

To: Parent/Carer

Fy nghyf: GD/TM
My Ref:

Eich Cyf: Your Ref:

Dyddiad: 15/10/20
Date:

Dear Parent/Carer,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for supporting your child's learning and attendance in school, and for supporting your school to keep children and staff safe.

Our school staff have done tremendously well to keep transmission rates in our schools low, against a backdrop of rising community rates of Covid-19. To date, we've had 178 confirmed cases of Covid-19 in 60 of our schools and in recent weeks we've seen a significant reduction in the number of confirmed cases in our schools. This suggests that control measures in our schools are effective and responses to confirmed cases in schools are measured and proportionate. However, we need your continued support to ensure that effective transmission control measures continue in our schools.

Use of face coverings by pupils using home-to-school transport

I would be grateful you could ensure that secondary school age children using local authority provided school transport wears a suitable face covering. This requirement does not apply to pupils with additional learning needs or relevant medical conditions which constitute an exemption. This requirement does not apply to primary school-age pupils, unless of course you wish for your child to wear a face covering and they are able to do so safely.

Some children may be exempt from wearing a face covering due to a disability or impairment. A pupil who is not exempt from wearing a face covering but who refuses to wear one, or removes the covering while on board school transport, may be refused onward travel and have their entitlement to free transport removed.

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Dewiswch iaith a diwyg eich dogfen | Available in alternative formats and languages

Croesawn ohebu yn Gymraeg a fydd gohebu yn y Gymraeg ddim yn arwain at oedi. Rhowch wybod inni beth yw'ch dewis iaith e.e Cymraeg neu'n ddwyieithog.
We welcome correspondence in Welsh and corresponding with us in Welsh will not lead to a delay. Let us know your language choice if Welsh or bilingual.



MAE EICH DATA O BWYS www.rctcbc.gov.uk/diogeludata
YOUR DATA MATTERS www.rctcbc.gov.uk/dataprotection



In order to mitigate risks further, can you please encourage your child to sit next to other children in the same year. Younger children should sit close in the front, with progressively older children sitting from the front to the back.

Please make every effort to ensure your child adheres to this requirement.

Use of face coverings by pupils in schools

Any child of secondary school age is recommended to wear a suitable face covering in communal areas in schools including corridors, halls and toilets. This requirement does not apply to pupils with additional learning needs, relevant medical conditions which constitute an exemption or to pupils with disabilities. This requirement does not apply to primary school-age pupils.

Individual schools are responsible for identifying these communal areas and parents/carers are therefore advised to ensure that their child is following the requirements in place in each school.

Parents/carers communicating with schools

If your child receives a positive test for Covid-19, it is important that you contact your child's school and notify them **immediately**.

Schools and the Test, Trace and Protect Service need to identify close contacts of positive cases as soon as possible to reduce the risk of further infection. Your support in informing the school if your child is tested positive would be greatly appreciated.

It is important to note that local authorities have a duty to support the management of the Covid-19 outbreak by processing and sharing information with bodies engaged in disease surveillance in order to protect public health, provide healthcare services to the public, monitoring and managing the Covid-19 outbreak.

Self-isolation

If your child is asked to self-isolate by their school, this is following an assessment approved by Public Health and Protection colleagues and therefore needs to be strictly adhered to.

Self-isolation means that the person does not leave the home and that no one who is not part of the household enters that premises. If a pupil is in school when they are identified as a contact of a positive case of Covid-19 (either another pupil or staff member), you will be contacted immediately by the school to arrange for the collection of your child. It is therefore recommended that you make the necessary arrangements in advance in case of this eventuality. Even if your child is eligible for free home-to-school transport, guidance from Welsh Government is that this should not be used in such a situation.

Anyone who lives with someone displaying Covid-19 symptoms, or is in an extended household arrangement (where they had contact in the two days before the person had symptoms) with someone displaying symptoms must stay at home for 14 days from the day the first person became ill or until the outcome of the Covid-19 test is known.

Individuals who are isolating because they have been contacted as part of the Test, Trace and Protect must continue to self-isolate for 14 days even if a negative test result is received. The same applies for individuals who have to quarantine after returning from abroad.

