



Weekly Newsletter January 14th 2022

Hello again everyone.

I have decided to retain the covid information contained in the previous two newsletters here. As with the last newsletter, if you are confident in your knowledge of the current protocols then please proceed straight to page 4 but please take note of the updated sections in red on page 2.

Hopefully, the promising news from Welsh Government earlier today signals long overdue brighter weeks and months ahead. Certainly, the Covid situation in school currently is very manageable in terms both of staff availability and pupil attendance. Long may this continue.

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. If the test is positive and your child has none of the cardinal symptoms then there is no need to arrange a PCR test but you will need to follow the self-isolation rules outlined below. If your child is symptomatic then you will need to arrange a PCR test for them.

Self-isolation (positive PCR)

- If your child has a positive PCR test (or, if asymptomatic, a positive LFD 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.
- If you are isolating due to an asymptomatic LFD test and become symptomatic during your isolation period then you must arrange a PCR test. If the PCR test is positive then you must isolate for 7 days from the date of the onset of symptoms.
- If you are asymptomatic and still test LFD positive on Days 6&7 then you must contact the school to request guidance. We will need to refer to the LA on a case-by-case basis for guidance as to how you will need to proceed.

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 **daily** LFD tests. They will not need to self-isolate but please be vigilant in this instance.

Public Examinations

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.

[Qualifications Wales / An update on exams this year](#)

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.

Year 9 and 11 options and guidance process

Year 11 options and guidance process:

A reminder that the sixth form virtual open evening can still be viewed on the school website:

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

Year 11 students will be completing their free choice survey over the next fortnight with a deadline of the 31st January. Although the subject choices that students make in the free choice survey are not final, it is important that they are as accurate as possible, as the totals and priorities of student choices will be used to formulate the final option grid. This ensures that the final option grid provides the highest possible match to student choices to ensure that as many students as possible can follow the courses they have selected in year 12.

Year 9 options and guidance process:

The year 10 and 11 virtual open evening for year 9 students will be available on the school website in the following location from 20th January onwards:

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

General

- Congratulations to our Year 11 pupils who received their GCSE Numeracy results this week. They should be very proud of what they have achieved especially given the challenges which they have faced.
- Information has been sent to parents regarding the Year 10 on-line parents evening. The deadline for booking appointments is 26th January.
- The Year 9 on-line parents evening will take place on February 9th. Please look out for further information regarding booking appointments.
- Study leave for Years 12 and 13 will run for the period of the PPEs (January 17th – 28th).

Kind regards



Mark Powell