

NEWSLETTER

17TH JUNE 2020



Ysgol Calon Cymru Re-Opening Update

Dear Parents/Carers,

At the beginning of this month, Welsh Government announced that schools will partially re-open for four weeks between Monday 29th June and Friday 24th July. This is the first step in resuming normal schooling, and gives pupils the opportunity to attend school on three occasions before the summer holidays begin. The aim of this period is to create an opportunity for pupils to **‘Check In, Catch Up and Prepare’** before the start of the next academic year in September 2020. It will give pupils at Ysgol Calon Cymru vital contact time with school staff and fellow learners, and allow our school an opportunity to further refine our wellbeing provision and blended learning in advance of the autumn term.

I wanted to use this letter as an opportunity to answer, as best I can at present, some frequently asked questions about this upcoming period. I appreciate that these are very uncertain times and hope that this information will give you confidence in the school's approach. That said, there are certain questions that I cannot yet answer. This is because Ysgol Calon Cymru's plans cannot be finalised until we receive additional information from colleagues in Powys County Council. For example, we cannot confirm which groups of pupils can attend school on particular days until we receive information about transport arrangements.

Strengthening Communication

So that you are kept up to date with all the latest school plans and developments, next Monday we will be sharing a specific page on our school website that is designed to support you and your son/daughter to make the transition back to school. This area of the website will host all key information that you will need to support your child to make a confident start back at Ysgol Calon Cymru. I will contact you again next week to share this with you.

In the meantime, if you have a question that I have not covered here, then please do not hesitate to get in touch with the school. Our contact details are listed on our website: www.ysgolcalon.cymru/contact

Q: Is my child required to attend school during the four-week period from Monday 29th June to Friday 24th July?

A: The short and definitive answer to this question is 'no'. Welsh Government has rightly acknowledged the concerns of parents and carers, and has said that children are NOT required to return to school during this period. It's also important to note that no parent, carer or child will be penalised for not attending. However, whether they return to campus or not during this period, all Ysgol Calon Cymru pupils are expected to engage fully in our online learning programme, which will continue alongside the planned return to school.

Q: Someone in our house is shielding, so should my child return to school?

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A: Again, the short and definitive answer to this question is ‘no’. Pupils who are shielding or at more risk are not expected to return this term. This also applies to pupils who live with relatives who are shielding.

Q: My child is in Year 11/Year 13, do they need to return to school?

A: Children who began the 2019/20 school year in Year 11 or Year 13 are not expected to return to school.

Q: My child has significant special needs, what will the arrangement be for them?

A: For parents/carers of children with significant special needs, a member of the Additional Learning Needs team will be in touch to discuss the most appropriate arrangement.

Q: If I do send my child to school, how can I be sure that they are safe?

A: Careful planning and risk assessment has already been undertaken to ensure that our school is a safe environment for pupils and staff. When we return, the school will be enforcing a strict 2-metre social distancing rule, a rigorous cleaning regime and careful management of hand-washing and other hygiene facilities. To ensure that social distancing is maintained, there will be a strict limit on class sizes, and corridors and other communal areas will be signposted and marked to facilitate social distancing. Movement around the school buildings and campus will be restricted, with staff and pupils limited to clearly-assigned areas.

Q: Will my child be required to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?

A: The Welsh Government has stated that it is not necessary to wear PPE in a classroom situation where social distancing is in place. Therefore Ysgol Calon Cymru staff and pupils will not be required to wear PPE during this period. However, your child is welcome to wear PPE when attending school if they would feel more comfortable doing so.

Q: What will happen if my child, other children or staff show symptoms of the virus?

A: Anyone showing symptoms of the virus during the school day will be immediately isolated and collected. National guidance will then be followed to control spread of the virus.

Q: How often will my child be able to come to school?

A: The Welsh Government has stated that all schools should aim to make arrangements for every child to attend THREE DAYS between Monday 29th June to Friday 24th July. Each individual school will define the duration of these days.

Q: How long will a day last?

A: At Ysgol Calon Cymru, we are currently working on the basis that these three days will represent three normal school days – rather than, for example, six half-day sessions. However, we will not be able to confirm start and finish times until we receive further information about transport from Powys County Council.

Q: Which three days will my child attend?

A: Again, this will be decided once we have further information about transport from Powys County Council and we confirm our timetable. Once we receive this additional information, I will write to you again to share more detailed plans and direct you to the designated area of the school website.

Q: How should my child travel to and from school safely?

