

To: Parents/Carers

Fy nghyf: GD
My Ref:

Eich Cyf:
Your Ref:

Dyddiad: 10/2/21
Date:

Dear Parent/Carer,

On the 29th of January, the First Minister announced that if the number of coronavirus cases continued to fall over the following weeks that plans would be put in place to return our youngest learners in our primary schools back to school from the 22nd of February 2021. The most recently published medical evidence supports the phased return of learners back into school and as a result the Education Minister confirmed on the 5th of February 2021 that foundation phase learners are set to return to school after the half-term break.

Your support with your child's home learning has been invaluable in recent months but a return to school is now required to enable your child/ren to benefit from much needed face to face learning with their peers so that they can reach their academic potential. Research tells us that time spent out of education settings can impact adversely on a child's development, and your support in enabling your child to return to school from the 22nd of February is now needed.

The safe return of foundation phase learners is the first part of the return of learners to schools. This will include children in nursery, reception, year 1 and year 2. Remote learning will continue for all other age groups (years 3 upwards) so that the risks of transmitting Covid-19 in the community can be minimised.

During this transitional period, the other current Welsh Government Restrictions for alert level 4 will continue to remain in place. Outside of school it will be important that children and their families continue to stay at home as much as possible, engage in essential travel only and limit their contact with others. Kirsty Williams, the Education Minister, has strongly advised that families continue to comply with the restrictions outside of school and that families avoid children's social contact with others outside of their family bubble. When collecting children from school, parents will need to keep to 2m social distancing and wear face coverings on school grounds so that we keep everyone safe. Only one adult taking children to and from school is recommended to minimise risks. School transport will be run as normal for entitled pupils and if you are not intending to use school transport for your child/ren please can you notify your school.

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Gaynor Davies
Cyfarwyddwr Addysg a Gwasanaethau Cynhwysiant | Director of Education and Inclusion Services

Dewiswch iaith a diwyg eich dogfen | Available in alternative formats and languages

Croesawn ohebu yn Gymraeg a fydd gohebu yn y Gymraeg ddim yn arwain at oedi. Rhwch wybod inni beth yw'ch dewis iaith e.e Cymraeg neu'n ddwyieithog.
We welcome correspondence in Welsh and corresponding with us in Welsh will not lead to a delay. Let us know your language choice if Welsh or bilingual.

The current school and remote learning arrangements will continue until half-term. After the half-term break the following arrangements will apply:

- Foundation phase learners in all school settings will start to return to school on the 22nd of February. All foundation phase children should be in school by the 26th of February at the latest. You child's school will contact you shortly to tell you which year groups will be returning on which day. Children that are shielding or are unable to attend school due self-isolation will be able to access remote learning opportunities.
- All schools, including mainstream and special schools, and pupil referral units, will continue to provide remote learning opportunities and wellbeing support for all learners in years 3 to 13 as face to face learning in school will not be possible for these year groups (unless they are eligible for vulnerable learner or critical worker provision).
- There will be continued provision for vulnerable learners and the children of critical workers on school sites after the half-term break. This provision will be during core school hours.
- Vulnerable learner provision will be made for eligible children in all school settings. Eligible children include children:
 - that have additional learning needs;
 - are looked after;
 - are young carers;
 - are in need of care and support; or
 - with child protection needs.

Your child's school will work with you to confirm arrangements for your child's access to vulnerable learner provision and face to face learning in school. This provision will be available for eligible children in years 3 and above. Children in the foundation phase will access school with their peers and will not require this provision.

- Critical worker provision will continue for mainstream learners in years 3 to 8. Learners in years 7 to 11 accessing learning support class provision in secondary schools and learners in years 3 to 13 in special schools can continue accessing critical worker provision.

In Rhondda Cynon Taf the following professional groups will be prioritised in the first instance for critical worker provision:

- Health and social care workers
- Public safety (emergency workers) and national security workers
- Education and childcare workers
- Food and other necessary goods workers.

If space allows, due regard will also be made of the Welsh Government's wider list of critical workers. Further detail regarding critical worker definitions is provided via the following link: <https://gov.wales/identifying-children-critical-workers-guidance>.

Please only apply for this provision if your work is critical to the Covid-19 response, you clearly meet eligibility and are scheduled to work and have exhausted all possible childcare avenues. All schools will notify you directly of the provision that they have in place. Can you please direct any queries relating to this provision to the school and not to the local authority. There will be no critical worker provision for foundation phase learners as they will be attending school.

- Breakfast club provision will be made available in all primary school settings. These places will be made available to foundation phase learners who were previously successful in obtaining a breakfast club place for the spring term and learners accessing vulnerable learner and critical worker provision on school sites. However, if demand exceeds supply first priority will be given to foundation phase applicants, followed by vulnerable learners and then the children of critical workers. Unfortunately, places cannot be guaranteed and will be subject to availability. All children will have to remain in their allocated year groups in breakfast clubs.
- Catering for school meals will be available on site as normal for parents who choose to purchase a school lunch.
- Free school meal payments will continue to be made for learners in the foundation phase until the 26th of February only and these payments will cease after this date. Children accessing education on school sites who are eligible for free school meals will receive lunch at their school. All children accessing distance learning at home due to current arrangements or who are self-isolating or shielding due to Covid-19 will continue to access BACs payments at a rate of £19.50 per week if they are eligible for free school meals. The Welsh Government has also made available funding at the rate of £19.50 per week per learner to make free school meal provision available during school holidays, up to and including Easter 2021. Please direct any queries relating to this matter to your child's school.

Can I thank you again for all of your hard work in supporting your child's learning at home. I appreciate that these have been very challenging times. I am sure you will appreciate the tremendous efforts made by our school staff to deliver remote learning for your child whilst also providing face to face learning on school sites. Your views on your child's remote learning offer would be appreciated and a survey is currently live to capture your views. The link can be found at:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/EmergenciesSafetyandCrime/InformationforResidentsCoronavirus/NEWCoronavirusCOVID19latestinformation/Schoolreturn/Schoolslatest.aspx>

The survey will close on the 13th of February.

I hope this outlines current arrangements after the half-term break. Further information can also be found on the Council's website.

Best wishes for a restful half-term break to you all.

Many thanks,

Gaynor Davies

Gaynor Davies
Director of Education and Inclusion Services