



Weekly Newsletter January 5th 2022

Hello and happy new year to you all. I hope that you and your families are well and that you had an enjoyable and relaxing holiday. We look forward to welcoming all of our pupils and students back to school tomorrow and we are planning and hoping for as normal a term as possible.

I am issuing this newsletter a few days earlier than would usually be the case in order to give everybody as much information as possible ahead of the return to school. There is much that I need to share with you but the covid situation has always been a fluid one and it may be that guidance and protocols change at short notice or that you may have queries which I haven't covered in this communication. If it is the former, then I will update you as soon as possible; if the latter, then please do not hesitate to contact the school. Whatever happens, I will issue another newsletter on Friday.

Covid Protocols in School

Schools in Wales have been instructed to plan for 'Very High Risk' covid scenarios. Fortunately, our school-based arrangements require **NO CHANGE** from where we were towards the end of last term. This is largely due to our decision to maintain nearly all of our covid-secure protocols from the previous academic year. As a reminder, though, these are our arrangements:

- Follow one-way systems at all times
- Line up outside in designated areas before lessons
- Sanitise hands at start and end of lessons
- Disinfect work areas at the end of each lesson
- Wear face masks indoors including in classrooms, corridors, halls, libraries, common rooms and other communal areas. The exemptions are when eating, drinking or engaged in physical activity.

Please note that pupils *must* arrive at school with a face mask/covering. We have only a very small number of masks available for issue to pupils and these are likely to run out very quickly if we have the same situation as in December where many pupils were turning up at school without a mask. This is disruptive to lessons and could easily compromise our covid protocols. Please support us in this.

Testing

Secondary school staff and students are strongly encouraged to take an LFD (Lateral Flow Device) test 3 times per week. A positive LFD test requires you to arrange a PCR test for your child and to self-isolate until they receive the result of the PCR test. If this is negative, then your child can return to school. If positive, then please follow the isolation rules set out below. As with face masks we have only a relatively small number of LFD testing packs in the school so please help us by trying to source the test packs from local chemists etc. Our stock will run out very soon otherwise.

Self-isolation (positive PCR)

- If your child has a positive PCR test then they will need to isolate for *at least* 7 days. On Days 6 and 7 they must take an LFD test 24 hours apart. If both are negative, then they can return to school on Day 8. If not, then they must continue to self-isolate either until they have 2 consecutive negative tests or until (and including) Day 10. If they still have a high temperature beyond Day 10 then they will need to continue to isolate and seek medical advice.

Close Contacts

Schools no longer trace contacts of positive cases. If TTP identifies your child as a close contact then they will inform you; your child will then need to take an LFD test once a day for 7 days. If these tests remain negative, then there is no need to self-isolate during this period. If, though, any of these are positive then please follow the advice on PCR testing and self-isolation.

Please note that this guidance applies to all students who are aged 17 and under. If your child is 18 or over then this guidance applies only if they are double vaccinated. If they are unvaccinated then they will need to isolate for the full 10 days either if they are PCR positive or if they have been identified as a close contact.

Covid Symptoms

The official guidance remains that the cardinal symptoms are: high temperature; new and persistent cough; loss/change of taste and/or smell. If your child experiences any of these then please arrange a PCR test and keep them off school until you receive the result. Then follow earlier guidance.

If your child presents more typical cold or flu-like symptoms, then it would be advisable for them to take more frequent LFD tests. They will not need to self-isolate but please be vigilant in this instance.

Public Examinations

The January examinations will go ahead as planned. It is important that all students sitting these exams are familiar with seating plans, their examination number and arrive fully equipped. I wish them all the very best of luck.

The position of Qualifications Wales and the WJEC remains that the summer 2022 examination series will go ahead with the relevant adaptations in place. We must, though, have a contingency plan in place in the event of their cancellation and your child's subject teachers will have provided them with the relevant information regarding this.

Continuity of Learning

Whilst several schools in Wales had to implement partial school closures in the Autumn Term we never came close to having to do so. It is our fervent hope and – indeed – expectation that we will not need to do so during this term or beyond either. However, we must be realistic and recognise that the new variant is likely to have an impact upon staff availability, that the peak for Wales is predicted to be around mid-late January and that the pool of supply staff in South East Wales is finite and is itself subject to sickness and self-isolation. Any decision to initiate a partial school closure (a year group for example) will be taken purely on the grounds of safeguarding in the event of there being insufficient numbers of staff available to supervise classes. Decisions will be further made according to the following criteria: prioritisation of public examination year groups; a proportionate share of the impact across other year groups.

In such an event the school will shift to remote learning via Teams for the limited period of time that the students may be working from home. With this in mind, the Wellbeing session for all pupils on Monday 10th January will be used to ensure that all pupils are prepared for online learning. This will include reinforcement of our expectations of learners regarding conduct and safeguarding. An updated version of the on-line learning protocols and agreement will be issued to you later this week.

Vulnerable learners and children of critical workers will have access to the school site during these times – as with previous school closures - and will be able to follow their on-line lessons here rather than at home. We will very likely have limited capacity for this, though.

Hopefully, we will not need to implement these procedures at all.

Thank you all for your continued support.

Kind regards



Mark Powell