A: The Welsh Government has advised that, where possible, parents/carers should accompany their children to and from school. However, I realise that this is neither practical nor possible for many parents/carers and pupils.

Q: Under normal circumstances, my child shares a lift to school with a different family. Will this still be possible?

A: For those travelling to school by car, the Welsh Government has stated that no more than two families should travel together, and only where social distancing can be observed. This social distancing rule will mean that normal car sharing is impossible for many of our parents/carers and pupils.

Q: Will my child still be able to travel to school by bus?

A: As I previously mentioned, we are awaiting further information about transport from Powys County Council. This will inform bus travel arrangements. However, I have been informed that social distancing will be in place on all buses. This will restrict the number of children that can travel on a bus at any one time.

Q: How often will toilet areas be cleaned, and what facilities will be available?

A: Toilets will be cleaned regularly throughout the day. There will be toilet and handwashing facilities in all areas of the school that are open to pupils.

Q: Will food and drink still be provided by school catering?

A: No. All pupils will need to bring a packed lunch with them on the three days they attend, as we are unable to provide school catering. Pupils should bring their own food and drink to school **for the whole day**. This includes pupils normally entitled to free school meals. The parents/carers of these children will receive payment or tokens in lieu of a meal provided by the school.

Q: How will the school ensure that break and lunchtimes are observed safely?

A: There will be staggered break and lunchtimes so that pupils attending school can observe social distancing. Before and after all food consumption, strict

handwashing and cleaning will be required. During break and lunchtimes, outside spaces will be used as much as possible.

Q: Is my child required to wear school uniform when they return to school?

A: No. For the three days your child is on site, they WILL NOT be required to wear school uniform. However, they should come to school in clothes that are easily washed. It is also important that pupils wear clean clothes on each day they attend.

Q: What will my child need to bring to school?

A: On the days your child attends school, they will need to bring a number of items with them. Some of these have been covered in the previous questions, but here is a summary:

- A packed lunch
 - Enough drink to last the day
 - Their own stationary (pens, pencils, rubber, ruler, calculator, etc.)
 - Digital device for learning (a laptop/iPad/tablet, etc.)
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Q: Are there any items my child shouldn't bring to school?

A: Our usual list of restricted items is still in place during this period, and mobile phones should not be brought into school unless absolutely necessary, and should be stored securely in bags if they are. Other equipment brought into school by your child should be kept to an absolute minimum.

Q: Will my child be attending their normal lessons during the three days?

A: It will not be possible for pupils to attend their normal timetabled lessons during this period. Instead, the Welsh Government has stated that the focus should be on wellbeing. This is echoed by the guidance from Powys County Council, which states that: *"The return to school period is meant for 'check-in, catch up and prepare' and, as such, learning will not be taking place in its traditional form. The strongest focus*

will be on the wellbeing of all learners.” Teachers will be using the time with pupils to support the learning that has happened at home and to re-engage thinking, literacy and numeracy skills. However, where possible we intend to deliver curriculum-related learning for pupils in Years 10 and 12.

Q: What will happen when the next academic year begins in September 2020?

A: At the moment, like all head teachers across the country, I am unsure what our start in September will look like. However, the Welsh Government has stated that schools and pupils need to prepare for a ‘new normal’. In September, this will likely consist of a mixture of face-to-face learning and online learning. This upcoming four-week period between Monday 29th June to Friday 24th July will give pupils and staff a chance to get used to this approach in readiness for returning to school in September. As soon as Welsh Government updates its guidance, I will contact you again with Ysgol Calon Cymru’s plans for the beginning of the 2020/21 academic year.

I fully appreciate that there will be a mixed response from our parents/carers to the return of pupils to Ysgol Calon Cymru. I’m sure that some of you will welcome the first step towards a return to ‘normality’, while others will feel that it is too early to send your child back to school. Whatever your views, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your patience and co-operation. As I hope you understand, so much of our school’s approach is dependent on decisions made at national and local level.

We are very much looking forward to welcoming as many of our pupils back to Ysgol Calon Cymru as possible at the end of this month. Although the situation will be far from normal, for those returning it offers a chance to resume important face-to-face relationships with the school’s staff and their fellow learners. To repeat Welsh Government’s view, this four-week period provides a vital opportunity for pupils to check in with their teachers and classmates, catch up with their social circle and prepare for the next academic year.

I will write to you again once our plans to re-open Ysgol Calon Cymru have been finalised.

Cofion Cynnes

Richard Jones

Dr. Richard Jones
Head Teacher, Ysgol Calon Cymru

