

Please ask for:

Direct Line:

E-Mail:

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

Date: 25 September 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

I wrote to you a fortnight ago with great optimism that our children and young people in Swansea were enjoying a successful return to education. Today, our focus on responding to pupils' wellbeing and learning needs has never been sharper. All our schools are working exceptionally hard to minimise risk and keep learning going.

The news this week that public restrictions in Wales are becoming tighter has strengthened our resolve to keep learning going in Swansea. Today's announcement of a local lockdown will not change schools remaining open for the benefit of all our children and young people.

We know that the effect of Covid-19 on the younger generation is far less than the older population. Further disruption to education carries high risk to wellbeing and we would seek to avoid this wherever possible. Understandably, there may be periods of short disruption ahead.

At this point, I need to thank you, as parents, for the support you have been providing to schools during the start of term. It is increasingly unlikely that schools will return to the way they were operating for a considerable time. We are experiencing partial reductions in operations within schools where whole year groups are asked to stay at home for 14 days.

Our school staff have been fantastic in the way they have kept learning going when year groups are asked to self-isolate. We are confident that this will continue. It is clear that teaching and learning will not be locked down. We are currently supporting schools to switch back to remote learning swiftly in order to minimise disruption to learning.

Where there has been a case of coronavirus in a school then headteachers are working with the council, Public Health Wales and the NHS Wales Test, Trace and Protect service to ensure that all the appropriate measures are in place to protect pupils, staff and the wider community.

These measures are communicated with parents as swiftly as possible and headteachers need everyone's support in recognising that they are going the extra mile every day.

We know that our schools are preventing transmission of Covid-19 through robust risk assessments and that recent positive cases have come into school from outside. You can have confidence that your school is doing all that it can to prevent transmission in school and to keep learning going. We appreciate that there will be uncertainty as numbers of positive cases in our area increase but schools have a range of control measures in place to keep buildings and people safe.

We require schools to ensure that all staff, pupils and parents understand how environments, procedures and operations work in each school by now. Many headteachers are taking the burden of responsibility but it is up to each and every one of us to play our part and know exactly how to behave during this challenging time. As parents, you have a big part to play in supporting education within your community and I know that our collective efforts will keep the safety of pupils and staff in our schools as the top priority.

I invite you once again to engage with the Test, Trace and Protect process and seek a test if your child has one of the following symptoms

- a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

If you are uncertain you should contact NHS Direct 111 or your GP.

Our collective effort to support Swansea's children and young people to continue to learn in school is vitally important right now.

Yours sincerely



Helen Morgan-Rees
Interim Director of Education