

22 June 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

I write to update you on our planning for the phased re-opening of our school from 29th June 2020.

Our aim is to be fully transparent and to provide stakeholders with all of the information they need in order to secure the confidence of the whole school community. In line with this we have published a comprehensive 'masterplan' document for the re-opening of the School for Governors, Staff and Parents. A copy of that plan, which includes our detailed COVID-19 risk assessment is accessible on our school website here: <https://www.hawardenhigh.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Reopening-of-School-Plan-v2.pdf> Please note that this is a lengthy document and I don't expect you to read this unless you feel the need to do so. I shall try to summarise the key points within this letter and other communications that you receive from us.

I am grateful to families who indicated their wish through the completion of the online survey to send their child to school. We have made plans according to this demand. Please note that if you have not informed us that you wish for your child to return to school we may not now have the resources to be able to support their return.

You may be aware from media reports that Welsh Government Ministers and trade unions have been unable to reach an agreement on the school term extending into the summer holiday period. Consequently, following a joint decision between Flintshire Headteachers and the Local Authority, all schools in Flintshire will now open for three weeks rather than four. I have attached an open letter from Claire Homard, Chief Officer: Education and Youth, Flintshire, to the end of this letter for your further information. The final school day of this academic year will be **Friday, 17th July 2020** as previously published. Please be assured this decision is not because of a reluctance of any member of staff at our school. Nevertheless, I am sorry that this additional provision will no longer be available.

Whilst we had been planning for this eventuality, it has complicated our efforts somewhat and we have had to make some significant changes to our initial plans. Therefore, we are only in a position currently to publish a timetable which will cover your child's initial session only. We hope to be able to offer another session for all students in Week 3, week commencing 13th July 2020, but given site limitations we may only be able to prioritise certain year groups. I shall write to you again to confirm these arrangements.

By way of a summary, from 29th June we will be holding face-to-face experiences for all children in Years 7-10 and Year 12. These sessions will be limited to 3 hours in duration on one allocated day in the first two weeks. The sessions will be taught by your child's form tutor and will incorporate a wellbeing and academic focus. Pupils will *not* be rotating around lessons and nor will they be able to leave their tutor base, except if they need to use the toilet facilities.

Pupils will be in a 'bubble' with up to 7 other pupils and will receive a free cold packed lunch prior to leaving the site. Please note there is not a requirement to take a lunch option. However, we have planned for each child to have one. Please could you notify the school by return (telephone or email) of any food allergies from which your child suffers, if applicable.

Given the pressures on space at the school, particularly given the requirement to socially distance at 2 metres, you will appreciate that we are increasing operations cautiously to ensure pupils and staff remain safe. This model will also support the children of key workers throughout this period who will benefit from separate provision.

As you know, transport is coordinated by the local authority. At the time of writing, the arrangements for school transport have not yet been finalised. However, we anticipate there will be limited transport available whilst regulations around social distancing remain. Students and staff are encouraged to attend school by car or by any means of active travel available.

Throughout the remainder of the term we will also continue to provide distance learning for those students who will not be returning in some capacity. Whilst there have been significant challenges for all schools around the use of technology to support home learning, we are investing a lot of time and effort in this method of delivery so that from September our teaching staff have every resource available to them to make remote learning as interactive and engaging as possible. We have worked to the best of our ability during the pandemic and we will continue to do so in order to provide our students with the best education possible.

The school continues to be guided by the latest science and medical advice. Therefore, to minimise social mixing we will be operating the vast majority of our meetings with families and external agencies via video conferencing. I trust that you will understand this measure is designed to support the health and safety of all member of the community. Please be aware, therefore, that it will not be possible for parents/carers to come to the school site without a prior arranged appointment.

In the next day or so, families will receive an email with a specific timetable for your child indicating their allocated time for returning school. As I stated previously, this will be for an initial session only, with further details to follow in due course on any subsequent session.

We have captured some answers to some of the most commonly asked questions below, in the hope that these aid you and your child's return to school. We have also published these and some other FAQs aimed specifically at pupils on our COVID-19 section of the school website: <https://www.hawardenhigh.org.uk/novel-coronavirus-covid-19-updates/>

You may also find it beneficial to watch the animation we have prepared with your child which details some of the key messages of the return to school accessible here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRSK3rk7yRI&feature=youtu.be>

I wish to thank you, as parents/carers, for your ongoing support during these difficult times for us all. Our primary focus now is to support the continuation of your child's learning into the new school year, as well as continue to support their wellbeing. Over the next few weeks and throughout the summer holidays, we will be reviewing the situation as we prepare for September. Once this information is available we will communicate this with you.

