



Weekly Newsletter December 17th 2021

Hello again and welcome to the final newsletter of 2021.

This time last year we had already closed the school gates and pupils were, once again, learning remotely. We had no idea how long this would continue or how virulent the Delta variant would prove to be. Mass vaccination was still only a beacon of hope on the horizon and society was, once again, locking down. I finished my last newsletter of 2020 with these words of hope from the poet Tennyson:

Ring out the old, ring in the new,

Ring, happy bells, across the snow:

The year is going, let him go;

Ring out the false, ring in the true.

And I think it fair to say that 2021 offered us much more in the way of hope and happiness than was the case in 2020. We re-opened late in the Spring Term, navigated CDGS in the Summer Term and experienced an Autumn Term which, though not without its challenges, was more like a normal school term than the five terms which had preceded it.

Today, of course, the picture has become rather less clear. The Omicron variant has reintroduced uncertainty into our lives and we await developments. At the time of writing Covid cases amongst the pupil population in Whitchurch are at a very low percentage and have remained low since half-term.

What we *do* now know, though is this:

- January 4th and 5th will be designated school planning days allowing schools to review the situation regarding covid and to prepare accordingly.
- All pupils will return to school on January 6th.

Key Covid Messages

Adults who are fully vaccinated and children and young people aged 5 to 17 will be asked to self-isolate until they have received a negative PCR test if someone in their household has symptoms or tests positive for Covid-19. Therefore:

- Your child will need to arrange a PCR test and self-isolate until they receive the test result.
If the test is negative then your child can return to school straight away.
- If negative, then take a Lateral Flow Test every day for 7 days *and...*
- If negative, then take a PCR test on Day 2 and Day 8
- If the test is positive then your child will need to self-isolate for 10 days

Please also be advised that – even though we receive notifications of positive cases daily - the covid positivity rate as a percentage of the school population remains relatively low. Many thanks to all of you for your vigilance and support in helping us to maintain this.

- If your child presents any of the main covid symptoms (new and persistent cough; high temperature; loss/change of sense of taste and/or smell) then they **MUST NOT** attend school. Please inform the school, arrange a PCR test and await results and TTP guidance.
- Close contacts who have been fully vaccinated or **are under 18** will not need to self-isolate but should get PCR tested on Day 2 and Day 8.
- Guidance and direction will now come from TTP rather than the school.
- Please use Lateral Flow Tests twice a week. It is recommended that pupils test themselves on the morning of their first day back.

Year 9 and 11 options and guidance process

A letter will be sent to parents/carers during the first week in the new year providing updates on the options and guidance process. A reminder that the decision has been made to move the sixth form and year 9 open evenings on-line, with further details to follow in the new year. Also, a further reminder that information relating to the options and guidance process can be found in the following locations on the school website:

Year 11: <https://www.whitchurchhs.wales/Curriculum/Y12and13SubjectInformation/index.html>

Year 9: <https://www.whitchurchhs.wales/Curriculum/Y10and11SubjectInformation/index.html>

School Events

For the second consecutive year we have refused to allow covid to prevent us from putting on a Christmas concert. Last year we performed it outdoors and this year we held it without an audience in the Royal Welsh School of Music and Drama on Thursday December 16th. It was filmed and recorded and is available to all on the link below. I hope that you all enjoy it.

<https://youtu.be/hnLaSsJTUh0>

If you would like to make a donation to help us recover some of the costs (as we were unable to sell tickets) involved in producing this then please feel free to do so via your ParentPay account where you will find a link to the Christmas Concert. We will use any funds raised to reinvest into performing arts within the school. Donations are purely voluntary of course and the concert can be enjoyed regardless.

General

- Interim reports have been published on the SIMs app for parents of students in years 10 and 12.
- Wellbeing resources to help students cope with exams and the pressure associated with them and also study skills tutorial videos, are available on the school's website via this link

<https://www.whitchurchhs.wales/Students/Wellbeing/index.html>

This area of the website is helpful for both students and parents; we recommend you take some time to look at what is there and click on the many associated links down the page.

- Year 10 parents evening will take place on 27th January and Year 9 parents evening will take place on 9th February - information regarding online bookings will be sent in the new year.

I would like to finish by thanking all of you for the support you have given to the school throughout this most challenging of years. And, of course, to wish you all a peaceful, happy and – most of all- safe Christmas and New Year. Here's to a (much) better 2022!



Mark Powell