

ASN coping with the Covid19 crisis

The covid19 outbreak has presented a great challenge to all teachers and this is the response of the ASN Department at Castle Douglas High School.

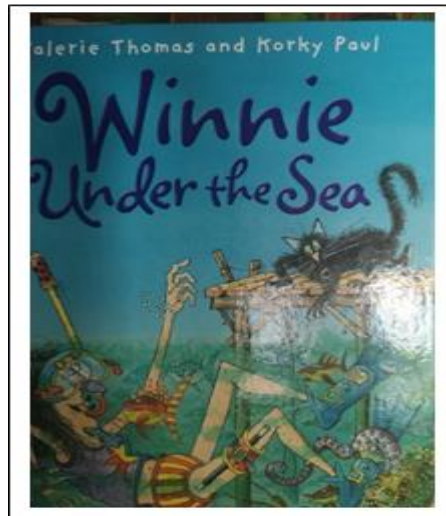


*Pupils take part in their sensory story 30/04/20 (*Photos provided by Parental Consent)*

Miss Sellers our PT is very IT aware and, in my case, incredibly patient, she has ‘ironed out’ many of our ‘issues’ with technology. Our week starts with a team meeting on **Microsoft Teams**. This keeps us informed, allows us to assess progress and to set targets for our pupils. A key priority is to support both the pupils and their parents/carers at this difficult time. This is handled with great sensitivity and we have worked hard to establish a support system that listens and offers help and advice without being intrusive. All issues/concerns are treated confidentially and professionally. The meeting is also an opportunity to support and encourage each other, going that ‘extra mile’ for pupils, parents and colleagues is the driving force behind this close-knit team.

Using **facebook messenger teams** a variety of activities is offered weekly. Parents ‘tune in to these at home. These include a music and singing activity, a yoga lesson, ‘lets move’ an exercise and dance session which include a warm-up and cool-down session. The children

also enjoy a sensory story read to them while one of the team uses 'Makaton' signing to assist one of the pupils.



'Thank you, Caitlin enjoyed that. She loves seeing you all.'*

(Parent)

*(*All names changed to protect anonymity)*

'Thankyou for letting Margaret join in. Both enjoyed that! Mummy too!'*

(Parent)

*(*All names changed to protect anonymity)*

'Andrew loves this story, it makes him feel so chilled that he kept on yawning!'*

(Parent)

*(*All names changed to protect anonymity)*

These learning 'experiences' have a *fluidity* all of their own, a team member does a one-to-one maths lesson with 'counting plates' another recites a favourite story to a pupil. It takes a great deal of pressure off parents. It is also carefully expanding with a drama and games session planned for subsequent weeks.

Parental Response has been so very positive and appreciative. This close contact with youngsters, their parents and staff has created a tight-knit bond that can only benefit the learning of our youngsters.

'Andrew felt totally lost and 'out of it'. It has helped him with his routine, he now feels part of something and has contact with his friends and teachers. He no longer feels so frustrated.'*

(Parent)

*(*All names changed to protect anonymity)*

Using the *online training* currently on offer, teachers have prepared lessons on Sumdog where learning challenges occur, and pupils earn rewards to spend on games. This is proving very popular, ‘challenges’ have superb graphics, are sequential and pupils are motivated to gain reward ‘coins’ which they can exchange for games. During the ‘lockdown’ these rewards have been doubled. A profile view enables the teacher to record and gauge progress. Spelling and language components are also on offer. Considerable work has been done on this programme, it is ‘slicker’ and more ‘user friendly’ than its previous form. At the end of the day however youngsters themselves will decide whether they wish to take part. Feedback from parents has been very encouraging.

‘James tried Sumdog this morning for the first time and it was a great success, he absolutely loves it.’*

(Parent)

*(*All names changed to protect anonymity)*

Issues

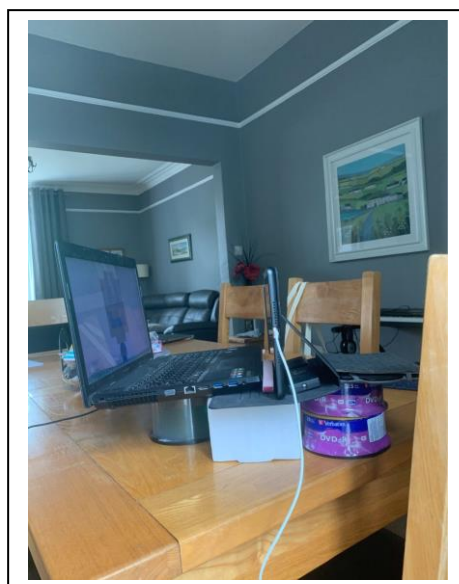
There are some ‘issues’ to be addressed with the sound quality and synchronisation. This was not evident from my laptop and may be related to using ipads.

‘Susan can hear much better if we play the music from a different ipad but gets confused if it’s not exactly in time. If it were possible to pause at an obvious point at the beginning and then say ‘go!’ we might be more able to sync our music with you better perhaps?’*

(Parent)

*(*All names changed to protect anonymity)*

Staff are doing their utmost to address this concern, not having the resources of a more ‘sophisticated’ studio, their response has been ingenious and creative.



‘I set up the laptop and my iPad and used husband’s ipad in the kitchen, both doors shut so no noise feedback. It seemed to work.’

(teacher)

Microsoft Teams

Teams offers a more formal teaching response to teaching entire groups or individuals and is well supported with boards, lesson storage files and a/v facilities. This impacts upon the ASN Department in that it enables us to closely monitor and support youngsters with learning needs who are also included within mainstream classrooms. This is particularly so in our S4 English class where youngsters are carrying out a wide range of investigations for their ***'NATIONAL 4 ADDED VALUE UNIT'***. Once again where there is a strong working relationship with the home, youngsters are able (with guidance) to develop research and writing skills at a pace that they are happy with. Parents and students have been delighted and surprised at the quality of work produced. Once again, they are motivated by success.

Observations/Recommendations

- 1) Covid19 has changed the way that we teach as a department and we fully endorse the increased use of IT in our lessons. Quite simply there is no going back from this.
- 2) It fosters closer contacts between school and home and the youngsters themselves. This is the 'bedrock' of an inclusive school.
- 3) There is a style of leadership at play that embraces change and encourages staff to try new things. This has produced a closer and highly committed staff.
- 4) As a staff we empathise with learners and their parents. This may be due to 'pulling together' during the present Covid19 Emergency.

R Mc Naughton ASN Teacher