



NEWBRIDGE
SCHOOL

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20th September 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

September Update Letter

With all that has happened over the last few months, I wanted to write to all parents and families to outline key developments at the start of this term.

Return to school

The overall return to school has gone very well, and I would like to commend all the pupils for the calm, focused way they have returned to school. Although lockdown has had many negative impacts on teenagers' lives, I do believe many more now truly understand the value of 'being able' to go to school. It has been fantastic in the first two weeks to see friendships reacquainted and pupils having many new experiences. I would like to particularly congratulate our new Year 7 pupils for the way they have seamlessly integrated into our school community and supported one another; they are already a fantastic year group to meet and teach. This week they have been able to visit the Black Mountains for a team-building day, a trip we have happily resurrected this year. Year 11 pupils should also be recognised for their calm and committed return to their final year of studies after the disruption they have had.

Pupil Results – Summer 2021

Outgoing Year 11 pupils performed fantastically well in the final 'assessments', and I would like to thank staff across the school who worked so hard to ensure they left our school with the grades they truly deserved. Pupil results were excellent across the board, and very much in line with our previous outcomes pre-Covid, with 800 A* and A grades and one-third of pupils receiving at least 5 A*/A grades. Well done Year 11 (2021), and we wish you well with your next steps. Current Year 11 pupils now have a very clear target to aim for!

Year 11 Examinations

Exam board adaptations to the syllabuses being studied have been issued by Mr Guillou, Deputy Headteacher. If there are any questions about these, please contact us. I will inform all parents of the expected examination system for this year as soon as we have any new information. We are currently expecting and planning for normal examinations, but this may well change depending on any disruption during the year.

Covid Vaccinations for pupils aged 12+

I am very aware that this is a topic of huge interest for all parents and families. Though we have been given limited information to date, I have been informed that there are currently no plans for our school to be used for any vaccinations, with pupils instead invited to Vaccination Centres by appointment from their local health board. I currently assume that the school will not be asked to play any part at all in the process. If it does turn out that the school is asked to be involved in any stage of the vaccinations, I can assure you that all families will be informed well in advance so that you can plan accordingly.

Self-isolation

Welsh Government guidance changed over the summer, and as outlined in the letter sent to parents on 7th September, the TTP process (including self-isolation advice) is now entirely handled by the centralised NHS team. The school is not involved. We have, however, been asked to send letters to families where close contacts of positive case have been identified or suggested. There may be questions around this, and the school office will be happy to answer these where possible. To briefly summarise, pupils **no longer** have to self-isolate from school **unless** they

have had a positive LFT/PCR test, or are experiencing one of the three main Covid symptoms. If they do not have symptoms/a positive test, they can continue to come to school - even if a family member is positive. This includes if they are identified as a 'close contact'. I would urge all families to make sensible decisions around this guidance, to help keep the school community as safe as possible. I am pleased to say that our number of positive cases is still relatively low, but we would like it to stay that way. Pupils who are self-isolating following a positive PCR but feel well should use Google Classroom to access summaries from class teachers of key learning/topics (these will be updated by the end of each week), and use these to research the topics being taught. I am afraid that it is not possible for class teachers to upload full lessons and resources for every lesson of every day as they are still teaching full classes and lessons on site. Pupils can also research topics taught in previous weeks when they were in school.

Toilets

Over the summer we changed one boys' toilet and one girls' toilet to become 'toilets for all pupils' (labelled as gender neutral). All these toilets contain modern 'fully sealed' cubicles (floor to ceiling with no gaps) and the communal areas (sinks, hand-dryers) are open to the corridor. These kinds of toilets are now common in many schools and offices – the open nature of the sinks area helps to reduce any bullying or poor behaviour in the toilets, and the fact that any pupils can use them means that they are accessible to all – which also helps the number of pupils who feel uncomfortable having to use a segregated boy/girl toilet. This action was agreed by the school council in the Summer term. There remain in the school six segregated toilets which will be kept permanently - three separate boy-only toilets and three separate girl-only toilets. All pupils have been reminded they can use whichever kind of toilet they feel the most comfortable with, even if it is slightly further from their lesson.

Punctuality to school

Lesson 1 begins at 8.30am and we encourage all pupils to arrive at school for 8.25am at the latest to ensure they are not late. Punctuality to school in the morning is generally very good, and I thank the many families who support the children with getting to school on time – whether by bus, car, train or by foot. This has also improved since we moved to start the day straight into lesson 1. However, we still have a small number of pupils arriving after 8.30am, often without a fair and reasonable excuse. Arriving after school starts is obviously unacceptable and is also very unfair on the whole school, as lessons are interrupted for their entrance to the classroom. Leaving multiple entrance gates open after the day has started also compromises the safety of the school site. Therefore, **from Monday 27th September, once school has started the two gates on the main road (Bridge Street) will be closed** – all pupils arriving after this time will have to enter at the school reception gate, by the Leisure Centre car park. Pupils coming to school late will then serve a short lunchtime detention that day. If your child will be late for school due to an unavoidable reason (eg. a family emergency) then you must contact the school office to let us know.

INSET days

A reminder that these are currently planned for the following dates, though as we await external examination dates it is possible that they could still change. If this is the case we will inform all families as soon as possible.

- Friday 3rd September 2021
- Monday 6th September 2021
- Monday 1st November 2021
- Monday 31st January 2022
- Friday 27th May 2022
- Monday 27th June 2022

Yours faithfully,



Mr. A. Thompson
Headteacher