

Investors in Families Lockdown Award Checklist - Ysgol Hen Felin Special School

This award will be given to schools that have supported children and families throughout the 'lockdown'. Its aim is to celebrate and acknowledge the dedication, support, guidance, care and nurture that you have provided during the epidemic.

Communication

How have you communicated with families?	What platforms did you use?	Frequency of communication?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the lockdown pupils who were not accessing our Hub Provision had weekly wellbeing phone calls from either a member of the class teaching staff or one of our HLTA'S. <p>The questions and conversations held covered the Wellbeing of pupils and their families and any difficulties that they may be facing in these times. All staff had a generic set of questions that provided us with specific answers.</p> <p>It was a difficult time for our families and our pupils with some pupils displaying some challenging behaviours. By communicating with our families on a regular basis, we were able to quickly sort out any problems that arose and signposted families to the relevant services, if required. Other ways in which we communicated with families were as follows:-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone phone calls. • Email • Texting service • Social Media (Our school Twitter Page) • Teaching staff were available to contact through their Hwb Emails for any 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent communication was one of the most effective ways in which we were able to offer support to our families during the pandemic. Vulnerable families were able to be identified quickly and support was put in place to help with any challenges they may be facing by signposting them to the relevant services. • Weekly, but more if were required, and this would be carried out by the Heads of Department.



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email • Texting service • Social Media (Our school Twitter Page) • Regular updates by letters and our school website – what is happening, newsletters, COVID information, etc. 	<p>problems or difficulties they may be facing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eduspot our school texting platform • Parents were kept up to date with all aspects of the school community by our Twitter page and school website, such as letters from our Head Teacher, class planning, suggested activities plus daily PE and literacy challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching staff were on hand to answer any concerns off parents or carers. • As and when required. • As and when required
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Engagement

How have you engaged with families?	Was this successful? What were the barriers?	What would you do differently?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We believe we have been very flexible and innovative in our approach to engagement with our families. We engaged with them using a multitude of different platforms as discussed above, informing them of important information through a variety of sources. • We have also engaged virtually with parents setting up Zoom parental Coffee Mornings. These drop in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been many barriers to engagement through the course of the pandemic, virtual platforms can sometimes put some parents off, confidence and self-esteem has proved to stop some parents engaging. Other barriers to engagement such as lack of technology, work commitments has also had an impact. Despite the barriers, it has taken sustained and regular engagement from every staff member to support our pupils and their families' wellbeing effectively. It has 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is always challenging to introduce new ways of learning and initiatives for our pupils and their families, the pandemic has taught us as a school how to be innovative and creative in many different areas of learning and on parental engagement strategies. As a school we understand the huge impact that the pandemic has had not only on our pupils but also our parents' wellbeing, who faced difficult challenges on a daily basis. We have worked together to the best of our

