

Please ask for:

Direct Line:

E-Mail:

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

Date:

16 December 2021

Dear Parent / Carer

This morning, the Minister for Education and Welsh Language wrote to headteachers setting out the arrangements for the start of the Spring Term 2022.

Our collective priority continues to be to minimise the disruption to education and ensure, where possible, that learners continue to receive in person learning. Protecting school staff and learners is also a top priority

The Welsh Government will be providing all schools with two planning days at the start of the new spring term. This will allow us time to assess staffing capacity and put the necessary measures in place to support the return of learners. In Swansea, this means that the first day of term for the majority of schools will be **Thursday 6 January 2022**. However, schools will also be ensuring that they have robust plans in place to move to remote learning if needed. This could be for individual classes/year groups or possibly for the whole school, depending on staffing pressures. A few schools will have an INSET day that can't be moved, and your child / children's school will let you know if that is the case.

The planning days will also allow our secondary schools to plan for learners to safely sit their January examinations. At the beginning of term these students will be prioritised for onsite learning and to ensure that the exams can take place safely.

Given the current uncertainties around Omicron the Minister has asked schools to move to the 'very high' risk level on the schools' infection control framework. At a school level this could see staggered start and finish times from the start of the new term as an additional mitigation as well as the re-introduction of contact groups and potentially pausing after school / breakfast provision, or team sports where necessary. These decisions will be taken based on each individual school's risk assessment. Please support our headteachers when these difficult decisions have to be taken.

Free School Meal Payments/Food Parcels

Free school meal payments have now been actioned for the Christmas holiday period with food parcels also being delivered to some families this coming Monday. An additional payment will now be made in early January to cover the planning days with food parcels for those not receiving payments being delivered on 5 January 2022. Should you have any queries please contact your school or email FSMpayments@swansea.gov.uk.

Lateral Flow Tests

It is very important that staff and learners continue regular Lateral Flow Testing in term time so we can find and isolate those who are potentially infectious to others without knowing. It is particularly important, now and in the new term, while we gather evidence and build our understanding of the Omicron variant. Moving forward, the strong expectation is that all staff and learners of secondary age and above should test three times a week using LFDs (on Monday, Wednesday and Friday) in the week before returning to school and to then continue testing regularly three times a week after the start of term in January.

Face Coverings

All staff and secondary-aged learners should continue to use face coverings in communal areas and classrooms where physical distancing cannot be maintained as well as on school transport. This will continue to be kept under review.

Finally, can I thank you all personally once again for your continual support to our schools during what has been another challenging term. I wish you all a peaceful and healthy Christmas and New Year.

Regards



Helen Morgan-Rees
Director of Education