Your sincerely



Mr. S. Budgen
Headteacher

Some questions answered:

What will school be like?

School will not be returning to anything like it was prior to closure. Pupils will be required to socially distance (2 metres) from one another and their teachers. There will only be a maximum of a third of the school in at any one time and pupils will arrive and leave at staggered times (in order to reduce the potential for contact with too many people).

There will be a maximum of 8 pupils in a classroom at any one time. Each pupil will be given an arrival time which they must adhere to otherwise they will not be able to access the school and parents will be notified to arrange collection of their child. After completing registration at the front of school pupils will report to their form room and will remain there for the duration of the session (likely to be a maximum of 3 hours). There will be no changeover of lessons.

Corridors are one way only with the exception of the reception and main corridor which is clearly separated and marked with signage.

How safe is the school?

The school has undertaken a thorough risk assessment to support the safe return of pupils and staff. There have been numerous adaptations to the building in order to support the smaller number of pupils in school at any one time.

The school has installed a significant number of alcohol gel dispensers around the school and extra plumbed washbasins for hand washing.

Each room will be thoroughly cleaned through the establishment of a renewed cleaning schedule. Each classroom contains additional cleaning supplies for periodic spot cleaning through the session.

What will students wear and what equipment do they require?

Students should wear their normal school uniform as far as is practicable. We recognise that some items may no longer fit and there has not been an opportunity to replace these as yet. However, we would appreciate parental support in trying to get students as close to our uniform expectations as possible. Pupils must have their uniform freshly washed each time they come to school. There is not a requirement to wear a tie and pupils need not wear their jumper if the weather is fine.

Pupils are not required to wear a face mask. However, if that is their preference then the school will support that decision.

It would be helpful if students could bring a device that they have been using to complete their online learning or their own mobile phone. This is so they can connect to our Wi-Fi facilities and show their teacher the work they have been doing or are struggling with. Any devices brought into school remain the sole responsibility of the pupil – staff will be unable to touch the device or assist with hardware problems in any way.

Pupils should also bring a notebook (or some paper/rough book) and pen. We will not be able to loan equipment or even hand out loose paper. They will not be able to loan equipment to or from other pupils.

Pupils should bring their own water bottle with enough water for the three hour session. All water fountains have been switched off.

What if I decide not to send my child to school?

We understand that even with all the steps that the school takes to minimise the risks to pupils and staff that some parents would prefer to keep their children at home. Attendance to school at this time is at your own discretion. There will be no issuing of fines or loss of attendance statistics for non-attendance.

Pupils that are in receipt of a shielding letter *must* remain at home.

What about break and lunchtimes?

Pupils cannot have a break or lunchtime in the same way as they have been used to as they cannot mix with anyone outside of their 'bubble'. A tutor group at a time will be escorted around the school and will undertake handwashing at key points.

All pupils will receive a free school packed lunch.

Pupils should bring their own water bottle with enough water for the three hour session. All water fountains have been switched off.

What will happen if my child becomes ill?

If your child is unwell, DO NOT send them to school. If your child becomes ill during the day they will be dealt with according to their symptoms. A qualified first aider will attend to them, but this member of staff will be wearing PPE. Please discuss this with your child. The school will then contact you to collect your child, even if they travel on the school bus.

My child is in Year 10/Year 12 and I am concerned they have missed too much of the GCSE/A Level content. What is going to happen?

We understand this is a worry. Welsh Government are in discussions with the examinations regulator, Qualifications Wales, and the examination board, WJEC, to see what plans can be put in place.

My child is anxious about returning to school

This is understandable. The COVID-19 pandemic is a worry for us all. However, part of the rationale behind students returning to school is so that we can help them when we see them in whatever way we can. Please contact your child's Head of House via the school office who will be pleased to help prior to your child's return if you feel you or they need extra support.

During the time in school pupils will have access to a pastoral team who can assist with any issues they may be having. They will be able to suggest helpful strategies, websites and further specialist professional organisations which should be able to assist if appropriate.

