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Covid-19 Bulletin – 12th May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you and your loved ones are all well. I trust you're enjoying this precious time with your children.

How are you finding online learning? Fantastic or fraught? Astounding or atrocious? No doubt your experience is somewhere between these extremes and probably varies from one day to the next. For your encouragement, from the work we have seen, you are doing a truly smashing job.

If you are finding it tough, please do not fret. Our priority at this point is your child's wellbeing. Rest assured that whatever work is missed, it can be caught up when we return to school. It really is not the end of the world if they miss assignment deadlines. Staff will continue to be sympathetic and positive. We all understand that the main thing right now is that pupils enjoy love, safety and support. If you are confident of your child's wellbeing and more concerned at their lack of engagement, we will work alongside you to provide them with more direct and robust encouragement.

I have divided this bulletin into several sections so that you can skip to those that are relevant to you and your child. Over the next week, I will also send an explanation of the rationale underpinning our approach to online learning and further updates from the Government.

Quick news items

- The Education Minister for Wales has announced that **schools will NOT be reopening** after May half term. We do not know when schools will reopen in Wales. Please note that a different approach is being taken in England.
- For the sake of consistency, the **current timetable will continue** through to the end of July, but online work will be adapted as necessary.
- The Welsh Government have issued guidance on how you can support your children to use the **Welsh language** at home: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vrGFWr9rayE>
- If you **do not have wifi or a device on which your child can work**, please email the school office. We may be able to help.

What's the best way to get in touch with the school?

Please forgive us if you have been unable to get through via the school answerphone. It has been behaving rather temperamentally. In the meantime, for general enquiries please email the school office on office@llanidloes-hs.powys.sch.uk For enquiries about work, it is best for pupils to message the teacher directly through the 'posts' section of the relevant 'Team' (i.e. class) within Hwb. All pupils know how to do this.



Staff appointments

Since the closure of the school site, many aspects of school management have necessarily continued in preparation for our eventual return. One such area is the appointment of new staff. I am delighted to inform you that we have made three excellent appointments to date.

First, we are delighted to welcome **Mrs Helen Thomas** who is currently Head of **Maths** at Llanfyllin High School. Since Helen lives in Newtown, we are much closer to home. We are absolutely delighted to have such an experienced, high performing and accomplished teacher joining what is arguably the highest performing maths department in Powys.

Second, we are thrilled to have **Mr Aled Thomas** joining the **Welsh and Humanities** team. Some of you may remember Mr Thomas's sister, Heledd, who taught here several years ago. Last year, Aled returned from leading the Economics department in Hastings British International School, Madrid. He is multi-lingual, has a proven track record of securing excellent outcomes and sense of humour aplenty.

Third, we are excited to welcome **Miss Beca Jones** to the **Welsh and Humanities** team. Beca graduated from Aberystwyth University last year with a First Class Honours Degree in Daearyddiaeth (Geography). She loves travelling, nature, music and Welsh literature and culture. She is looking forward to using her rich experience performing solo and in choirs in eisteddfodau and with Cwmni Theatr Maldwyn to support co-curricular opportunities for our pupils.

We are interviewing for a **new music teacher** this week and a **new IT teacher** next week. Don't worry, Mr Craig isn't going anywhere, he is just picking up additional post-16 courses.



Year 9 Option Update



Thank you for completing Mr Young's options survey towards the end of April. Every year in every secondary school across the UK, a few pupils are unable to receive their first choice options. We are sorry if this has affected your child this year. For the sake of transparency, I thought you might value a brief explanation of the process of determining the Option Blocks.

After the Year 9 Options evening, pupils were given a free choice form, where they ranked their five favourite subjects. Once all the forms were received, the subjects that have no interest are withdrawn from the list. The remaining subjects are placed into option blocks. These blocks are based on the combination of subjects that minimise overall clashes and guarantee subject specialist teaching in each subject area.

