



07 December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

'A NATIONAL EFFORT'

You may recognise these words from the second volume of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, 'The Two Towers':

Sam: This looks strangely familiar.

Frodo: That's because we've been here before, we're going in circles.

Alas, we find ourselves closing our doors once again at short notice as we move to synchronous learning for the last week of term.

Yesterday evening, Education Minister Kirsty Williams confirmed that schools will move to blended learning as part of a 'national effort to reduce transmission of coronavirus'. By making this decision, the Minister felt it was important to make a 'clear, national direction' to take pressure off individual schools, local authorities, parents and carers. The Minister said her decision followed expert advice from Wales's Chief Medical Officer showing that the public health situation in Wales was deteriorating.

Kirsty Williams said, "This is not an early Christmas holiday, please do everything you can to minimise your contact with others. The education family in Wales has pulled together so many times this year to make a real difference to the course of this virus and ultimately to save lives and I know we can do the same again. Together we will keep Wales safe."

We are now in the position of having to abandon our plans for next week and quickly reinvent our provision to ensure quality does not suffer. Therefore, I have decided that:

- **Monday 14 December 2020 will be an INSET day, allowing teachers to plan digital lessons for the week ahead. The school will be closed to all pupils on this day.**
- **From Tuesday 15 December 2020 to Friday 18 December 2020, live (synchronous) lessons will be broadcast to pupils at 9.00am, 11.00am and 1.30pm each day.**
- **Vulnerable children who cannot learn at home will be supervised in school between Tuesday 15 December 2020 and Friday 18 December 2020.**

I am sorry for the extremely short notice of these decisions. Indeed, I share your frustrations. However, I sincerely believe that the Minister has made the right decision for learners and that we will now be able to provide a calm, controlled and safe end to the school term.

How will my child access their lessons?

All children are enrolled into a blended learning class on Hwb. Each day, there will be three links to lessons in the 'Live Lessons' folder. Pupils simply need to click on the link to watch lessons through their browser. A timetable for the week will be available within the same folder.

Sixth Form students will need to download the Microsoft Teams app from Hwb to engage fully with their meetings.

If pupils have technical difficulties, they should email closurehelpline@stteilos.com.

My child is vulnerable. Can they continue to attend school?

All children who can learn at home, must do so. If a child has a particular need which prevents them from learning effectively at home, then they may continue to attend school. All children wishing to attend school will need to apply for a place, so that enough staff can be made available to provide supervision and care. To make such an arrangement, please email headteacher@stteilos.com as soon as possible.

My child does not have access to suitable technology.

The school retains a small number of devices which can be loaned to families. Please email headteacher@stteilos.com to request support.

I am worried and need somebody to talk to.

Notwithstanding the difficulties posed by the COVID crisis, Christmas can bring its own challenges. If you are worried and need to talk – or if you require material support or food – please contact our emergency helpline on [07568357563](tel:07568357563). You can call us during normal working hours, send us a text message, or message us via WhatsApp.

What about the new year?

It is my authentic hope that the school will be in a position to reopen as usual in the new year. However, this decision will be predicated on the changing public health information. It is therefore essential that we all play our part during the festive period to reduce contacts, stay at home and act responsibly. Only by working together can we begin to again reassert our control over the virus.

Let us move forward in confidence and faith. 'For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.' (Isaiah 9:6 NKJV)

With every best wish for a joyful family Christmas,

Mr I Loynd
Headteacher