



09.12.20

COVID UPDATE - CHANGE IN END OF TERM DATE

Dear parent/carer,

The school has been approached by the local authority and asked to consider closing for the Christmas holidays on the 18th December. Although this is short notice, the school has agreed to this request and will now close to all pupils on **Friday 18th December** and will reopen for pupils on **Tuesday 5th January 2021**. A statement from our local authority can be found below.

This decision is based on ...

1. The increasing infection rate within our area,
2. Bringing consistency to all schools meaning that all pupils and siblings are at home and
3. Ensuring efficient and effective Track, Trace and Protect (TTP) procedures are in place.

Our planned Christmas celebrations will remain albeit a week earlier. Here are the important dates...

11.12.20 - Whole school INSET.

17.12.20 - Christmas dinner (Please use ParentPay) & jumper day, virtual pantomime.

18.12.20 - Non-school uniform Class PTA party (£2 per pupil) and Christingle assembly.

21.12.20 - School closed.

22.12.20 - School closed.

04.01.21 - Whole school INSET.

05.01.21 - 1st day back for pupils.

If you would like to discuss this or any other aspect of school please contact the school office.

Thank you for your understanding and support #keepsafe

Yours,

OGHyett

Statement from Neath Port Talbot

We understand that this is an extremely anxious and challenging time for children, young people, parents and wider family members.

Unfortunately, infection rates in Neath Port Talbot local authority are very high at the moment and continue to rise. The demographic most affected is 40-49 year olds, followed by 50-59 year olds. The rates of new cases in 0-9 and 10-19 age groups are consistently lower but are starting to increase. With community transmission so high, it is inevitable that this will be seen across all age groups.

In accordance with advice received from Welsh Government and Public Health Wales, schools in NPT will close to all pupils on 18th December with INSET accounting for the remainder of the term.

Schools have established tried and tested control measures to reduce the risk of virus transmission and pupils should attend as normal. There has only been a very limited amount of transmission within schools themselves. It is clear that the risk is higher through the behaviour of people in the wider community. Much of the contact tracing work we undertake on a daily basis shows that transmission happens most often in out of school settings - in birthday parties, in junior rugby training, in sleepovers, in adult work settings, in retail outlets, in dance clubs and a range of other events. Generally speaking, schools provide a Covid secure environment.

Whilst some pupils would respect the need to stay within the household for the last week of term if schools were to close, experience shows that many would be out and about in their communities. That creates the opportunity for further spread of the virus.

We have to assess the risks and benefits of all circumstances, and, on balance, when we consider the wider community issues, we believe that it is better for pupils to engage in their learning within school settings.

There is no evidence that school settings are driving transmission, and there is no clear rationale for disrupting them and children's education.

Equity is a key consideration. Christmas and New Year are often particularly difficult times for those living in poverty, and an extended period out of school would increase those difficulties and potentially result in more household mixing where parents are unable to provide care for them. School closures would have a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable children, those who are living in poverty, and those who are at risk from domestic violence or child sexual exploitation.

Closing schools earlier would inevitably result in more children and young people mixing in non-controlled or less controlled circumstances, thereby running the risk of further increases in transmission rates leading to greater pressure on the National Health Service.

We must ensure that decision-making processes are based on seeking to reduce the risk of virus infection across all communities and all age groups. The public health advice is that schools should continue to deliver face to face learning until the end of the term unless there are exceptional circumstances based on health and safety concerns that demand the consideration of closing a school.

We must not lose sight of the fact that reducing the number of people that you mix with in your household, coupled with social distancing, the wearing of face coverings across the nose and mouth, hand washing, and surface cleaning, remain the most effective and beneficial ways of protecting yourself, your family, your friends and your community. I can assure that we will continue to monitor and review this matter.

Regards,

Nadolig Llawen, Merry Christmas.