**“Supporting a Successful Return to School – what worked for us”**

*During this one-hour webinar, primary head, Sarah Jones will talk about how she and her team worked with children, staff and the community to support a successful return to full school reopening following the spring lockdown.  She’ll share what worked, what didn’t and give some ideas you could try in your setting.*

* Journey to return which started well before we were given a return date to enable us to have a shared vision for that return by the time it came around.
* Sharing our journey, not necessarily best practise and likely to be what you have already thought about and considered.

**BREAKOUT ROOM**

**What do you feel are the prioritises to be consider for a return/full reopening of schools?**

**Our journey started with the *SWAN Model training through Creative Education, The Enabling Children to Feel Safe so they can Flourish training and Pooky’s Podcast with Head Teacher Stuart Guest***

* SLT undertook this training prior to the planned reopening for “Catch-up, Check-in Days” in Wales.
* This training enabled us as a leadership team to discuss the key points in relation to the needs of our school. Doing what was right for our staff and pupils. We took each element of the SWAN Model and were able to begin discussing what that meant for staff, parents and pupils.
  + Safety (physical and emotional)
  + Welcoming
  + All Together (for the staff, pupils and community)
  + Nurturing
* The SWAN Model led the way for our first few actions in terms of the adults being the SWAN for the children (Calm, graceful, controlled and gliding – we might have been paddling like crazy underneath to overcome our anxiety but on the surface we would be what our children needed us to be)
* This enabled us to align the vision for the reopening with our core school aims, values and motto
* For our staff we were mindful that some staff would be returning to work after a period of shielding, where they had had limited contact with others and had been living alone. But for others they had been working in the Hubs throughout March to June and were confident in the processes schools had in place for safety and reduce the risk of the virus and working with the children. We were very mindful that when bringing the staff back together everyone had had different experiences over the previous few months and some may feel more anxious than others. We obviously were not going to be the same team we were before the school closed in March, as the pandemic and lockdown had affected us all differently.
* Our first action was to bring all the staff onboard. All school staff (including clerical, catering and cleaning staff) and Governors were asked to complete online SWAN Model training session and begin thinking about what we the key messages that resonated with them. As a collective we followed this with a “Zoom” staff meeting to discussed our thoughts, opinions and impact of the training during.

**BREAKOUT ROOM**

**What are your experiences or knowledge of the SWAN Model? How have you used it in your schools?**

***How could we ensure the staff felt all the elements of the SWAN Model to ensure they embodied that for the pupils***

* We followed this with a staff SWAN questionnaire using Google Forms, again all prior to actually returning to school and as we received the information from WG about dates for the return.
* We wanted to do this as a priority so we could fully understood their concerns and needs before coming back onto the school site. We very much felt that if the staff did not feel safe, welcomed, altogether and nurtured in their return to school, after the lockdown, we would be unable to promote this to the children and their families. We also didn’t want to make assumptions of staff’s level of anxiety or that the messages and information we were giving, such as Risk Assessments etc was doing enough to reassure staff. We weren’t all in the room together at the same time to have a conversation and discussion in the way we would have previously done before the Lockdown.
* Questions we included were:

How can the we support you in feeling physically safe?

How can we support you in feeling emotionally safe?

How do you think we can make the school team feel all together?

When returning to work, what would help you to feel welcomed?

How do you think we can NURTURE and create an environment to have fun! – to laugh together - to relax – to teach our brain that school is a safe place?

Would you like to add or ask any other information?

***Opportunities to regulate their own wellbeing and anxieties about the return to full face to face teacher***

The results of the questionnaire were what led the actions for the SLT, some of the results were:

* On average, from the 25 responses to the SWAN Questionnaire on Forms, staff are feeling at about 3.6 for how they are feeling about returning to work. 1 being the lowest rate and 5 the highest.

We are a very close staff and a very supportive of one another but by sharing the general outcome of the questionnaire it enabled us all very quickly to understand that we were all feeling very similar and to have further understanding and empathy from where one another were coming from.

* Ensuring all staff had a copy of the reopening risk assessment well in advance so that they could read it carefully and have an opportunity to ask questions or raise further concerns or issues.

• The school being organised with socially distanced seating, signage, hand sanitiser all in place before they returned.

• We set up one or two classes as an example for them in how they needed to prepare their classrooms in line with the reopening guidance and risk assessments.

• We ensure there was additional PPE and cleaning materials in every classroom if staff wanted to clean for themselves. This wasn’t an expectation of the SLT that they would clean their own surfaces, as we had cleaner on-site throughout the whole day, but it was want the staff wanted to feel more reassured and safer.

• We developed an area (old intervention room) which was private for staff to have an opportunity to “regulate” themselves away from the other staff if they needed to. We called this the SWAN room and included comfortable chairs, a radio, tea and coffee making facilities – staff who had been living alone during the lockdown had expressed their anxiety about being around people all the time and the noise that they were used to.

• We purchased radios to ensure staff felt safe when out at break times, forest school and to communicate effectively with SLT if they were not in their rooms.

• We made improvements to the school grounds so the school looked attractive when the children returned and not that it had been closed for moths.

• We carried out weekly calls to families.

• Support staff created a Wellbeing ppt.

• We changed the timetable of the school day to ensure staff (and children) had regular breaks or opportunities to check-in with one another.

• The plan for the very first day the staff returned

**SHARE PPT SCREEN – this was the first day all staff came back into the building which was a week prior to the children returning**

* **Breakfast each morning**
* **Additional refreshment areas**
* **Radio on as they came in each morning**
* **Gentle start and finish times**

• FAQ report for staff

***Parent and Pupil input***

We carried out a similar questionnaire with parents prior to the children’s return to again ensure we were involving them in the reopening and supporting their needs, as both parents and the children. Again, this was done via Microsoft Forms and some of the questions included:

What is your child looking forward to most about returning to school? – We used this to explore timetabling and opportunities to address and prioritise these (e.g. more pause for breaktimes to allow the children time to mix socially through structured and unstructured times)

Do you feel you as parents need to feel confident about the physical safety in returning to school? – we used this to inform future communication with parents about the reopening – Risk Assessments, videos of the new one way systems in and out of the school grounds

What is your child looking forward to learning when they come back to school? – this enabled us to prioritise our curriculum delivery in the short term to engage and motivate the children, enabling them to get back into routine and structure on “their agenda”

What do you feel your child needs for their emotional safety in returning to school? – We had already done a lot of wellbeing activities throughout the Lockdown like staff video – dancing and singing, sent letters and postcards to the children, left stick people around the village with messages on for the children to find on their daily walk.

Rate how is your child feeling about returning to school?

Is your child worried about any aspect of returning to school?

Has your child experienced a bereavement during the Lockdown?

Has the child/family received any additional support from other community services during this time?

Has anything happened to the family or your child during this time that you feel school should be made aware of?

Is there anything you think your child will struggle with on return to school, that we should be made aware of?

Do you or your child have any questions you would like us to answer before returning?

We used this information to inform:

• The priority for curriculum provision

* Developed socially distanced greetings for each morning

• The timetable of the day

• The quantity and strategies for high quality wellbeing provision

• FAQ report for parents

• Communication of Newsletters, the risk assessment and videos from staff and the changes to the organisation of the classroom before the children returned.

**September**

We developed a reopening handbook with all the timetable changes in, routines, lunch cover, staggered breaktimes, PPA arrangements so that everyone had the information up front and could keep referring back to it throughout the term