School contact groups or 'bubble' arrangements and self-isolation requirements

Schools are working hard to reduce the chances of Covid-19 spreading. In order to restrict the number of contacts, pupils are being kept with their own year groups and/or classes to form a discrete contact group or 'bubble' which will be kept apart, wherever possible. At primary level this will be class level. In key stage 3 (years 7-9) discrete contact groups will be class, half year group or whole year group size. In key stages 4 and 5 (years 10-13) the contact group or 'bubble' will be year group size.

Maintaining distinct groups or bubbles that do not mix makes it quicker and easier in the event of a confirmed positive case to identify those who are close contacts and may need to self-isolate.

In the event of a positive test being confirmed, those who have had close contact with the case are required to self-isolate in line with national guidance, for 14 days after their last known contact with the positive case. This will include close contacts only to prevent further transmission of the virus; ensuring that if pupils (or staff) are carrying the virus (even without symptoms), they do not come into contact with others and potentially spread the virus further.

Breakfast club provision

The safety of pupils and staff is of the utmost consideration at this time. In view of this, the number of places in breakfast club provision will remain capped based on capacity calculations in each setting. Applications for spring time applications will become live in November. Further information will follow closer to the time. For parents/carers that require more stability in their childcare arrangements, please contact Denise.Humphries@rctcbc.gov.uk.

While the local authority and schools acknowledge that breakfast provision is important, the reinstatement of breakfast provision at schools must not compromise the safety of children and staff in our schools and increase the risk of the transmission of Covid-19.

Free school meals

The Education Minister, Kirsty Williams announced on 15th October that the Welsh Government will guarantee free school meal provision for eligible pupils for all school holiday periods, up to and including Easter 2021. Provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf will be by means of a BACs payment to parents/carers of eligible pupils, as has previously been undertaken.

Social distancing

All schools have undertaken risk assessments and follow Welsh Government, local authority and Public Health Wales guidance relating to the management of Covid-19. While every effort is being made in and around each school, it is critical that families assist schools to mitigate risks by maintaining social distances outside of the school gates, ensuring that drop-off and pick-ups from the school gates happen very swiftly, ideally whilst wearing a face covering. This is important as we are aware that Covid-19 is circulating within the community and we must all play our part in making the school community as safe as possible.

School attendance if your child is showing symptoms

If your child is unwell at home with any of the symptoms of Covid-19 listed below please do not send them to school. Symptoms include:

- a high temperature - chest or back feels hot to the touch;
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot, for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours; and/or
- a loss or change to sense of smell or taste – this means they cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

If your child has any of the main symptoms of coronavirus:

- get a test to check if they have coronavirus as soon as possible; and
- stay at home and do not have visitors until you get the test result.

Please be sure to follow the self-isolation stay at home guidance from Welsh Government.

If, however, your child does not have symptoms of Covid-19 but has other cold-like symptoms, such as a runny nose, they do not need to be tested and they, and you, do not need to self-isolate.

Your child should attend school if fit to do so. If they are required to self-isolate, your support in ensuring continuity in learning will be critical and we require your support for your child to engage in home learning.

Parking outside/on school premises

Pick-up and drop-off times can be very busy around the school due to the numbers of children on site, therefore, it is essential that parents/carers consider the safety of children when driving and parking in the proximity of our schools. Inconsiderate driving and parking can present a significant risk of harm to both pedestrians and other road users, and can result in complaints being received by the school and the local authority from both residents and other parents alike.

It is important that when driving within the vicinity of any school, you do so with due care and attention and do not put others at risk, or inconvenience residents around schools. **Please ensure that you drive and park safely in appropriate areas, even if this means a longer walk to the school gates.** South Wales Police, residents, school leaders and health and safety colleagues have recently identified significant numbers of pupils and their parents/carers gathering on narrow footpaths outside of schools, particularly at the beginning and end of the school day. In some instances, these gatherings are forcing other pedestrians into the road in order to maintain a two-metre distance and this practice is potentially placing children and their parents and carers in danger. Parents/carers are therefore respectfully requested not to form small groups outside schools and to limit the time spent outside school premises. This is essential and requires your immediate support.

The local authority is working closely with the leadership teams in all schools in order for them to remain open to provide your child with invaluable educational opportunities. Your support is essential in ensuring that risks are mitigated so that we can keep your child and our school communities safe. This cannot be achieved without your help and support and it is imperative that we help our schools. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Director of Education and Inclusion Services