

Dear parents/carers,

Thank you for your continuing efforts to support the school's blended learning offer in these difficult times; we know how difficult it can be organising your children's day in tandem with all your other commitments. The First Minister has announced today that there will be no significant change to the nature of secondary school provision in Wales for at least three weeks but that, transmission rates permitting, he would like to discuss further the possibility of a phased approach to early years and vocational provision restarting after the February half term. Detailed discussions as to how this could most sensibly be achieved are apparently due to commence at a National and Regional level next week and we await further announcements in that regard.

I am disappointed that the First Minister has seemed to rule out a vaccination programme for school based staff during the half term break (as advocated by Sir Kia Starmer) but we are hopeful that some staff in the school's base provision may qualify for such a provision in the coming weeks. Until we have more detail as to the operating guidelines that we shall be working under it will be difficult to further our planning to any great extent but a recent reconsideration of the school's risk assessment currently sees the site team more clearly designating teacher 'islands' in classrooms and a clear maximum occupancy limit being stated at the entrance to communal areas. It is also very likely that we and the pupils would be required to wear face coverings in the classroom as well as in communal areas inside the building.

We are now consistently delivering somewhere between 45 and 55% of our lessons live on any given day and data suggests that pupil attendance at those sessions is increasing in a similarly positive fashion. Hopefully, before the end of the half term we will be in a position to evidence that pupil engagement across the whole of the remote offer has also improved significantly since the Christmas break. This has been a real team effort by the whole school community and I am really grateful that members of the Governing Body have given very generously of their own time to support parents in their attempts to improve their ability to engage with remote learning. The first of their sessions was well attended, focusing on aspects of 'Google Meet', 'Google Classroom' and 'ClassCharts' with accompanying demonstrations. There was also a presentation on safeguarding, a copy of which will be made available on the school website. Next Wednesday's 'Session 2' (3rd February) will, again, take place via Zoom (codes will be published in advance), where there will be discussion on the questions raised in Session 1 and an ongoing focus on how you can keep your children safe online. A reminder of details will be sent early next week and, as before, all parents/carers are most welcome to attend.

Please try to enjoy your weekend - the infection rate in Wales (and Caerphilly especially) is the cause for a good deal of optimism and, if things continue to progress positively, we may see a few more smiling children in the building as the Summer term draws closer.

Regards,

JNH

Mr J Hicks
Headteacher