What about pupil behaviour?

Students are expected to follow the rules for their own safety and wellbeing, and everyone else in the building. If your child cannot adhere to these rules, a member of the Senior Management Team will contact you. THE SAFETY OF ALL STUDENTS AND STAFF IS PARAMOUNT.

How will arrival and leaving of school be managed?

The specific time your student is allocated for their return to school session is staggered so as to avoid long queues and potential cross contamination.

Staff will welcome students arriving at the front of school having been dropped off in the car park/ entering via the gates. Students will queue up, confirm no sign of illness and sanitise hands.

Pupils follow signage and one way system and make way to their allocated room.

At the end of the session pupils will hand wash and exit the building to be collected by car/bus or walk home. We ask that pupils do not congregate and wait for friends outside the school building. Pupils must make their way home immediately observing 2m social distancing at all times.

Claire Homard
Chief Officer (Education and Youth)
Prif Swyddog (Addysg ac Ieuenctid)



Your Ref/Eich Cyf

Our Ref/Ein Cyf CH

Date/Dyddiad

Ask for/Gofynner am Claire Homard

Direct Dial/Rhif Union 01352 704190

Dear Parent/Carer

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

This letter will provide you with further information in respect of school-based learning for all pupils and emergency childcare provision for eligible children available in Flintshire for the rest of the summer term which will now end as originally planned on 17 July.

This is because Welsh Government and the trade unions have not been able to reach a common position on the proposal to extend the summer term by one week to 24 July, as previously announced by the Education Minister Kirsty Williams. We would have hoped to have seen these issues resolved but in the absence of a national agreement, the Council has had to make a decision to be able to give schools sufficient time to plan properly. There would be no guarantee that schools would have sufficient staff available to deliver the fourth week safely on voluntary basis as staff are not contractually obliged to work in the holidays. The Council has a duty to ensure the safety of its pupils and staff first and foremost.

Check in, Catch up and Prepare

As a result of the Minister for Education's recent announcement in respect of the reopening 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.

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The Council welcomes correspondence in Welsh or English
Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg

From Monday 29 June, Flintshire schools will start to accept their own pupils to attend identified sessions and this information will be shared with you directly by your child/children's school(s).

As a result of the legislation around maintaining social distancing of 2 metres and to ensure the health and safety of all learners and staff, schools will not be operating full time provision for all pupils during this three week period and neither will this be a return to the teaching of the full curriculum. Not all pupils will return at once and, when they do return, the school day might start and end at different times for different learners. This may include different arrangements for siblings of different ages, attending the same school.

Because every school building is different in its size and layout, and because each school will have differing numbers of staff available to return to work, there will not be a standard offer for each child in Flintshire for this 'check in, catch up and prepare' period. Each school, based on its own risk assessments, will be making an offer its pupils of the number and timing of contact sessions. Welsh Government has made it clear to schools and to councils that decisions on how to operate for this short return to school before the summer holidays can be made at a school level. Each school will communicate their specific arrangements directly to parents via their normal methods of keeping in touch.

However, Flintshire County Council has made one key decision that is to be adopted by all primary schools for this period which is that Nursery aged children will **not be** allowed to return to school before the summer holidays. This is because very young children will not be able to maintain safe social distancing. It is also because the close and sometimes intimate care that these very young children need will be difficult to manage in school settings and could put themselves and the staff who care for them potentially at greater risk. The changes to the way schools will be operating may also be unsettling for very young children. Many other councils across Wales have made a similar decision.

Plans to ensure a carefully organised return for nursery children when they will be transitioning into Reception classes in September will be developed in the near future, as will suitable induction opportunities for the new cohort of children due to start Nursery in the autumn term.

It is important to note that, during this period, parents and carers are free to decide whether to send their children to school. Should parents/carers decide not to send their children to school during this summer term, they will not be penalised. If you choose not to send your children to school, they will continue to receive the same home-to-school support they have received so far.

When your child returns to school, there will be a focus upon pupil wellbeing and on an enjoyment of outdoor learning, where and when this is practical, in their particular learning environment. There will be an opportunity to discuss with them how their distance learning has been going and some limited opportunities to engage in some other activities to practice key skills e.g. literacy and numeracy. As this will be strange time for all pupils, regardless of their age, schools are being encouraged by Welsh Government to think carefully about the programme of catch up sessions being offered which will also continue to be supplemented by online learning.

