

05 March 2021

Dear Pupils, Parents and Carers,

We are delighted to provide to you today initial details regarding the planned return to school-based provision, following the Welsh Government announcement on Wednesday 3rd March.

As you will be aware, some weeks ago the First Minister and the Education Minister spoke of their intention that, if infection rates had dropped sufficiently, school return would begin on 15th March with pupils in Years 11 and 13 returning initially. This would continue on a phased basis, to include Year 10 and 12 pupils thereafter, and Year 7-9 pupils were due to return after the Easter break. The Minister confirmed yesterday, however, that:

"There will ... be flexibility for those in years 10 and 12 [following 15th March]" and that she was able to "Give schools the opportunity to welcome back learners in years 7, 8 and 9 before the Easter break" for "the opportunity to check-in with teachers, with a focus on support for wellbeing, and readiness for a full return to school after Easter."

She stipulated that "I want to make clear now that this will not be a full return to school for years 7, 8 and 9 before Easter. The focus before Easter will be on learners who are undertaking qualifications, especially those in Years 11 and 13."

Swansea's Director of Education has therefore written to you (the letter is linked [here](#)) to confirm that Swansea's arrangements in respect of the above announcement are these:

- Monday 15th March – Years 11 and 13 return to school
- Thursday 18th March – Years 10 and 12 return to school, in addition to the year groups above
- Years 7-9 will each be offered one day per year group for a check in day during the second week

At Bishop Vaughan, the check in-day will consist of an extended tutorial period to focus on wellbeing, followed by the normal lessons for that day, as we recognise that the best ways of supporting wellbeing are helping our pupils to re-adjust to on-site learning in readiness for full return after Easter.

With that in mind, then, we will be offering on-site days as follows:

- Wednesday 24th March – Year 7

- Thursday 25th March – Year 8
- Friday 26th March – Year 9

The updated guidance for schools states that, in order to mitigate against the risk of Covid-19 and its variants:

"In secondary schools face coverings should be worn in all communal areas and in the classroom where it's not possible to socially distance. However, there is no longer a requirement to do so in outside spaces unless the school risk assessment indicates that additional measures are needed."

This clearly indicates that, unless pupils are exempt for medical reasons, they will need to wear face coverings in the classroom as distancing is not possible for them. I fully recognise that this is a difficult adjustment for our pupils to make, however the fact that it has been included in the operational guidance for schools – to which we must all adhere – is an indication that it is considered necessary to mitigate the risks, and that it is considered ultimately to benefit pupils and their families. In complying with this guidance, we will all be helping to protect one another, as well as our own families. We will, of course, update you immediately when this requirement is lifted from schools.

Finally, it will be necessary for all pupils attending school this term to continue bringing packed lunches as on-site catering will not be available until the new term starts after Easter.

Of course, all of the above is subject to further change when WG next review the restrictions and guidance on Friday 12th March, but at present, this reflects all of the information we have to date and the clearest indication, with a reasonable degree of confidence, about what is going to be in place the following week.

With thanks, as ever, for your ongoing support and for your understanding of the rapidly changing directives we are receiving, and with our prayers for your continued safety and good health –

Yours faithfully,



Mrs E Pole
Headteacher