

June 19th, 2020.

Dear Parent/Carer,

Firstly, I would like to thank you for your support, understanding and patience over the past three months. I am grateful to you for everything you have done to assist your child's learning, your child's school and the local authority at this difficult time.

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with further information in respect to the re-opening of schools.

Check in, Catch up and Prepare

Our school staff have been innovative in the way they have kept learning going since the 20th March; it is clear from recent experience that learning knows no boundaries and will not be locked down! As a result of the Minister for Education's recent announcement in respect of the re-opening of schools, the local authority is keen to work with schools and parents/carers to ensure all pupils benefit from an opportunity to check in with their schools, catch up with their peers and teachers, and prepare for the next school year.

It is unlikely that schools will return to the way they were operating prior to the lockdown for some considerable time; we however need to approach the 'check in, catch up' arrangements as first steps towards inspiring and exciting pupils about learning once again.

From Monday 29th June, our schools will welcome back pupils to attend specified sessions. Not all learners will return at once and, when they do return, the school day might start and end at different times for different learners.

Headteachers and their staff are preparing our schools to ensure that their operation complies with local and national guidance and ensure that they are as safe as possible for pupils and staff. It is clear that the restrictions placed on schools will be lifted carefully and cautiously and each individual school will make local decisions on how they will re-open. We expect this process to be developmental and as schools and their communities gain greater confidence and rhythm, they will progress towards admitting up to their new capacity although it may take time to reach this level of operation.

We expect schools to contact you to ensure that you understand, as soon as possible, how environments, procedures and operation have been adapted in order to accommodate, as safely as possible, the return of pupils to schools. These arrangements will be reviewed regularly and will be subject to change wherever necessary, placing the safety of pupils and staff at the centre of consideration.

Gareth Morgans, BAdd/BEd; MGw/MSc

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You are welcome to contact me in Welsh or English

We appreciate that there will be some apprehension and uncertainty at this time. Schools will engage with you over the next fortnight to inform you of their plans and to provide reassurances as and when needed. Information will include, amongst other things:

- *A school plan with information in regard to entry, exit and circulation of learners.*
- *Information in respect to arrival at school - time, protocol, registration*
- *The day/session your child is expected to attend.*
- *Arrangements in respect to lunch - if your child attends for a full day a packed lunch will be required.*
- *Confirmation in regard to school uniform - this will be a local decision for the Governing Body.*
- *Information in regard to the process if a child becomes ill during the day.*

Once again, I am keen to do everything possible to reassure you of the local authority's efforts in supporting the emotional and physical wellbeing of learners. The local authority is working closely with schools and its partners to ensure that guidance and support is in place to assist your child's return to school.

Therefore, when your child returns to school, there will be a clear focus on wellbeing and on an enjoyment of outdoor learning, where and when this is practical. In secondary schools, there may eventually be a focus, in some year groups, on supporting pupils' learning, in anticipation of the academic demands of the forthcoming school year.

Owing to the regulations set by Welsh Parliament on social distancing, our home to school transport provision will be significantly restricted. Pupils are being encouraged to safely walk or cycle to school where possible, and if transport is needed, for parents to make every effort to provide it.

It is important to note that, during this period, you are free to decide whether to send your child to school or not. We are doing all we can to ensure that the school environment is as safe as possible for learners and staff. Should you decide not to send your child to school during this summer term, you will not be penalised. If you choose not to send your child to school, your child will continue to receive the same home-to-school support they have received so far.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you all, once again, for your continuing support at a very difficult time.

Gareth Morgans

For further information and guidance on schools re-opening please visit -
www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/education

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