



25th September 2020 – Headteacher Blog #2

Dear Parents, Guardians and Students / Annwyl Rieni, Gwarchodw Year a MyfYearwYear

Well, what are two weeks it has been! Our school community is now back and all our young learners are in their lessons receiving high-quality learning and teaching from their teachers, just the way it should be. Even so, the world around us is different, we understand it, we embrace it and we are safe in the knowledge that everything we do day in day out, through the robust implementation of our risk assessments allows our community to thrive.

The new structure of our day has greatly helped us. Our young learners have been amazing! They are supported on a daily basis by our excellent pastoral team at school. They fully understand why we are doing what we are doing and have embraced the fact that they must always wear facemasks and follow our one-way system with travelling to and from lessons.

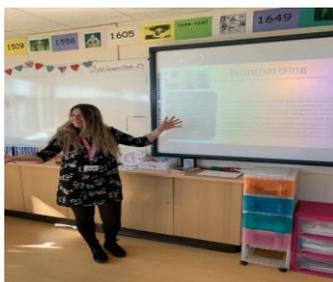
As I said earlier, we are very pleased with the way in which the first month has gone in school but we absolutely will not rest on our laurels. We are seeing more and more areas within Wales being placed on local lockdowns, and we in school have been planning for every eventuality.

Behind the scenes we have been planning for every eventuality and have made excellent progress in the development of our 'PHS Online Academy'. Please see below a direct link to further information about our readiness for remote learning if required.

<https://www.pencoedtrehigh.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/What-happens-when-pupils-are-not-in-school.-Info-for-parents.pdf>

So, what's been happening in school?

People receiving high-quality learning and teaching is at the heart of everything we do at Pencoedtre high school. Our pupils are lucky to have the teachers that they have. They are excellent! This week's departmental focus is on our core departments English, Mathematics and Science. The Heads of Departments are Elise Clark, Jamie Chalkley and Della Conway respectively.





Please see below exciting developments going on in our core departments over the last few weeks.

English

Within English, Mr Saunders has been developing differentiation strategies so that we are able to quickly and effectively differentiate every lesson for our pupils.

Differentiation by SMA (secure, mastery and advanced) is a simple and quick, but very effective way of offering a class of mixed ability students a task.

To begin, the teacher needs to create three ability groupings within the class. This can be done solely on data but works best when combined with a teacher's soft assessment of all students' abilities. The weaker students are then labelled SECURE, the slightly stronger students are MASTERY and the most able students are called ADVANCED. (The wording is important to promote positivity; simply calling them easy, harder and hardest can have a negative effect on self-esteem.)

Once the groups are established and students know which group they are in (write it on the front of their exercise books) it can be put into action at any stage during a lesson. The key here is not to simply give the stronger/advanced students more work to do but rather give them more difficult tasks to complete. Students should not complete a task below their grouping but can opt to attempt a question from the next grouping up, thus showing a positive growth mind-set.

Two resources to use when establishing the difficulty curve for task are Bloom's Taxonomy and the Question Matrix – suggestions given below:

- SECURE tasks usually follow the 'What' or 'When' format. These work well as retrieval practice which is key for weaker students.
- MASTERY tasks usually require students to summarise, explain or infer.
- ADVANCED tasks can be such things as having students interpret information in a new medium (text into diagrams for example) or anything else from the higher end of Bloom's.

A great benefit of this strategy is that is evolving, and students are not always stuck on one grouping. For example, a student in English may be SECURE on this term's unit but be more able on next term's unit. Once an assessment has been marked, the grouping on the front of their book can be altered. Additionally, the groupings can be colour-coded allowing for a 'no hands up' approach to questioning. This then allows for deeper questioning of other students in the same group.

Title: Apollo 11 **Monday 2nd March 2020**

Starter: Today we will be looking at the Apollo 11 lunar landing.

Secure: What do you think the man in the image is famous for?

Mastery: Why is he wearing that odd suit? (Don't just say 'because he is going into space, duh')

Advanced: Why are we so interested in exploring space?



Today's keywords:

Hoax	Cold War	Space Race
Rebet	Lunar	Patriotism

TiF: based on your half term homework do you know the name of this man?

LO: To explore the Apollo moon landing of 1969 to understand the facts and conspiracy theories.

TITLE: R&J - CHARACTERS **TUESDAY 25TH FEBRUARY 2020**

Starter: Friends and enemies...

Secure: What qualities do you look for in a friend?

Mastery: What reasons do people have for being enemies? (think about what you know about gangs in Birmingham)

Advanced: Can you ever become a friend to a former enemy?



Today's Key Words (Tier Two)	Foe	Loyalty
	Desire	Betrayal

LO: TO UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY



Maths

The Mathematics Department took a new shape in September 2020 wishing farewell to Mr Jack Williams, who moved to Porth Community College furthering his career in a promoted role. In his stead we have appointed Ms McGowan, an experienced teacher from the other side of the bridge. She's already bringing her brand of Mathematics pedagogy to the department and has fitted in well with the department and pupils alike. We're really pleased to have her on board!

We've also had a change at the top of the department with Mr Baker stepping up to take a role on the Senior Leadership Team; Mr Baker has worked tirelessly to improve the mathematical education of our pupils over his years as Head of Department and will continue to be an integral member of the department going forward. I, Mr Chalkley, have stepped up into the Head of Department role and am extremely excited to continue Baker's great work in leading this innovative and hardworking department over the coming years.

