



8th December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we approach Christmas and the end of the autumn term I wanted to take this opportunity to write and set out the measures and steps that will help keep our schools safe for everyone, pupils and staff, up to the end of term. As many of you will be aware, we are seeing a very significant rise in the number of COVID-19 cases across Wales and Monmouthshire is not immune to that.

The impact is not being felt evenly across the County and there are some areas that are seeing substantial increases in infection rates. Because of this, we need to redouble our efforts to keep our schools safe to ensure that they can remain open until the end of term for face-to-face learning.

Firstly, if you have a positive case in your family the rest of the household should self-isolate for fourteen days (the positive case should isolate for ten days and only return to school (or end their period of self-isolation) when they feel well enough and have not had a high temperature for 48hrs. This may mean the case has to isolate for longer than 10 days).

Secondly, if a member of the household is feeling unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 (a new continuous cough, high temperature or loss of or change to your normal sense of smell or taste (anosmia)) they should seek a test as soon as possible. Until the result of that test is known the whole household should self-isolate. When the result is received, you should follow the advice of the Test and Trace team.

Unfortunately, we have seen a number of cases of pupils attending school despite the fact that they may have a positive case in their family, there is a symptomatic family member or they are waiting for the results for a test. This is a significant risk to classmates and teachers alike.

Thirdly, if you receive notification from Monmouthshire's (or another Local Authority's) Test and Trace team to self-isolate because you are a close contact then you must follow this rule explicitly. That means that you must stay at home (the Welsh Government's guidance can be found: [here](#)). This applies to all ages.

Lastly, we should all take the necessary steps to remain safe by socially distancing, washing our hands and where appropriate wearing face coverings. The Welsh Government has issued new guidance that states that the wearing of face coverings applies in all schools, on school transport (for those pupils in year 7 and older) and by any visitors picking children up from school.

In some of our schools, there is a very real risk that the impact of self-isolation directives on teaching and support staff may make the safe operation of that school un-safe. In these instances, schools may have to move to reduced operations; this would mean some year groups or classes receiving blended learning and support at home. Schools will work with you directly to inform you if this becomes necessary.

I know that Christmas time in all of our schools is a time of great excitement and joy for our children. It is also a time of year when the temptation to stray from the strict rules we have been asked to follow for so long may be higher than ever. I would ask that in order for everyone, including all of our school staff who have worked tirelessly this term, to enjoy a happy Christmas holiday we continue to observe the rules as I know so many of you have.

Thank you for all of your support during what has been a hugely challenging term for all of our schools and the communities they support and work in. I hope that you have a happy and restful Christmas.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. McLean', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Will McLean
Chief Officer Children & Young People Monmouthshire
Lead Director for SE Wales