

### Update for parents: Welsh Government Planning Days

Following yesterday's announcement by the Minister, January 6<sup>th</sup> and January 7<sup>th</sup> will now be used as teacher planning days. This is due to the increased risk level posed by COVID. School will **not be open** to pupils on either January 6<sup>th</sup> or January 7<sup>th</sup> and there will be **no on-line learning** provision. We are expecting school to re-open to pupils on January 10<sup>th</sup>. We will keep you informed of any updates.

Please refer to the extract from Welsh Government. (below/attached)

### CABINET STATEMENT

# Written Statement: School and colleges operational arrangements from January 2022

Jeremy Miles MS, Minister for Education and Welsh Language

Published 16 December 2021

Our collective priority continues to be to minimise the disruption to education, and ensure where possible learners continue to receive in person learning, as well as protecting staff, learners and communities.

I know that the autumn term has been particularly challenging for school staff, learners and their families, and the level of disruption due to staff capacity has resulted in some schools having to make the difficult decision to move certain classes/year groups to remote learning for short periods.

Similarly, for colleges, staff and learners, there has been continued disruption due to the pandemic, but the commitment to the blended learning model and the different age range of learners in further education has meant that colleges have been able to be flexible in their approach to offer remote learning when needed.

In recognition of the challenges that schools and colleges have faced, and the current levels of uncertainty regarding the impact of Omicron, I have today written to all schools and colleges to provide as much clarity now as I can to enable them to plan and prepare for the return in January.

The following steps are being put in place to help schools achieve our shared goal of maximising learning and minimising disruption.

- I am providing all schools with two planning days at the start of the spring term. 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 will be 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. Schools will be asked also to use this opportunity to revisit contingency plans, ensuring exam years are prioritised for onsite provision should there be a need to restrict in person learning at any time and consider what arrangements might need to be in place for vulnerable learners and the children of critical workers during any periods of disruption.
- As a precautionary approach all schools have been advised to plan that mitigations from January onwards are based on those set out at the 'Very High' risk level in our Local Infection Control Decision Framework for schools. As part of this preparation, I am issuing a Coronavirus Act 2020 Notice to allow schools to operate staggered start and finish times from the start of the new term as an additional mitigation should schools determine this is appropriate as part of their risk assessment process.

For schools and colleges:

- From the return in January, we will continue with our national approach to the wearing of face coverings.
- We will offer enhanced testing which includes strongly advising all staff and secondary aged learners, to test three times a week using Lateral Flow Tests. We will be increasing our communications to remind staff and learners of the importance of regular testing.
- Our arrangements for staff in special educational provision remain in place. However, the 'test to safeguard' approach for these staff will continue to be considered alongside social care staff and where appropriate any changes in approach for social care staff will be reflected for special school staff.

This is a fast evolving situation and we continue to monitor the latest data and evidence.

I would like reiterate my thanks to all in the education community for all they have done during these most challenging of times.