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<p>sessions have proved successful in allowing parents to feedback on the challenges they may be facing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some of our pupils found the lockdown extremely difficult when not attending school. Getting pupils engaged with home learning tasks also proved very challenging for our parents.• It was also proving to have an impact on our parents wellbeing as they coped with their children's challenging behavior at home.• By providing the coffee morning drop in sessions parents were able to see firsthand that lots of other families were also experiencing difficulties.• This has encouraged peer to peer support and fostered a culture of parents supporting each other facing similar circumstances as themselves.	<p>demonstrated everyone's commitment to helping our pupils to continue to learn and progress as best as can be, whilst also equipping parents with the skills and knowledge to be able to support their own children at home.</p>	<p>ability supporting our pupils and their families in the most difficult of circumstances, offering specific and detailed help within our school community. We will continue to monitor and evaluate our current practices and make improvements where necessary.</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have delivered virtual Attention Autisms sessions for pupils and their families, three times a week, throughout the lockdown. This intervention is a tool to help develop attention and communication skills through highly motivating activities. Some of these aims include,<ul style="list-style-type: none">*To engage attention*To improve joint attention*To develop a shared enjoyment in activities*Increase attention in adult led activities*To encourage spontaneous interaction*To increase non-verbal and verbal communication*To have fun• We also delivered Friendly Makaton signing sessions for parents via zoom, the sessions were delivered by two members of our school Communication Team. All classes were offered the sessions throughout the course of a few weeks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children were photographed completing their Christmas activities, and filmed singing Christmas songs and dressing up. This was put together to make a video shared with parents and uploaded to our school twitter page and YouTube. We held a Christmas party in our 'bubbles' where Santa appeared via video link with a message. We arranged for a local community organisation to carry out a special Easter Visit from the	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We also delivered Sensory stories virtual sessions once a week via zoom aimed at our most complex and PMLD pupils and their families.• We created a 'Hub school' video for pupils to show them how we introduced Covid-19 signage around the school and staff wearing PPE and using hand sanitiser.• We have made a transition video to introduce new teachers and new classes for the new academic year Sept 2020 and shared on our school Twitter page. Here, we also introduced staff, discussed routines and operational guidance for new pupils who starting school• Christmas Activities – Easter Raffle, virtual concerts and Easter bunny mascot visits• We created 'how to...' videos which were posted on our Twitter page for	<p>Easter Bunny who also gave the pupils a small gift. These events were shared with our parents so they didn't miss out on these special occasions.</p>	
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parents supporting them with accessing Twitter, Youtube, zoom, Purple Mash and how to set up an email account.		
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Home Learning

How did you support Home learning?	What platforms did you use?	Frequency of Home Learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each class posted a timetable of suggested activities each Sunday evening on Twitter. Some of our pupils did find home learning a challenge and some struggled with engaging with the home school tasks suggested.• As a school we understood that the challenges the pupils were facing with regards to home learning could also have an impact on our parents' wellbeing. Therefore, we were cautious about promoting too much work which could put a strain on our parents/carers and our pupils.• Through telephone conversations with our families we always tried to remind parents of the fact that they were doing their very best in the circumstances and	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Class timetables and suggested activities were posted onto our school Twitter page on a Sunday evening, the different activities offered were suitable for all circumstances, resources needed could usually be found within the home or garden. Links to stories, songs, action videos, etc to engage, but also allow children to develop skills, through engaging and sensory play-based activities were shared. Feedback from families has been positive and families have shared photographs and videos of how they have engaged with us, these were then shared through our school Twitter page.	<p>We produced a weekly timetable and a suggested list of activities for each class at Ysgol Hen Felin, posted on our school Twitter page on a Sunday evening. From discussions with our parents and finding out the challenges they were facing with regards to home learning, we encouraged them to do as little or as much work as they wanted to. We focussed on supporting our parents and the ability they had to make a difference to their own children's learning, helping parents understand that we are equal partners in their children's learning. Most families engaged with some sort of home learning and home school tasks, to celebrate these achievements we reposted them on our school Twitter page.</p>



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that they were not expected to take on a role of a teacher, activities that are offered are a suggested list of tasks that pupils can access as we are aware of the challenges of home schooling and the pressure on pupils and parents working from home. Teachers offer one to one support via telephone call or email, to any families struggling with any aspect of home learning, our staff are always on hand to answer any concerns or problems, or to provide encouragement or support to our families and pupils. Our families have a unique set of challenges and circumstances where each individual family have different needs so with this in mind we believe we use a flexible approach to support our families' needs.

- Devices were delivered to our digitally excluded learners so that they could access home learning.



