

December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Thank you again for your support at this extremely difficult time.

You will no doubt be aware of the alarming and growing Covid case rates across Wales and in Swansea.

I am writing to inform you that, following our latest health and safety risk assessment, I have taken the decision that the school will move to a blended learning approach for **all year groups from next Monday, December 14th**.

This decision has been taken with the health and safety of pupils at the forefront of our considerations.

Specifically:

- Staff absence (particularly teaching staff) has now reached a critical level where we can no longer offer teaching consistently in a safe environment
- The level of staff absence is now preventing us from being able to supervise pupils during break and lunchtimes in a way that is consistently safe
- Covid outbreaks have been confirmed in all year groups in the school and there is growing evidence of transmission within school
- Covid case rates within the school significantly exceed national rates and are rising quickly

Therefore, all pupils will follow blended learning online until the end of term. Attendance will be expected and monitored as it is important for pupils not to fall behind with their work, as far as practicably possible.

Detailed information about timetables and other details will be forwarded to you tomorrow.

You may wonder how we can operate in this way when we have so many staff 'off' school. The answer is fairly straightforward. The vast majority of staff who are off either do not have Covid (and are just isolating because Public Health Wales or the national guidelines have required them to do so) or have Covid but are either asymptomatic, mildly affected by the illness or are in the recovery phase. Consequently, most of our absent staff are able to work (and to teach) but are not allowed to do so here. All staff who are able to do so will work through all of next week and all of those who are allowed to will be expected to do that work here, at the school. School staff are certainly not finishing 'early for Christmas'. They will be working up to and including Friday, December 18th.

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I realise that this decision will place additional pressure on families in the approach to Christmas. However, I am also aware of rising anxiety amongst parents, evidenced by plummeting attendance figures across Swansea, around the run up to Christmas and the possibility of Covid outbreaks in schools next week forcing pupils, in effect, to isolate over Christmas. Significant numbers of parents here and in other schools have already indicated their intention not to send their children to school next week for this reason.

For this reason, it is better to act now and to act in a way that ensures that schooling, albeit in a different form, continues through next week up to Friday December 18th.

I am counting on your support to ensure that your children engage with this process and to provide them with the structures to be able to do this. They should expect to be 'going to school', but at home, bizarre though that concept sounds.

Some children really need to be in school. Vulnerable children identified by the school will be offered the facility to come to school and conduct their online work here.

We are going further as a school than this. We are also prepared to accommodate the children of key workers of Year 7 and 8 pupils who have no other childcare options to come to school and be supervised in the same way. Just to be honest here, this experience is not going to feel that great for the pupils. They will be isolated from each other and will work at a distance of at least 4 metres from anyone else and will stay, essentially, at their work station all day under supervision. It is not particularly uplifting, but it at least provides a safe environment for them.

I hope you will understand and support this decision. I have always been honest with you and I will be honest now. This is what is required to prevent a disastrous situation developing in the imminent future. I cannot take that risk, for the pupils of the school or for its staff, to whom I pay tribute here for their tireless work in keeping your children safe and focused on learning throughout this dreadful time.

As always, I trust this letter finds you safe and well, although the figures tell me that this is less likely, overall, than it would have been a few months back. Please try to do whatever you can to keep yourselves and your families safe over the Christmas period.

With sincere good wishes



Hugh Davies

Headteacher