

Happy St David's Day! As I write this I am looking out over an arctic scene through my kitchen window, the mini daffodils in the decking planter are looking extremely sad and the severe weather warning has just been upgraded to red!

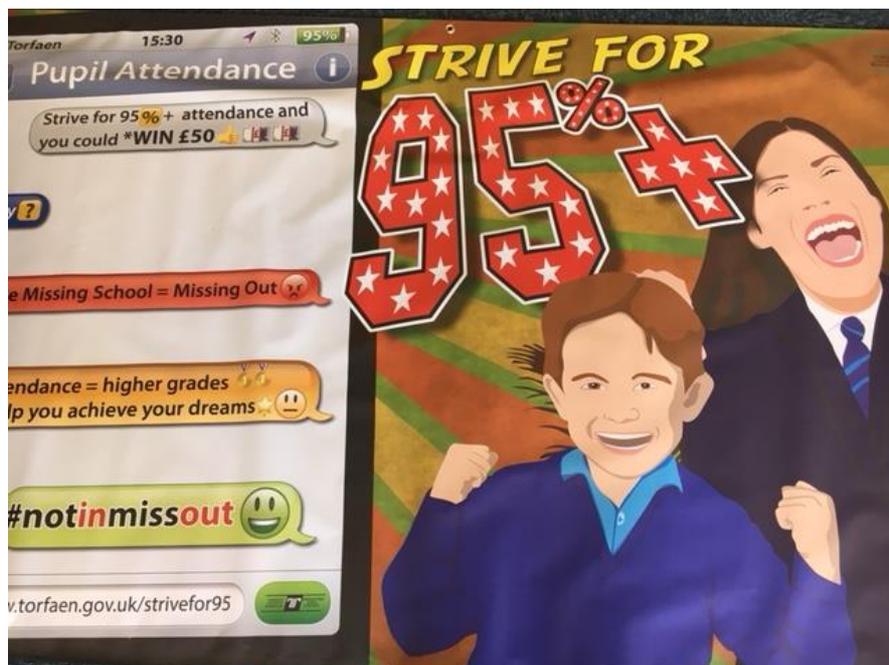
I took the dogs out for a walk last night after work and, according to the Met Office 'feels like' temperature, it was somewhere near -13!

Snow closures are always one of those difficult decisions where everyone has an opinion and you feel yourself getting dragged progressively into a 'no-win' situation. We've learned from closing the school during the day (about 8 years ago) and the challenges of contacting 480 parents to collect the children is not easy and proved too difficult for us to manage. This decision was pretty straightforward in this circumstance - let's hope that we all get through the red warning unscathed! Stay safe and enjoy it!

As for St David's day itself, we will, of course, re-arrange the dressing up, Eisteddfods, and competitions along with the plans for World Book Day (keep those costumes on ice!) - details to follow once we have figured out what we are doing (St David's Day Wed 7th, World Book Day Fri 9th)

