



Bishop Vaughan Catholic School

03 June 2020

Dear Parents, Carers and Pupils,

Further to the announcement today that school-based provision will re-commence on **Monday June 29th**, I would like to offer you the reassurance that very extensive planning and preparation for this time has been undertaken. Whilst, like yourselves, we heard this announcement in today's news briefing by the Welsh Education Minister, very thorough planning for the re-opening of Bishop Vaughan (as a school, rather than for emergency childcare as has been the case since March), has been our focus. Your own safety as pupils, parents and carers, that of the staff and indeed all of the Bishop Vaughan community is paramount and it will always be supported by the most careful decision-making.

As you will imagine, the Local Authority has been similarly dedicated to preparation for this point and has tasked numerous working groups with focusing on addressing the challenges presented by the current situation. You will shortly be offered an opportunity to put forward any questions and concerns that you may have, so that you can be assured that these have been factored in and addressed prior to June 29th.

The way in which schools will operate in the immediate future will, of course, look very different from all that was in place when we 'closed down' in March. Very significant work has been done, however, to ensure that the changes to our ways of working will be sufficient to address the risks and concerns that exist in the current climate. It goes without saying that we will do all contained within the Wales and Local Authority guidance and a great deal more besides to ensure our pupils' safety.

Please be assured also that, as the Minister has stated today, your decisions will be entirely respected on the matter of school attendance. The Minister referred to attendance this term - which has in fact been extended for a week until July 27th - as an opportunity for pupils to 'check in' with their teachers and become familiar with what will be a 'new normal'. If parents and carers do not feel that it is the right decision for their children at this point in time, there will be no sanctions with regards to attendance; the Welsh Government has made a commitment that no fines will be imposed. Each family therefore has the opportunity make a decision based on what is right for them.

As the Minister has also stated, there will be an absolute maximum of a third of pupils attending school at any one time. With that in mind, please understand that school attendance will not be possible on a full-time basis until such point as there are changes in the laws with regard to social distancing. As 'school' provision is being formally re-introduced, however, we are looking forward at Bishop Vaughan to sharing news of some of the ways in which we will be facilitating blended learning, this supplementing on-site provision with extensive and exciting online learning.

I would like, in this communication to you, to thank our parents and carers for all that they have done to cope with the challenges of 'home learning' during this time, and to congratulate our pupils on the creative, innovative and truly impressive work that they have completed. I would also like to thank all of the staff, including those from our partner primaries, who have worked within our emergency childcare setting and personally delivered learning resources and provision for those entitled to free school meals where needed.

I feel that it is vital to recognise here too the tireless work of all teaching and support staff who, during this period of school closure, have carried out many thousands of wellbeing checks, uploaded countless learning tasks and projects on Microsoft Teams, communicated with hundreds of individual pupils, and worked to support the awards of thousands of qualifications this summer.

Collectively, the contribution of pupils, parents, carers and staff in what we know is a very special school community, has formed an incredible response to a situation that none of us could ever have envisaged just a few months ago.

As stated, we have heard today - just as you have - of the date for schools to be re-opened, and of the part-time and non-compulsory nature of attendance. I am sure that you will have numerous questions, many of which we will be unable to answer until the Minister's further guidance to schools is released early next week. That being the case, I can assure you that detailed and comprehensive information will be provided to you following that information being received by ourselves. A dedicated helpline number to deal with queries will be provided in the next few days; prior to that, if you have an urgent queries please email them to BishopvaughanH@hwbcymru.net. We will do our best to answer your queries but please be mindful we may not be able to provide a definitive answer until guidance is provided next week by Welsh Government. We are keen to do all that we can to ensure that our pupils and their families are fully informed, confident and secure about all matters connected with the return to school.

May I say too, that while we must all be prepared for the fact that school-based education will be very different to the experience with which we are familiar, as teachers, we are looking forward to seeing our pupils again soon; we have missed you!

Further updates will follow next week, then, with more detailed information. In the meantime, thank you for your understanding that, once more, we are responding to a rapidly-changing situation; as always, we will endeavour to do so with the safety and wellbeing of all paramount in our planning and our decision-making.

With our prayers for your safety and your good health, and with very best wishes -

Yours faithfully,



Mrs E Pole
Headteacher