

**BLACKWOOD COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL**  
**YSGOL GYFUN Y COED DUON**

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Dear Parents, Carers and Governors

5<sup>th</sup> January 2022

**Re: Start to Term: January 2022**

Happy New Year; Blwyddyn Newydd Dda. I hope you are all well and that you had an enjoyable Christmas break.

I wrote to you in the last week of term to say that the Education Minister, Jeremy Miles, had shared information regarding the start of the new term in January 2022. Given the current levels of uncertainty regarding the impact of Omicron, Welsh Government (WG) wanted to provide schools with planning days which would enable them to assess staffing, review and update relevant risk assessments and to work on teaching and learning contingency plans if the school was forced to partially or fully move to remote learning as a result of the impact of Covid-19.

I would like to reassure you that we will do all we can to stay open for all pupils for face-to-face teaching. However, events may force partial closures at short notice. A partial closure might mean that certain year groups may be asked to stay at home and work online rather than attend school for face-to-face teaching. This will only be as a last resort and examination year pupils will be prioritised for attending school in person.

With staffing as it is currently, I am pleased to say that we are able to welcome all pupils back on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> January. In line with WG guidance, we will be monitoring the situation closely and have plans in place to move to remote learning, for some or all learners, should our circumstances change. If this eventuality arises, I will update you via Class Charts, the website and Twitter as soon as possible.

**Updated Welsh Government Guidance on Self-isolation**

- **Changes self-isolation for anyone who has received positive test result:**
  - You can leave self-isolation after 7 full days (on day 8 of your self-isolation period). You should take a lateral flow test (LFT) on day 6 of your self-isolation period and another lateral flow test 24 hours later. This is to check if you remain infectious and could pass COVID-19 on to others.
  - You should not take a LFT before the sixth day of your self-isolation period because the risks of remaining infectious and the chances of passing it on to others before this period is significantly higher.
- **Changes to testing and self-isolation for close contacts:**
  - All over 18s who are fully vaccinated (having received two full doses of an approved vaccine) and children aged 5 to 17 are now asked to take lateral flow tests (LFTs) every day for 7 days if they are identified as a contact of a positive COVID-19 case.



Ymdrech I Drechu  
Strive To Succeed



- Unvaccinated adults identified as a contact of a positive COVID-19 case must isolate for 7 days.

### **Mitigation measures in School**

Most of the mitigation measures which were in force to reduce the spread of Covid-19 before the holidays will remain in place until further notice, the most important one being non-attendance in school for any learner or staff member with symptoms of COVID-19, which are: a new continuous cough, a high temperature or loss of taste or smell.

A reminder of the main mitigation measures, with some recent updates are as follows.

#### **Face coverings**

From the beginning of the autumn term all pupils have been required to wear a face covering when inside school buildings, including in classrooms during lessons, unless exempt. We have distributed in a considerable number of disposable and reusable face coverings to pupils and this means that our stock of face coverings is rapidly dwindling. We would be grateful if all pupils would now ensure that they bring in a face covering from home. The remaining stock in school will be used to assist pupils who are in genuine need. We would encourage face coverings to be washable and reusable rather than disposable in nature. This will help to address environmental sustainability and reduce potential littering problems.

Face coverings are still required for pupils if they are travelling on school transport to and from school.

Although Welsh Government has also now made the decision to require the wearing of face coverings in classrooms and communal areas, where social distancing is not possible, we will also be emphasising to pupils that the wearing of face coverings should be viewed as an act of courtesy which can protect their own health and that of loved ones.

#### **Ventilation and colder weather**

As part of the school's approach to reducing the likelihood of COVID-19 transmission, we have ensured that classrooms are as well ventilated as possible. This means that windows are open, fully or partially, to obtain the levels of fresh air required. As the colder weather is now with us, we have to be mindful of pupils' thermal comfort if windows are open. Therefore, pupils are allowed to wear their dark school coat in class if conditions require it. However, it is important to note that the school jumper and/or blazer are the main item of clothing if pupils are cold; blazers being a compulsory item of uniform.

#### **Lateral Flow Testing**

Welsh Government expects that all pupils of secondary age should test three times a week before entering school using LFTs (on Monday, Wednesday and Friday). Pupils can obtain LFTs, should they need to, from reception, at the end of the school day only.

#### **Additional Measures**

We have had a number of additional measures in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 since September. They are:

- Instilling robust hand and respiratory hygiene for pupils and staff members;
- One way system in main block,
- Entry and exit to labs in main block via fire exits;

- Accurate seating plans must be on Class Charts;
- Year group areas for break and lunch;
- Separate key stage 3 & 4 serving and seating areas in the canteen;
- Virtual assemblies, staff meetings and Parents' Evenings.

### **Visits to school by parents/ carers**

Please note that parental visits to school will be strictly by invitation only, or in response to a request from the school to attend urgently for a specific reason. We would ask that pupils check that they have all their equipment with them each day to avoid the likelihood that they forget something which then needs to be brought later to school.

### **Uniform**

Pupils will need to wear full school uniform when they return. A reminder that this consists of:

- *Grey trousers or grey knee length pleated skirt – **no leggings or jeggings***
- *Compulsory black blazer with school badge on left hand side*
- *White blouse/shirt*
- *Optional V-neck black school jumper with school badge*
- *Plain black or navy coat*
  - *No denim, leather or leather look jackets*
  - *No hoodies*
- *Flat black leather or leather look shoes*
  - *Leather or leather look converse style shoes are acceptable but not trainers or boots.*
- *Black or white socks or black tights*
- *School clip on tie*
- *One small pair of stud earrings in ear lobes*
- *No bright or unnatural hair colours, tramlines or facial piercings.*

If any families need support with purchasing new uniform then please contact the school.

We are looking forward to welcoming all of our pupils back to school tomorrow.

Thank you for your continued support.

Take care.

Yours faithfully



Jane Wilkie

Headteacher/Pennaeth