Emergency childcare support for key workers and vulnerable children

In light of the decision to open schools for all learners to touch base before the summer holidays, there will be significant changes to our emergency childcare provision which we need to implement as a matter of some urgency.

On Friday 19 June, Flintshire's emergency childcare hubs will close. From Monday 22 June until Friday 17 July emergency childcare will be provided at your child's own school with the same operating hours as already provided and with the same support for catering and transport. Places will continue to be booked through your child's school.

Please be aware that Welsh Government rules continue to apply for these places e.g. children of key workers or those identified as vulnerable. The number of places available will be limited as schools try to continue offering this provision as well as giving other children the chance to 'check in, catch up and prepare.' Parents are asked to only consider using this emergency childcare if there is no suitable alternative provision for their children and if they meet the Welsh Government definition of key workers.

Parents/carers are advised that the Council is currently not in a position to confirm whether emergency childcare provision will be available during the school summer holiday period (ie between Monday 20 July and Tuesday 1 September). We are waiting further advice from Welsh Government.

Separate Childcare and 'Check In' Groups – reducing the risk of transmission

Based on the Welsh Government guidance, Flintshire's position is that children **should not be switching** between the emergency childcare group and the 'check in/catch up sessions'. This increases the risk of transmitting the virus between different cohorts of pupils. Our advice is that children who have accessed the emergency childcare to date need to be kept in that cohort for rest of the summer term. In reality, this cohort have already had a considerable amount of contact time with familiar staff which has enabled them to 'check in and catch up'.

Pupils arriving for the new 'check in' sessions will be kept separate. If a parent requests that their child accesses the catch up sessions, they cannot then access the childcare provision for the remainder of the summer term. Parents will need to make a choice of one or the other. If an eligible parent chooses for their child to access 'check in and catch up' from 29th June rather than the emergency childcare, as long as they are not showing any symptoms of Coronavirus, there is no reason why their child can't join their first designated catch up session but then they only access those designated catch up sessions going forward.

Bringing in things from home, provision of meals, wearing uniform

Welsh Government guidance outlines that bringing items from home should be kept to a minimum and this is one of the reasons why a decision was made by the Council to provide packed lunches for all pupils for this short period before the end of term at no charge.

As water fountains will not be safe for use during this period of time, it is not unreasonable to allow pupils to bring a bottle of water from home but this should be clearly named and not shared with anyone else. Similarly, other essential equipment e.g. pencil case, would be permitted but again, pupils will be discouraged from bringing any other unnecessary items with them.

Pupil will be encouraged to wear school uniform but schools will be flexible, acknowledging that many will have grown out of clothing and shoes and parents will want to wait for the start of the new academic year before investing in new uniform. Clothing should be easily washable. Schools will provide more advice on this matter.

Children who may be unwell

We are asking parents to check that their child is not showing any symptoms of **Coronavirus** or **any other illness** before sending them into school.

There are clear guidelines for schools to manage pupils who may develop symptoms of Coronavirus during the day and parents/ carers would be contacted immediately.

With the new arrangements in place to manage learners safely, schools will not have the capacity to look after lots of children who become unwell with the usual childhood ailments during the day and make calls for pupils to be collected. For this reason we are asking parents/carers to make the decision in the morning whether or not they should attend rather than send them in and 'see how they go'. This will help to keep the numbers of poorly pupils to an absolute minimum.

Pupils entitled to Free School Meals

Since 18 May Flintshire has made direct payments to all those parents eligible for free school meals who supplied us with their bank account details. These payments will continue for the three week period when schools reopen and through the summer holidays.

A return to more normal arrangements for the payment of school meals and the provision of free school meals is being developed for September and will be communicated nearer the time.

We are keen to do everything possible to reassure you of our collective efforts in the Council and in our schools to support the emotional and physical wellbeing of learners during the weeks ahead. All schools have received significant support and guidance materials to enable them to plan for reopening and to operate safely.

We look forward to seeing as many children as possible before the end of the summer term. If you have further questions regarding the provision for your children, these should now be directed to the schools they attend.

Yours sincerely

Claire Homard

Claire Homard

Chief Officer, Education & Youth