schools involved.

Whilst the response of staff and the willingness & cooperation of parents has been magnificent, these arrangements cannot continue indefinitely, for two reasons:

1. the prolonged absence from school is concerning academically, socially - and for some children, from a welfare and safety perspective;
2. the long-term impact of a deep recession, particularly on the poorest families, will be very damaging.

It is important therefore that we balance the public health risks in the short term (related to the transmission of the virus) with longer-term public health considerations. If a child loses out on the basics of an education, this can have an impact on that child across their whole

lives – their economic prosperity and long-term health. Children benefit hugely from being at school. For these reasons, I believe we need to take steps toward opening schools more widely.

The Welsh Government produced a document last week which you can read here: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-05/decision-framework-next-phase-education-childcare_0.pdf The document raises the questions that will have to be answered before schools can open. They are currently consulting with all stakeholders reviewing the latest science, including transmission rates. We will make our own decisions based on our capacity and risk assessments. It must be emphasised that the safety of our pupils and staff is our overriding priority.

All planning for any form of reopening will take a very measured approach, based upon a rigorous risk management process. We are awaiting further Council and Welsh Government guidance, which we hope will include clarity around what ‘some face-to-face contact’ means in practice. We absolutely want children back in school and I know that every one of us is desperate to return to some kind of normality. It will be a great day when our schools are finally open to all children and young people and we can return to our workplaces once again.

In the meantime, it is important that we maintain strong links with our pupils, and continue to guide their learning and provide support. We will continue to update you as the situation develops and hope to be in a position to announce a date for the first stages of reopening soon.

With continued thanks for your support.

Best wishes and take care

Armando Di-Finizio
Headteacher
Eastern High