

Dear Parent/Carer

I hope that you and your family are all well and that you have been able to make the most of your time together this summer.

As promised, I am writing to update you on the most recent advice regarding your child's return to school.

Throughout the summer holidays, headteachers and local authority staff have worked together to update risk assessments and to ensure that school environments are compliant with all the latest guidance from the Welsh Government.

This information can be viewed on their website here <https://gov.wales/education-coronavirus>

All schools have enhanced cleaning regimes in place and have re-designed the way in which they work in order to minimise contact between pupils.

The organisation of the school day will include staggered start and finish times, which will vary from school to school, depending on the context (e.g. size, access to transport, physical layout in terms of exits and entrances, etc.) Detailed information will shortly be provided to you from your child's school, which will set out how the school will operate.

All secondary schools across the county borough have shortened their day in order to avoid using their dining halls and to accommodate additional pressures on school transport.

These arrangements will be reviewed regularly and your school will inform you of any changes.

What do we know about September 2020?

- Tuesday 1st and Wednesday 2nd have been set apart as planning and preparation days for schools to update risk assessments and make the necessary practical changes within the building, in readiness to welcome the return of pupils.
- From Thursday, 3rd September until Friday, 11th September, there will be a planned phased return, to enable the return of all pupils to school full-time from Monday, 14th September 2020.

It is expected that all pupils will return to school but schools understand the anxieties that some of you and your children may have. Please contact your child's school with any concerns you may have, as this will help schools, education settings and the council to plan for, and respond to any barriers there may be to learners returning to school. This will also allow us to identify any further support that may be needed.

The Education Welfare Service hotline will operate during the autumn term. If you or your children are concerned about anything and need advice, guidance or support please call 07702948725 and one of the team will be able to help.

Free school meals will continue to be delivered until the end of September in exactly the same way and with the same food content as was provided during the summer holidays.

All primary school pupils are required to bring a packed lunch during September. It is anticipated that catering provision and School Breakfast clubs will resume on 1st October, 2020.

All primary school children will be offered a breakfast bar or fruit at school every day. Due to the shortened day, secondary school pupils can bring their own snacks for their extended breaks.

Face Coverings

You will no doubt be aware that Welsh Government issued updated advice earlier this week about the use of face coverings in school settings which can be found on their website: -

- Technical Advisory Group – Face coverings - <https://gov.wales/technical-advisory-group-face-coverings-children-and-young-people-education-settings>

Ministers have determined that it will be up to schools and local authorities to decide if face coverings are required, based on appropriate risk assessments.

Following discussions between the council and headteachers it has been agreed that face coverings are strongly advised for staff and secondary school pupils where social distancing of 2m is not possible and where appropriate in corridors, classrooms, toilets and communal areas. This is subject to review and change in line with the risk assessment

School based staff will also be required to wear face coverings, where social distancing cannot be maintained.

You will be pleased to know that we taken proactive steps and placed a significant order for face coverings. We will have sufficient supplies so that we can initially issue 5 reusable masks per pupil, per term, as well as for staff.

School Transport

We are recommending that masks are used by all secondary school pupils using school transport.

Further information and frequently asked questions about school transport arrangements can be found on the CCBC website

<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/Services/Schools-and-learning/School-transport/School-transport-FAQs>

We also ask for your help in encouraging children to think of others and act responsibly when travelling from home to school.

This is still a very uncertain time for us all but schools and the local authority are committed to working together to ensure that children, and staff, can safely return to schools and confidently continue their learning.

We will continue to keep in touch if there are any updates to our plans or if we need to make changes due to new or updated Welsh Government advice.

Thank you for your continued support, patience and understanding, we really appreciate it.

Regards
Keri Cole
Chief Education Officer
Caerphilly County Borough Council