If a subject is in great demand, it may be placed into two option blocks to ensure as many pupils as possible receive their first choice selection.

Some subjects may have an exceptionally low uptake and cannot run. For example, if a subject has only 2-3 pupils interested, it is usually not feasible to run that option within the school's overall funding envelope.

Please be assured that we try our absolute best to ensure that most pupils can access their top three subjects. Indeed, nearly all pupils have access to two of their top three choices.

Once again, we are sorry if your child has not been able to choose all of the options they had in mind. I just wanted to assure you that we do our absolute best to deliver their choices and, where this is just not possible, they can still study an exciting, high quality alternative.

Year 11 Options Update

We are delighted to hear that the vast majority of students are intending to return to Sixth Form. The option blocks have been carefully designed to ensure we cater for everyone. These will be shared within days.

The surge in demand for places is possibly linked to the significant increase in subject choice. For example, in addition to the usual range of facilitating subjects, we are introducing A-levels or equivalent in Criminology, Classics, Drama,



Engineering and Marine Science. We are also introducing a BTEC Sports Coaching qualification and new Health and Social Care qualification. These can be taken as part of a suite of options for students who are concerned about limiting their qualification range to just one 'all in' subject at Newtown College. Our approach is designed to keep a wide range of career pathways open to students by the end of Sixth Form.

By popular demand, we can confirm that we will continue to supply free laptops to all Year 12 students to facilitate university-style flexible working. We have also secured Freedom Leisure gym membership for just £25 a year so that students can maintain a healthy lifestyle throughout their studies.

While awaiting options, please remind students of the wide range of materials available to them in the files area of their Hwb Year 11 Team. These will help support their transition to Sixth Form or next stage of learning. In addition, ERW (Education through Regional Working) have sent further resources in a range of subject areas:

- **Dolen - Year 11: GCSE to AS Level Transition work** (regularly updated with new resources):
<https://thingi.erw-rhwyd.cymru/Repository/resource/0a468ca6-4ad8-48bc-ab79-3bae6f063155/en>
- **Dolen – Year 11: Preparation for Moving on from GCSE to A Level Maths:**
<https://thingi.erw-rhwyd.cymru/Repository/resource/46234908-8825-4ab7-a85c-90cf6dd18984/en>



What can Years 12 and 13 be doing now?

Cardiff University have created a whole series of events and resources to support **Year 12 and 13 Linguists** over the next few weeks. This includes a series of seminars, lectures, language classes, university talks and resources. The link for the programme is here:

<https://hwb.gov.wales/playlists/view/bbf64e57-3191-4a6d-94b3-f08b3dc5af69/en/1>

Year 13 A Level Results 2020 – Please find attached a simple infographic which provides learners who have applied to university with the possible options available to them and the actions they need to take following publication of the A Level results in August.

Future Learn – a wide range of free online courses from top universities and specialist organisations suitable for learners in years 11, 12 and 13. <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses>

Hwb: Post-16 distance learning resources – New content has been added to this area including a range of Welsh medium resources and new resources focusing on the creative subjects such as Fashion, Interior Design, Graphics and Photojournalism. <https://hwb.gov.wales/distance-learning/resources/post-16/>

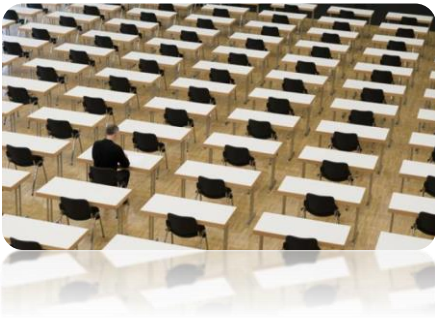
Hwb: Seren Distance Learning Resources - These distance learning resources are aimed at supporting Seren Academy Year 12 students on their journey to study at the leading universities in Wales, the UK, and overseas, by providing a range of interactive distance learning materials, live online events, webinars, videos and podcasts all designed to stretch and challenge within specific subject areas.

