

Dear Parent/Carer/Guardian,

First of all can I thank you for the support you have given our schools over the past few months- I know that our Headteachers and school staff appreciate your assistance. It has been a difficult time and I'm sure it will continue to be challenging for a few more months, however, by working together I'm confident we will get through this.

I am aware that there has been discussion in the press in regard to the pressures on the education system and suggestions in regard to the last week of term. Having considered all the evidence and the scientific advice available I write to confirm that **our schools remain open until December 18<sup>th</sup> as planned.**

We have not taken this decision lightly as I'm aware that our school staff are under considerable pressures and many are dealing with the impact of positive Covid cases on their schools. To ensure the wellbeing of our learners and our staff, and to ensure that all of us are able to celebrate Christmas with our families, we all need to act responsibly over the coming weeks.

I can confirm that schools in Carmarthenshire have strict procedures in place to protect both learners and staff, however, it is inevitable that where there are cases within the community, we will see cases in our schools.

Carmarthenshire schools have not been affected as badly as some other counties, however, since September over 53% of our schools have had to respond to and deal with a positive COVID case. This includes working with the Test Trace Protect team to minimise the contact group and to keep as many of our learners as possible in school. However, many learners and staff have had to self-isolate for 14 days.

Running a school at this time is very challenging and I have to acknowledge the hard work of our school leaders and their staff who have made it work. However, I also have to note that many staff are tired and have not had a real break since September. I do appreciate that this is also the same for many other groups of front line staff.

With increasing number of cases many issues have become evident:

- Some groups of pupils have had to self-isolate many times which undoubtedly will have had an effect on them.
- Pressure on school staff having to provide teaching and learning in school and for those that are self-isolating.
- Managing a school site with Covid-19 restrictions.
- An increasing number of positive staff cases or staff having to self-isolate leading to staffing issues.
- Impact on school attendance.

**Gareth Morgans, BAdd/BEd; MGw/MSc**

Cyfarwyddwr Addysg a Gwasanaethau Plant,  
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- The resilience and motivation of staff who have been responding to Covid-19 challenges since March cannot be sustained.

We kindly ask you to work with us to try and ensure that our learners, staff and families do not have to self-isolate over the Christmas holiday. Fewer cases in the community will mean fewer cases in schools which will reduce the pressure on our teams in tracking and tracing contacts and reducing the numbers who have to self-isolate.

We ask you to make sure that your child/young person limits their contact in your community and respects the advice around washing hands, social distancing and wearing face coverings. Everyone needs to play their part to stop the spread.

To conclude, families eligible for free school meals will receive a payment for the Christmas holidays as agreed by Welsh Government however this might take some time to process.

I hope that we all work together to support our schools and ensure that we are all able to celebrate Christmas safely with our families.

Thank you again for your support,

*Glynog Davies*

Executive Board Member for Education

*Gareth Morgans*

Director of Education and Children's Services

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