

Please ask for:

Direct Line:

E-Mail:

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

Date: 5 March 2021

Dear Parent / Carer

Since I wrote to you last, it is clear that we are in a better position where schools in Swansea are concerned. From 24 February, our youngest children have returned to school successfully.

We can now use a flexible approach to welcome more pupils back and aim towards a full return to schools after the Easter holidays. Welsh Government has encouraged a cautious and flexible return. Our aim is to bring back priority year groups first as well as give an opportunity for years 7-9 to have a check in for wellbeing and readiness to return after Easter. We hope to see all year groups return by mid-April.

We want to see a safe and sustainable return to schools so we will take a flexible approach.

Primary schools 15 March 2021

All primary pupils are expected to be in school on this date. We expect that year 3, year 4, year 5 and year 6 pupils will return on 15 March to join the children in foundation phase. School meals will be offered to the whole school on their return from the 15th.

Secondary schools 15 March 2021

Across Swansea, years 11 and 13 return on 15 March 2021

Across Swansea, years 10 and 12 return on 18 March 2021

Years 7, 8 and 9 will be offered an opportunity to attend for one day between 15 March and 26 March. Your local school will let you know what their arrangements are.

All secondary pupils will return to school after Easter on Tuesday 13 April 2021 (Monday 12 April will be a planning day, and onsite learning will not be available for any children on this day).

When secondary aged pupils start to return from 15 March, we expect them to bring a packed lunch up until 26 March. We hope to start serving hot meals after Easter.

Free School Meal Payments/Food Parcels

Free school meal payments and parcels will end for all Key Stage 2 (years 3 to 6) pupils on 12 March 2021, and for all secondary pupils prior to the full return to school on 13 April 2021.

Note that free school meal payments/food parcels will be provided for all school holiday periods from Easter 2021 right through to, and including, Easter 2022. We will use the bank details you have provided on your Swansea Account, so if your details change you will need to update them yourself in advance of the holiday payments. You can access your account here <https://account.swansea.gov.uk/>

Voluntary Lateral Flow Tests for pupils in year 10 and above

The Welsh Government have announced the offer of regular asymptomatic lateral flow tests for all learners in years 10-13 and further education. The lateral flow home testing kits will allow students to test themselves twice a week. Learners will be able to collect their test kits from their school / setting and will test themselves at home. These tests will be part of a range of measures in place to help manage the transmission of the virus. The responsibility for managing the taking and reporting of the tests is with parents / carers and young people. If you chose to undertake the tests then it is really important that any positive results are reported and self-isolation requirements are met. I also hope they will provide some added reassurance that any positive cases will be identified early.

More information on the specific detail of the processes are currently being finalised by Welsh Government and will be shared by schools as soon as possible.

Masks

Pupils in our secondary schools will be required to wear a mask in school if they are unable to keep the required distance from others. Masks must be three-layered and pupils will be provided with three good quality masks that can be washed up to 50 times.

Transport

If your child will not be using school transport after 15 March please let your local school know so that they can make plans with transport officers.

Purchasing of school uniform

Most products are available on a click and collect basis where businesses have that facility. This enables people to buy items they need without having to go into shops. Supermarkets and other shops selling multiple types of product are also able to sell products that are not on general sale at alert level four if they are needed in an emergency or on compassionate grounds. This means that you may not be able to browse the clothing section for example but staff members can get products for you and sell them to you if the above grounds are met. Any clothing would need to be tried on at home and, if not fitting, returned to store in line with the store's return policy. We hope to see the rules on non-essential shopping change on 15 March.

The Welsh Government has recently announced that additional year groups can claim for school uniform grant if their child is currently entitled to free school meals (this does not cover those with higher income levels that have Transitional Protection for a free meal). Officers are working on a new online application and this should be ready towards the end of next week. Parents will be advised when the system is ready for them to apply. Details of the year groups that are eligible can be found here <https://gov.wales/pupil-development-grant-access>

Key messages for keeping safe

It is vital that that our children and parents continue to adhere to all social distancing rules under our tier of restrictions to enable further relaxing of rules. This means that learners should not mix outside of school just because they are doing so inside of school, as strict rules will be followed within the school grounds.

Please can I take this opportunity to remind you that the washing of hands and social distancing is still our best way to prevent the spread of Covid.

Regards



Helen Morgan-Rees
Director of Education