For Year 13 students, the resources provide an opportunity to continue learning, read widely around their chosen degree course, obtain advice and guidance on university life, and gain insight into studying at a leading university as they make the transition from school into higher education. Please note that these resources are available and accessible for **all students** regardless of whether they are enrolled with the Seren Academy. The resources also provide beneficial information and support for teachers, parents and carers: <https://hwb.gov.wales/distance-learning/seren-distance-learning/>

We can also commend the free accredited courses available through 'Open Learn' from the Open University. The wide range of courses are second to none when it comes to online education: <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/>

Yet another option worth exploring is 'Coursera'. This organisation is based in the US with an extensive range of online courses with a particular strength in science and technology (many of the courses come straight out of MIT, UCLA, Stanford, Imperial London and Carnegie). Please note that not all of their courses are free!

[What is happening about exam grades?](#)



As you know, Qualifications Wales has asked us to prepare **centre assessment grades**, together with a **rank order** of learners for each grade within each qualification, to enable the award of GCSE, AS, A level and Skills Challenge Certificate (SCC) qualifications. We are in the process of generating the initial set of grades that will be subject to careful internal review to ensure all of our pupils receive a truly fair set of results.

The centre assessment grades submitted to WJEC must reflect a fair, reasonable and carefully considered judgement of **the most likely grade** a learner would have achieved if they had sat their exams this summer and completed any non-exam assessment. WJEC will standardise the centre judgements once they have been submitted, using a method developed in conjunction with Qualifications Wales. This method has not yet been published.

For more detailed information on the assessment grade process we are following, please following this link: <https://www.qualificationswales.org/english/publications/information-for-centres-on-the-submission-of-centre-assessment-grades/>

Qualifications Wales have also produced a useful Frequently Asked Questions document: <https://www.qualificationswales.org/english/coronavirus---covid-19/frequently-asked-questions/>

As you might expect, we have been instructed by Qualifications Wales not to share these grades with pupils or parents.

[Important consultation from Qualifications Wales](#)

On a related note, Qualifications Wales are inviting feedback on how standardisation and the appeals process will work for this summer's GCSE, AS and A-level exams now that exams have been cancelled. This is an opportunity for us as staff to give feedback but also for you as parents and pupils to have a say. The young person's version is, understandably, a little more user-friendly and you may find it helpful to go through this survey with your child at the outset. This affects pupils from Years 10 to 13 **as well as any pupils in Year 9 or below sitting any external exams**. If you do want to add comments to explain your answers it will take approximately 30 minutes to complete but it is important that feedback is given. The link to the survey and relevant documents is below and the consultation closes very soon indeed.

<https://qualificationswales.org/english/get-involved/consultations-and-surveys/consultation-arrangements-for-summer-2020-exam-series/>

And finally...

Food bank in Llanidloes

A food bank is set up at Powys Safety Solutions (the old post office in Llanidloes opposite Spar). It is open from 9 to 5pm Monday to Friday for drop offs or collections.

Anyone requiring items can pop in or ring 07729 186833 and someone will arrange delivery. No questions will be asked and the service is completely confidential.

Hub bookings

The online registration form to use the emergency childcare hubs is now live at www.powys.gov.uk/emergencyhubs. Once again, please remember that ***the safest place for your child is at home***. This provision is to be used only as a ***last resort*** to minimise risk of children transmitting Covid-19 to each other and taking it home to their families.

Parents who are critical workers will need to register their children each week by 3pm on the preceding Wednesday.

Thank you

On behalf of all the staff at the school, I would like to thank you once again for your smashing support and perseverance with supporting your child's online learning.

Once again, if there is anything we can do to help you, please do not hesitate to contact us using the school email address: office@llanidloes-hs.powys.sch.uk

Take care and God bless,



Daniel Owen (Headteacher)

