

To: Parents/Carers

**Gofynnwch**  
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Fy nghyf: GD  
My Ref:

Eich Cyf:  
Your Ref:

Dyddiad: 17.12.21  
Date:

Dear Parent/Carer

## **ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE START OF TERM** **JANUARY 2022**

Please be advised that changes are to be made affecting schools, parents, carers and learners across the whole of Wales at the start of the January term.

In recognition of the challenges that schools have faced and the current levels of uncertainty regarding the impact of the Omicron variant, the Minister for Education and Welsh Language has written to all schools to provide as much clarity as possible to enable them to plan and prepare for the return in January. The full announcement is available via - <https://gov.wales/written-statement-school-and-colleges-operational-arrangements-january-2022>

In summary, the first two days of the January term, namely – Tuesday the 4<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022 will be planning days for all schools throughout the whole of Wales. There will be no remote learning provided during these two days. This will allow time for schools to assess staffing capacity and put the necessary measures in place to support the return of all learners. Schools have been asked to make use of the planning days to ensure they have robust plans in place to move to remote learning if required – this could be for individual classes/year groups or possibly for the whole 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. Rhowch 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.

### **Critical workers and vulnerable learners**

On site education within school sites will be available on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> January for identified high priority vulnerable learners and for the children of eligible critical workers only.

### **Critical workers**

Eligible critical workers include:

- Blue light workers, including NHS, Police, Ambulance and Fire Service staff;
- Social care workers (including care homes); and
- Childcare or education staff.

Critical worker provision will be available for eligible children of all ages in primary, secondary, special school and pupil referral unit settings.

**Please only apply for this provision if you clearly meet eligibility and are scheduled to work and have exhausted all possible childcare avenues.**

Please can you notify your school via the school's e-mail address by **Monday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January** if you meet the above high priority vulnerable learner or critical worker criteria and require a place for your child for the 5<sup>th</sup> of January. Please await confirmation from the school before sending your child to school.

### **Transport**

Transport will not be available for the children of critical workers on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January. For parents/carers of children attending special school / learning support classes who usually receive home to school transport – this will be provided as normal, however, should your child not be attending school on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> January, please let the school know by lunchtime on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> January so that the Transport Unit can plan accordingly.

### **Breakfast club provision**

Breakfast club will be available in primary schools on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January for high priority learners and children of critical workers whose attendance has been confirmed by the school.

### **Free school meals**

All learners who are entitled to free school meals will receive BACS payments for the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of January. High priority vulnerable learners and children of critical workers who attend school on these days will be provided with lunch at the school.

### **Examinations**

The local authority and schools readily acknowledge that this is a difficult time for all learners, especially those learners who are preparing for examinations. At present, there is no change to the January 2022 examination timetable. Schools will continue

to provide support for all learners to ensure the learning environment is safe and learners' emotional wellbeing is supported.

### **Lateral Flow Tests (LFTs)**

To ensure that asymptomatic individuals do not unknowingly take the virus into school, and while more is learnt about the Omicron variant, there is a strong expectation that all staff and learners in Year 7 and above continue to take lateral flow tests. The frequency of lateral flow testing has increased and it is now requested that LFTs are undertaken **three times per week**. Requirements for learners in year 7 and above are summarised as follows:-

- Take an LFT three times per week in the week prior to the return to school (Monday, Wednesday, Friday morning)
- Take an LFT three times per week on the week that you return to school (including one on the morning that you return to school)
- Continue to take LFTs three times per week following the return to school (every Monday, Wednesday, Friday morning)

### **Face coverings**

Staff and all secondary school learners should continue to wear face coverings when they return to school in January (unless exempt) – this applies to all communal areas and classrooms where physical distancing cannot be maintained.

Face coverings must also be worn by all secondary school age learners (unless exempt) on home to school transport.

### **Summary**

The situation is summarised below:

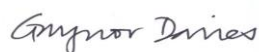
- The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of January will be planning days for school staff. There will be no remote learning provided during these two days.
- On the 5<sup>th</sup> of January, schools will only be open to vulnerable learners and children of critical workers whose attendance has been confirmed with the school. **Please only apply for this provision if you clearly meet eligibility and are scheduled to work and have exhausted all possible childcare avenues.**
- On site provision for these groups of children will be core school hours only (including breakfast club for primary schools).
- Your child's school will confirm the exact date that your child is to return to school.
- Parents/carers of learners eligible for free school meals will receive a BACS payment for the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of January.
- All secondary school aged learners should take three lateral flow tests in the week prior to returning to school and three lateral flow tests each week following their return to school (including one on the morning they return to school).
- Face coverings continue to be required for secondary school aged learners.
- Schools may operate staggered start and finish times from the start of the new term as an additional mitigation. Your child's school will advise you accordingly.

It is vitally important that anyone with COVID-19 symptoms or anyone who is in a household with a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case does not attend school at the start of term – all such individuals (aged 5 and above) should book a PCR test.

Due to the Omicron variant, this is a fast-evolving situation and there may be a need to issue further updates in the event of any significant developments during the Christmas holiday period. Should there be any changes to the arrangements for the start of term, these will be sent to you at the earliest opportunity.

It is appreciated that this pandemic continues to place unprecedented demands on everyone and your support continues to be hugely appreciated.

With thanks and best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gaynor Davies".

Gaynor Davies  
Director of Education and Inclusion Services