

Dear Parents and Carers

Please find attached a letter to the parents and carers of all school aged children in Swansea outlining the implications of the Welsh Government's announcement around the reopening of schools in January.

I am writing to give you an idea of what that may mean for us here at Olchfa.

There are two clear principles underlying how we will proceed as schools in Swansea:

- There will not be a full return for all pupils in school in January and that there will be an element of phased opening
- The precise nature and timing of that phasing will depend on the individual circumstances faced by each school in relation to the Covid situation in that school at that time

All Swansea schools will be closed to all pupils on Monday January 4th and Tuesday January 5th. There will be no learning online.

These are to be used as 'buffer days' by schools across the authority. 'Buffer Day' is a new term that none of us have encountered before. Essentially, it seems to be in the nature of a preparation day. School staff will use these two days to prepare for the challenging landscape that we all expect in January, with Covid continuing to disrupt normal schooling to a greater or lesser extent depending on individual school circumstances.

From Wednesday, January 6th, schools, including Olchfa, will begin to open to some pupils as risk assessments allow, with the expectation that all pupils will be back in school by Monday, January 18th.

It is my sincere hope that all pupils will be back in school in Olchfa comfortably before January 18th but I cannot guarantee that at this point. This is because we do not know how severely Covid will have impacted on our staffing levels by then. To give an example, if January were now, I would not be able to open the school fully due to staff Covid related sickness levels. The position will probably change by January, hopefully for the better but, conceivably, for the worse.

I know that this is not particularly helpful in terms of certainty or planning as parents and carers, but I am proposing to write to you late in the week beginning December 28th, maybe on December 31st or thereabouts, to update you on the situation we find ourselves in at that point.

However, to give you some broad principles, it is likely that we will (as circumstances allow) phase pupils back to face to face teaching in school in the following priority order:

- Vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers
- Pupils in Years 11 and 13
- Pupils in Years 10 and 12
- Pupils in Key Stage 3

As I have said, I cannot at this point give you precise timescales around this as it would be pointless right now since the staffing situation could change. However, it is my hope that all pupils will be back in school well before January 18th, provided that circumstances do not change significantly for the worse.

From Wednesday, January 6th, as things currently stand, all pupils not physically in school will be offered learning online. As always, it is important that you support your sons and daughters by stressing to them the importance of engaging with this work and not falling behind.

I am genuinely sorry that I cannot provide you with more certainty at this time. It is in the nature of this pandemic that the picture, both locally and nationally, changes very quickly, as you will all have seen and experienced already.

Please have a restful and safe Christmas, as far as you are able to. We look forward to welcoming your sons and daughters back to school in January when it is safe to do so. I will, as I have said, write to you nearer the time to give you the full details of how that will be rolled out.

With warm wishes

Hugh Davies