



06 January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

GENTLE JANUARY

Charlie Mackesy, author of 'The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse' offers us the following:

"What is a true sign of strength?" asked the boy.

"Gentleness" said the horse.

Today is the Christian Feast of Epiphany; the day when 'The Wise Men' arrive in Bethlehem. We do not know a great deal about these visitors from the East. Certainly they were not Jewish – they might have been Zoroastrian – but we are told that they were Magi, mysterious magicians, pagan astrologers, sorcerers.

The Wise Men saw a star and began a journey of faith. They did not know where they were going, or what they would find, but they were led to worship Jesus. We, too, begin this new year on a journey of discovery. We do not have all the answers, much is unknown and we are uncertain where we will end up. Yet, like the Magi, we are each called to trust in God so that we know, whatever the destination, we go safely if we go with Him.

Another national lockdown and rising levels of infection inevitably add to the stresses and strain felt by families. In school, too, we are having to reimagine education so that children can learn safely from home. So it is important that we look after one another, finding strength in our gentle treatment of those around us. The Revd Arwen Mary Folkes tweeted:

"I propose a 'gentle January': gentle with ourselves, gentle with each other, gentle with the to-do lists and plans, and gentle with our creation. Gentle tones of voice to accompany gentle footsteps and gentle thoughts, all gently brought into our pauses and prayers."

Enough said.

Online learning

On Monday, we learnt that schools in Wales would remain closed for longer than first expected. In a written statement, Education Minister, Kirsty Williams, said:

"The situation in Wales and across the UK remains very serious. Today, the four UK Chief Medical Officers have agreed that the UK is now at the highest level of risk, Joint Biosecurity Council level 5.

In the light of that decision the Welsh Government [...] has agreed that all schools, colleges and independent schools should move to online learning until January 18th.

As a government we will use the next two weeks to continue to work with local authorities, schools and colleges to plan for the rest of term. This is the best way to ensure that parents, staff and learners can be confident in the return to face to face learning, based on the latest evidence and information.”

For St Teilo's, this means:

- **In the week commencing 11 January 2021, live (synchronous) lessons will continue to be broadcast to pupils at 9.00am, 11.00am and 1.30pm each day.**
- **Vulnerable children who cannot learn at home will continue to be supervised in school.**
- **It is anticipated that all students will return to school on Monday 18 January 2021. However, this decision is subject to change based on the latest public health information.**

In light of this uncertainty, the school's senior leadership team has put in place plans for an extended period of closure as a precautionary measure. These plans include weekly feedback for parents and carers about their child's engagement and progress with online learning. In addition, there will be an increase in targeted work for children with additional learning needs, vulnerable children and academically able children. Let's hope it isn't needed.

Headteacher's Q&A

I know that the decision to again close the school building will cause worry and anxiety to families. Therefore, I would like to offer you the opportunity to ask questions and raise queries or concerns. I will be broadcasting from the school, live, on the following dates:

- *Tuesday 12 January 2021 at 6pm for parents with children in Years 7, 8 and 9. Join the live Q&A by clicking [here](#).*
- *Wednesday 13 January 2021 at 6pm for parents with children in Years 10, 11, 12 and 13. Join the live Q&A by clicking [here](#).*

You can join the broadcast via a web browser or through the Microsoft Teams app.

Progress reports

The current restrictions make our role of assessing pupils' understanding and progress very difficult. Likewise, parents and carers have been denied the opportunity to meet directly with teachers to discuss their child's learning. To address these challenges, I intend to produce three progress reports this year instead of the usual one written report. You will receive the first of these in the week commencing 18 January 2021. The report will include the percentage outcome from the first two formal assessments of the year and an effort grade in

each subject. By no means perfect, it will provide some indication of your child's strengths and areas for development.

Digital devices

This week, we have received a flurry of requests for laptops. Whilst our stock is running low, we do retain a small number of Chromebooks and are actively sourcing more. As our lessons are broadcast live, it is essential that each individual child has their own device. Our broadcasts can be viewed on a tablet, laptop, PC or games console through a browser. Mobile telephones can also be used to watch lessons but reading text on a small screen can be problematic.

- **If your child requires a device to access live lessons, please email me as soon as possible at headteacher@steilos.com so that we can source a laptop for you.**

As always, I will keep you updated as the public health picture unfolds. Letters will be sent by SMS and published on [Twitter](#) and [online](#).

Wishing you a happy new year,

Mr I Loynd
Headteacher