

*Please ask for:*

*Direct Line:*

*E-Mail:*

*Our Ref:*

*Your Ref:*

*Date:* 10 February 2021

Dear Primary School Parent/Carer

We thank you for the support you have given our schools during the early part of 2021. It has been a challenging time as schools have juggled with onsite and offsite learning. Teachers and teaching assistants have tried their best to adapt to different ways of working and to keep learning going.

Many comparisons have been made between schools on what the learning offer is, what it should be and even what it could be like in an ideal world. Social media has made it easy to compare schools but not so easy to see the efforts involved in working in a virtual world. This has not been easy for anyone but schools and teachers have again risen to the challenge with professionalism and resilience.

Unfortunately, we are still operating in abnormal times and each school has tried to meet the needs of its community by continually improving on the learning offer. I am very proud that our schools have followed our guidance for the continuity of learning and have done their best in the circumstances we find ourselves in. There is now some hope that the next few months will start to see a gradual and cautious return to school. After half-term, primary schools will have three priorities, addressed in this order:

1. Educating and keeping 3-7 year olds in Nursery to year 2 onsite
2. Educating years 3 to years 6 offsite
3. Onsite learning for vulnerable/critical worker children in years 3 to years 6 only where essential

During the week beginning Monday 22 February there will be a flexible return to school for children in the Foundation Phase year groups, namely, Nursery to year 2, in all schools, including special schools and the pupil referral unit. In Swansea, headteachers will utilise the first Monday and Tuesday (22 February and 23 February) as planning days, and after that all Foundation Phase year groups will start to return by Friday 26 February. We will aim to work to this timeline but please be patient if your school needs more time to prepare. You should contact your school to confirm if there are reasons why your child cannot start back on their given date.

Between 24 February and 26 February, your child will be required to bring a packed lunch to school. From the week commencing 1 March, Reception to year 2 children will start to receive a hot meal in school again. Please remember to make sure your sQuid account is topped up. Free school meal payments/parcels will not be provided for Foundation Phase children after 26 February (the last payment should be in bank accounts by Friday 12 February to cover the period up to 26 February, and the final fortnightly food parcel will be delivered on Monday 15 February).

Classrooms will offer as much ventilation as possible and a lot of the learning will take place outdoors, so please remember to send your child to school with a coat and jumper. Please avoid sending in any unnecessary items though, and keep these to essential items only e.g. lunch box.

For children of critical workers in years 3 to year 6, the message remains the same at the moment, namely, it is safer to stay at home, if possible. However, onsite learning will still be offered to those who need it as opposed to those who want it. From 23 February, there may not be enough staff to provide the same levels of onsite learning for years 3-6 as the focus is on educating Foundation Phase year groups. Please do not be disappointed if your school cannot offer the same level of onsite learning as it did before half term. To assist with the move to their class bubbles there will be no provision in schools for any primary school learner on 22 February and none for Foundation Phase learners on 23 February.

We are particularly grateful to parents and pupils alike who have followed the public and school rules and regulations for keeping safe. Everybody's efforts have paid off and community transmission of Covid-19 is clearly falling. At this point in time, there is a concern that once the younger pupils go back, we may see community transmission of Covid-19 increasing once again. I cannot emphasise enough how important it is that we all keep sticking to the rules so that we can focus on schooling our 3-7 year olds. All parents and visitors to school sites must wear a face covering. Parents should also avoid gathering at the school gate and should arrive as close as they can to their agreed drop off/collection time.

I understand that there are significant pressures on staff in schools and I am pleased that the week commencing 15 February will be a normal half-term week. Equally, I understand the pressure on families so it is welcome news that schools will open again for the younger children who find it hard to work online.

Schools in Swansea have risk assessments in place that will focus on educating 3-7 year olds within their class bubbles. This means that after school clubs, breakfast clubs and any activity that mixes bubbles in schools should be avoided. Our headteachers want nothing more than seeing a safe return to education. Please help us by ensuring social distancing, thinking twice before sharing lifts to schools, holding parties, sharing childcare, mixing on the way to school, whilst on school premises or afterwards. Please act responsibly as not doing so could jeopardise the return to school for the rest of the spring term.

Transport for eligible Foundation Phase pupils, including ALN transport will be available from 24 February. Please inform your school immediately if you are not planning to send your child/children back to school so that transport officers know as soon as possible what transport is needed after the half-term break.

We kindly ask for your continued cooperation to try and ensure that our children, staff and families are kept safe. Fewer cases in the community will mean fewer cases in schools, and this will build confidence that we are starting to recover. We ask you politely to ensure that your child limits their contact in your community and respect the advice around washing hands, social distancing and wearing face coverings.

In summary:

- Week beginning February 15 is half-term
- Monday (22 February) and Tuesday (23 February) will be used as planning days in Swansea
- Onsite learning for children of critical workers in Y3-6 WILL be available from 23 February
- No onsite learning available for Foundation Phase pupils prior to their return to avoid mixing of contact groups during week beginning 22 February
- Packed lunches need to be brought in between 24 February and 26 February

I hope that we can all work together to support our schools and ensure that we can enjoy a cautious return to education.

Regards



Director of Education