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Contact:/Cysylltwch â: Lynn Phillips

Date:/ Dyddiad: Friday 11th March 2022



Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: School Operations Update - Week Commencing Monday 14th March 2022

I am writing to inform you of the latest position with our schools in relation to the COVID pandemic. As of Wednesday 9th March 2022, the incidence rate in Blaenau Gwent was the highest in Wales. Therefore, we have to continue to take a cautious approach throughout the school estate, and as a result, we have taken the decision to transition to the moderate risk level in schools next week - pending further review.

As always, the main priority for the Local Authority and all of our schools is to consider safety and minimise disruption to learning for our children and young people. The Local Authority continues to work closely with our Headteachers in Blaenau Gwent, to agree a common approach where possible. Schools are doing all that they can to ensure continuity of learning. However, as a result of community transmission, we have seen a higher incidence rate in some schools along with increased pressure upon resources, requiring a move to blended learning for specific classes and year groups, along with additional control measures being employed. We will continue to work with schools on an individual basis to provide the level of support and controls required in keeping everyone safe.

Throughout the course of the pandemic, Education has worked closely in partnership with schools, support services, colleagues in Environmental Health and Health & Safety, to provide COVID safe teaching and learning environments, whilst also adhering to the latest national guidelines. Recent changes and adaptations to school operations have been implemented in order to ensure compliance with the latest Welsh Government legislation and guidance. Our schools continue to do an outstanding job in maintaining high quality learning under extremely dynamic and challenging circumstances.

We have also taken the decision to work with schools in increasing registration capacity for breakfast club provision over the course of the next 2 weeks. We will be working with your school to establish a commencement date when the intake will be reviewed, and will communicate this to you next week. Breakfast club provision will continue to operate as per the current practice, for a 30-minute period prior to the start of the school day.



The Council welcomes correspondence in Welsh and English and we will communicate with you in the language of your choice, as long as you let us know which you prefer. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to any delay.

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg a byddwn yn cyfathrebu gyda chi yn eich dewis iaith, dim ond i chi rhoi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn creu unrhyw oedi.



The main principles currently outlined by Welsh Government at the moderate risk level are:

- Implement arrangements aimed at reducing close interactions between staff and learners. This may include:
 - o not holding large group gatherings such as assemblies;
 - o the use of one way systems;
 - o consistent seating plans (recognising this may not be possible for younger learners); and,
 - o using outdoor spaces where possible.
- Physical distancing in place in classrooms depending on room capacity and risk assessment, recognising that this may not be possible with younger children or with learners that require one to one support
- Face coverings are not routinely recommended, but may be worn by secondary aged learners anywhere on the school site and in particular when moving around indoor communal areas outside of the classroom, such as corridors. Face coverings continue to be recommended on school transport
- Face coverings may be worn by staff and visitors in schools when moving around communal areas outside of the classroom, such as corridors



School support services including catering and transport are likely to continue experience disruption, resulting in the need to adapt service delivery. The Local Authority and your school will communicate any significant changes and/or adaptations with you as soon as practicably possible.

Blaenau Gwent schools are well placed to maintain safe and effective operations. This of course will continue to be reviewed on a regular basis. The core mitigation measures i.e. hands, face, space and ventilation remain in place. All activities involving visitors to school sites and off site visits will be subject to risk assessment, and considered on a case by case basis.

Please continue to be vigilant for any symptoms and do not let your child/children attend school if they are symptomatic, or they have been told to self-isolate by the Test Trace Protect Service. We must continue to do all that we can to keep pupils, staff and the wider community safe and well.

Yours faithfully,

Lynn Phillips
Corporate Director of Education
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

We welcome correspondence in the medium of Welsh or English. / Croesawn ohebiaith trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg.

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