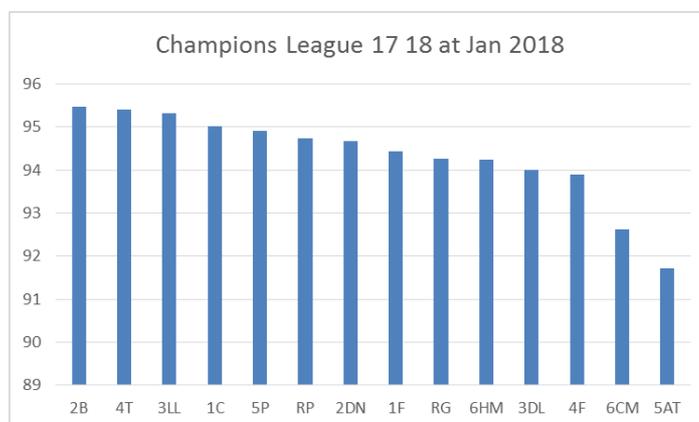
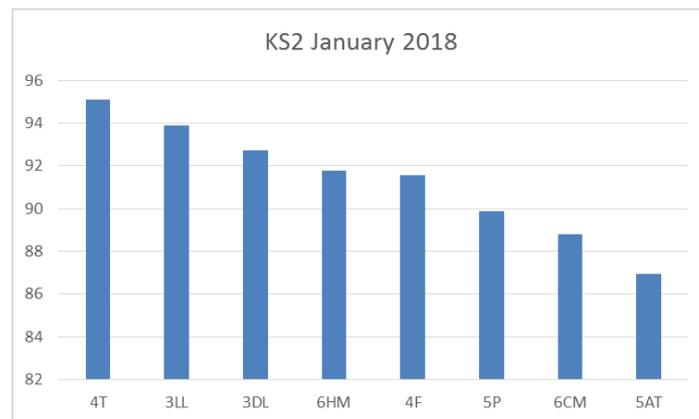
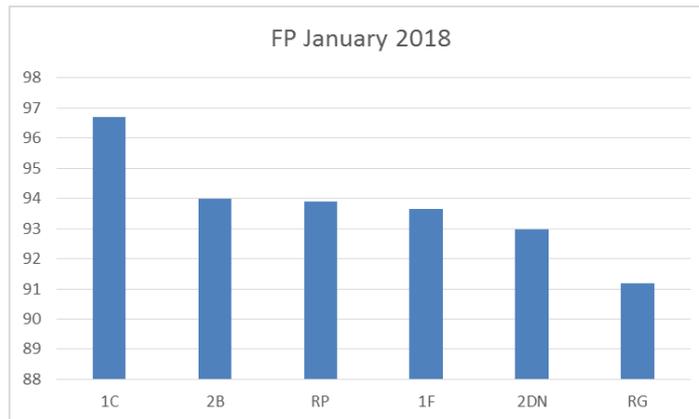
Strive for 95%

There is a Local Authority central drive to improve pupil attendance rates across Torfaen's schools.



At the risk of stating the obvious, there is a clear link between school attendance and pupil outcomes, hence the push. Obviously there are other

drivers here (notably a Welsh Govt metric by which the authority is measured!) and there are a range of factors that lead to this link but, put simply, your child can't learn unless they are here! There are always, of course, entirely legitimate reasons for being off but, ultimately, as with employees working at an organisation, attendance is mostly linked to attitude and behaviour rather than illness and circumstance; it's also about eating the right things and living a healthy lifestyle so, at the risk of preaching / nagging, help us to help your child by getting them here as often as possible!



Three classes making the grade so far this year!!

Winter Woollies

The school, once more, stepped up to the mark to support a national charity - our winter woollies raised £264 for Save The Children to support families at Christmas.



Singapore Maths / PISA

It has become quite a trend for the great and the good in education to look increasingly overseas for ideas as to how best go about raising standards.

This largely came about from tests with 15 year olds every 3 years in maths, literacy and science, that started in 2000.

So for those with a good maths brain, yes it's that time again and the normal disappointment about how badly Wales performs! The UK is usually about mid-point, with France and lesser developed countries (and the USA!) are usually in the lower performance.

Scandinavian and some Asian countries (e.g. Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong) consistently perform towards the top. I'm afraid Wales is consistently the lowest of the home nations and gets the proverbial wooden spoon every 3 years.

So that's the reason why we are looking at Singapore maths, but what is it?! In a nutshell, it's about concentrating on fewer fundamental concepts in greater depth rather than a scattergun of knowledge and understanding pushed too soon (e.g. the National Curriculum for Wales!!).

Pupils go through 3 distinct phases :

1. 'concrete' (hands on counting, sorting etc),
2. 'pictorial' (simple representation of the concrete)
3. 'abstract' (e.g. sums!).

It's not exactly rocket science but it is a bit different to the 'good old days' of the British education system and we will certainly be taking on many elements of the approach to see if this improve pupil results. We will keep you posted on how it goes.

Tropical Inc.

The Year 5 'Tropical Inc.' topic was, as ever, brought to life with the arrival of a range of weird and wonderful animals!





As I end writing this blog the mini-daffodils and, in fact, the entire planter have completely disappeared under a snow-drift! The weather, if possible, has got even worse but the heating is still on!

Keep an eye out for posts on the webpage (which has been down but should be up and running again soon), Twitter feed and the school newspaper.

SB 01.03.2018