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Health and Wellbeing

How did you promote Emotional Health and Wellbeing?	How was this monitored?	Is further work required in this area, what will you be doing?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We understand that the wellbeing of our pupils is at the heart of what we do at Ysgol Hen Felin. Our Staff tried to ensure our pupils didn't fall through gaps while the schools were shut. For various reasons throughout the pandemic, we understood that many of our pupils may have been feeling scared, at risk, unhappy or hungry and that some families and carers may have been struggling to support them if they didn't have the help, food and equipment they needed. The pandemic was potentially having a negative impact on some of our pupils and their families, we tried to mitigate this by providing structure, routine and enjoyable engaging activities for our pupils throughout the lockdown.• Our School Nurse made regular contact with families of our medically vulnerable pupils to offer advice and support	<p>Through communication with pupils and families and Staff sharing any concerns they have regarding a pupil or family through our weekly wellbeing telephone call logs. Any Issues that arose from a result of these conversations were passed on to our SLT.</p>	<p>We will continue to monitor and evaluate our current practices by striving to achieve the best results to support and meet the emotional, health and wellbeing needs of the pupils and families at Ysgol Hen Felin and make improvements where necessary.</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We did our very best to provide the relevant support to our families, by providing a sympathetic ear and someone to talk to. Some families sought reassurance or advice whilst others needed advice with regards to behaviours, sleep patterns and engagement in activities. By regular contact with our parents we were able to identify families in need of support quickly and put strategies in place to help with any challenges they may be facing by signposting them to the relevant services.• The school, through regular communication with families, ensured that pupils who needed to access Eye to Eye counselling had the opportunity to meet with counsellors via zoom on the school premises as and when they needed it by providing them with a laptop and private room. <p>Provision and allocation of the hub for keyworker/vulnerable children:-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to our hub provision was the responsibility of our Head teacher and the Senior Leadership Team who were able to make sure our pupils were receiving access to this provision and the right support as necessary. They are also able to monitor the number of pupils attending and the allocation of days for each pupil.• Questionnaires were sent out to all our families to complete to access this scheme, we have also recently sent out a questionnaire to find out parents'	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Throughout both lockdowns when our school was not open to the whole school community, our school hub has been available for children of key workers and those children deemed as vulnerable. Numbers were relatively small to begin with however, numbers increased quite rapidly over the weeks with more referrals coming in from families of pupils who needed to access this provision, from families needing support and were struggling with their circumstances for whatever reason.• We have started an Ysgol Hen Felin food bank scheme in conjunction with Fareshare and have asked families if they would like to access this provision, we now deliver up to ten food hampers and cleaning hampers to families on a weekly basis. This started before lockdown and continued throughout.	<p>thoughts and experiences of this service and ways in which we can improve what we are already doing.</p>	
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Innovation

How else have you gone above and beyond to support your children and families?

We believe we have been flexible and innovative in our approach to the coronavirus pandemic during the lockdown period, providing our families and pupils the right level of support and guidance to deliver the very best outcomes.



- We have started an Ysgol Hen Felin food bank scheme in conjunction with Fareshare and have asked families if they would like to access this provision, we now deliver up to ten food hampers to families on a weekly basis. Questionnaires were sent out to all our families to see if they would like to access this scheme. We then got in touch with them to arrange delivery. We currently have around 56 families who are signed up to this scheme, food parcels are allocated on a rota basis or if we know of a family in need. We hope this scheme has gone a little way in helping our families in these unprecedented times.
- Save The Children also provided us with care packages from various donors with food staple items and cleaning supplies that we were able to offer to our families.
- We are very lucky to be able to work with Save The Children, who at Christmas donated a vast amount of Christmas gifts to ourselves from donors such as Hasbro and the Welsh FA. These gifts were a lifeline to some of our families, with many suffering the effects of the pandemic. We were then able to contact families we thought would benefit from this extra help at Christmas to arrange deliveries of the gifts. Staff delivered to gifts to many families across the whole of RCT who were extremely grateful for the Christmas presents.
- We also received some donations of Easter eggs from Care For Humanity so that all of our pupils were able to receive an egg at Easter.
- From a questionnaire sent out to parents it was brought to our attention that not all families had access to the right technology for pupils to access any home learning tasks, we set about sourcing a number of unused laptops around the school so that these pupils were not at a disadvantage and where then able to access any work provided. The laptops were then delivered to families across RCT who needed them.
- All staff took part in a transitional video posted to our school Twitter page for pupils due to start school with us in September, who were unable to take part in any school transition because of the Covid restrictions. The video introduced staff, discussed routines and operational guidance for new pupils starting and pupils returning to school.
- We were lucky enough to be contacted by a local community organisation asking if we would be interested in some special Easter Bunny visits for our families. Lots of families were interested in these visits and signed up.