



Tuesday, 04 January 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

May I take this opportunity, first and foremost, to wish you and your families happiness and good health in the year ahead. The ongoing situation with regard to the pandemic has meant that 2021 was another challenging year with much uncertainty. Our pupils, as always, showed fortitude and resilience throughout. We all hope, of course, that the situation will ease throughout 2022 and for continued progress towards 'normality' for all.

As you will be aware, the Welsh Government notified schools on Thursday 16th December that all schools were to utilise Tuesday 4th and Wednesday 5th January 2022 as 'preparation days'. This preparation was to focus on assessing staffing capacity, evaluating whether we have sufficient staffing (in a climate of high case numbers) to welcome all of our pupils back to school this Thursday and to prepare materials for remote learning, either immediately or later in the term, should it be needed.

I am pleased to let you know that on the basis of current case numbers, **we will be able to welcome all pupils back to school on Thursday 6th January**, as we had hoped. We look forward to this.

We are all aware that the increased transmissibility of the Omicron variant presents challenges, however, therefore this letter outlines the risk mitigation measures in place and contingency plans should case numbers rise significantly in the coming weeks.

Risk Mitigation

The following measures will continue:

- Separate entrances for all year groups to prevent crowding at the school gates each morning (please see image at the end of this letter)
- Hand sanitisation on entry to school
- Masks are to be worn in all indoor communal areas where physical distancing cannot be maintained. This includes classrooms. Pupils who have exemption have been provided with lanyards to indicate this, which they should wear at all times.
- One-way systems in place throughout the school
- Continuing with the frequent cleaning of high-touch areas throughout the school day

In addition:

- We will be returning to split breaktimes and lunchtimes, effectively halving the number of pupils in the dining areas at any one time. This does not affect the start and end time to the school day in any way. Pupils will be advised about the changed time upon the return to school.
- We have been asked to recommend that all pupils now undertake lateral flow testing **three times a week**, instead of the previously-recommended twice weekly tests. All pupils for whom we have parental consent were provided with three boxes of tests

before the Christmas break. Additional supplies will be distributed regularly and can also be collected from the main office.

The most important risk mitigation measure, of course, relies upon **no person attending the school site if they are experiencing Covid symptoms**, whether or not they feel otherwise unwell. Similarly, **no one should attend if they have tested positive, even if they are asymptomatic**. It remains vital that anyone with symptoms still isolates immediately and seeks a PCR test. The current guidance relating to those who are contacts of positive cases can be found here: <https://gov.wales/self-isolation#section-83763>

Contingency Planning

As stated previously, we have been asked to utilise these preparation days to plan for the possibility of high levels of staff absence. This may necessitate one or more year groups moving to remote learning for a period of time. Please be assured that, while we are developing robust contingency plans, we will do everything that we possibly can to maintain continuous on-site provision and the contingency plans would only be triggered if there was insufficient staffing to run our full provision safely. In this event, we would write to the families of all affected pupils, providing information and plans for the shortest possible period of remote learning.

We would ask you, please, to be aware that our planning needs to be responsive to situations that can change very rapidly, and that the information that we have so far regarding the new variant may mean that we are in a position where large numbers of the school community test positive within a short space of time. We will nevertheless do all that we can to give families as much notice of a remote learning period as is possible. In addition, with the remote learning period being triggered by high rates of staff absence, it may not be possible to offer an extensive programme of live lessons, however as I write, colleagues throughout the school are preparing recorded lessons and resources for use should they be needed later on this term. We remain hopeful that they will not be required, and aim, as ever, for no disruptions to continuity of learning in the term ahead.

Should you have any concerns or queries in relation to the above, or indeed on any matter, please do not hesitate to contact the school and to speak with your child's Head of Year in the first instance. We will be most happy to help. Once more, I wish you and your families good health, and a successful, happy and fulfilling year ahead.

Yours faithfully,



Mrs E Pole
Headteacher



DROP OFF POINTS AND ENTRANCES