There's plenty happening across the department; keep your eyes peeled in all year groups for the unveiling of our replacement to MathsWatch. (Details will be shared once all the wrinkles are ironed out.) We promise a fantastic resource to match, if not surpass, your experiences with our previous online learning platform. Tutors across the school are delivering our "Loom" videos to help pupils remember those forgotten lockdown skills.

Year 7 pupils have made a strong start. There are rumours of some pupils posting scores above 95% in their first assessment.

We have also learnt a few things from our Mrs Jones' Maths Department Murder Mystery:

- a. There might be more to Mr Adams than simply the "Zoom Quiz King"...
- b. Our new intake have some great problem solving skills and the resilience to back it up.

In the "examination years" of 11, 12 and 13 we've seen clear and distilled conviction, drive and enthusiasm for the subject. Year 13 are already producing reams of Calculus work that may look like hieroglyphics to mere mortals and Year 12 have a steely look in their eyes giving Baker and Chalks an incredibly positive outlook on their futures.

Every week we'll try to look at one student who has impressed us over the previous days, weeks or months. This week we look at Piers Chandler in Year 13. After underperforming in the summer exam, we saw how disappointed he was at the thought he might have to drop Mathematics A Level. In his own words: "I love Maths. I want to keep working at it", and he did. Weeks and weeks of work allowed him to show us his passion, determination and, most importantly, his Mathematical skills... He almost doubled his percentage with no additional teaching, other than what we guided him to on the internet. Not often do you see pupils with the attitude and conviction to follow up on a promise to do better. He's now sat proudly in the Year 13 class, using his summer learning to press forward

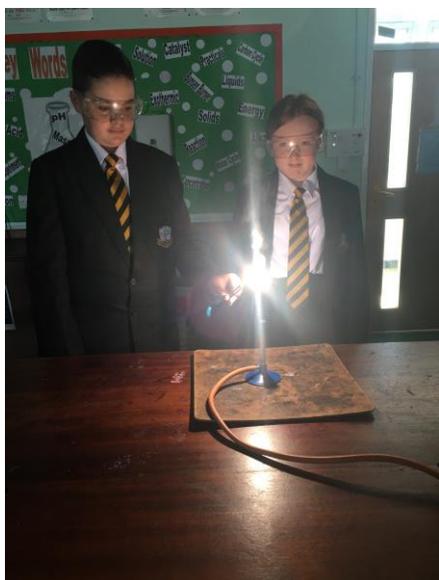


towards his university goals (he's even pre-learning topics I mention in passing!).

Science

Year 7 have made a great start in Science. They have learned how to light a Bunsen burner and have been burning metals. They have also had fun mixing chemicals and making observations. Year 8 have been acting as Forensic scientists and have made a cast of a screwdriver and lifted fingerprints to help 'solve a crime'. They have also been studying sound and testing their reaction time. Year 9 have been carrying out displacement reactions, testing for glucose linked to diabetes and using magnets. Year 10 have been distilling sea water and studying conduction and the impact of humans on the environment. Year 11 have been studying classification and biodiversity, Bonding and Space. Year 12 Biology have been carrying out Food tests and extracting DNA from a strawberry. Year 12 Chemistry have been learning how to make an accurate standard solution. Year 13 Biology have been extracting, then calculating the Rf value of chlorophyll. Year 13 Chemistry have been investigating reaction rate.

Covid-19 has meant that all equipment must be thoroughly disinfected and/or quarantined when used. This requires a lot of extra organisation but we are determined that the pupils as much as possible will still be able to carry out most practical sessions.





Budding Movie Stars? (Well definitely not the bearded man!)

On Thursday, we welcomed Red90 Media into our school, to create a promotional video. The video will form part of our virtual year 6 open evening this year, but will also be a focal point for visitors to our website for years to come. Mike Baker arranged the schedule for the day and wishes to pass on his thanks to all teachers for their support. He said that all of the environments were excellent and pupils were so pleasant, engaging really well with the filming. Scott and Martin, from Red90, mentioned several times throughout the day that they have rarely visited a school with such positive teacher/pupil relationships and that they were blown away by the interactions. As a relative newcomer to this school, I am not surprised, as I have immediately seen the deep level of care and reciprocity you cultivate on a daily basis. I am just delighted that visitors to our school are recognising this after a few hours with us! We should have the video with us by this time next week and look forward to sharing it with you.



Something Interesting!

The latest digital 'back to school' issue of Families Cardiff & Vale is out now, with lots of great educational content, plus a chance to feature your child on our next cover, win a family holiday to Lapland, and for schools to win national book tokens.

The link is:

[https://issuu.com/familiesonline/docs/fam_cardiff_9 -
_sept oct 2020_web?fr=sMTAxZTE5NTYyNzY](https://issuu.com/familiesonline/docs/fam_cardiff_9_-_sept_oct_2020_web?fr=sMTAxZTE5NTYyNzY)



Finally, a thought for the week ahead:

“Every accomplishment starts with the decision to try.”

John F. Kennedy

Have a lovely weekend! Stay Safe!

Thank you for reading/Diolch am ddarllen,

Mr Lee G Humphreys,

Headteacher