

13th December 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

I write to you in my capacity as chair of the Caerphilly County Borough Council Covid 19 Incident Management Team (IMT). The incident management team includes representatives from the Environmental Health Department, Public Health Wales (PHW), Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB), the Education Department and importantly the Head Teacher of Lewis Girls' School.

As you may be aware there are currently several positive cases of Covid 19 in the school, both in pupils and staff. We are currently investigating and managing these cases as possible cases of the new variant Omicron. Therefore, I would like to reassure you that measures have been put in place to minimise the risk of further transmission of the virus. However, these measures will only be effective if everyone plays their part.

Please take time to discuss the following points with your child/children and emphasise the importance of good compliance and cooperation.

- As of today, teaching for years 12 and 13 will switch to remote teaching and learning. This will continue to the end of term and will be reviewed before the start of the next term.
- You may be aware that as of 29th November 2021 the Welsh Government's Infection Control Framework for schools changed temporarily, and there is new guidance on the use of face coverings in schools.
- Face coverings should be worn by secondary aged learners in all indoor areas, including classrooms, where physical distance cannot be maintained.
- Face coverings continue to be recommended to be worn by secondary aged learners on school transport.
- There will be some learners and staff who are exempt from wearing face coverings - we do not expect this to change that position as the wellbeing of individuals is critical to any considerations around whether staff or learners should wear face coverings.
- Staff and pupils should be reminded to be vigilant in their personal hygiene and hand-washing.
- There are a number of respiratory viruses currently circulating and the advice is that any child with new symptoms may be infectious and should stay off school until their symptoms have subsided. They should also be encouraged to seek medical advice if their symptoms are severe or prolonged.
- All individuals linked to the school that have recently tested positive will be required to re-test so the possible link to Omicron variant can be investigated by laboratories in Wales. Arrangements are being made for the community testing team to visit these individuals at their homes to avoid travelling to local testing stations.
- All contacts of positive cases will also be tested at home, as detailed in the previous point.
- If there is a positive case in a household; children in the household should also isolate and not attend school and await further contact from the TTP teams. Children over five years should undertake daily LFD testing during the family isolation period.
- All pupils that have had their first vaccination should ensure they attend for their second vaccination as per the appointment invitation.

- All individuals that have not been vaccinated should reconsider options. If an individual has a genuine cause of concern regarding vaccination, arrangements may be made to speak to a health professional to be provided with facts about the vaccination.
- All staff that have received a double dose of vaccination should ensure they attend for booster vaccinations as per the appointment invitation. Early evidence about Omicron suggests that the booster is key to preventing serious illness.
- End of term activities and festivities should be avoided or kept to minimum and only happen if they can be safely managed.
- Christmas with family and friends should be carefully managed. Please do not risk transmitting the virus to vulnerable individuals or the elderly. If you plan to visit family in care homes or hospitals, please adhere to the visiting rules applicable for that setting and consider using LFD tests before the contact takes place. Please do not attempt to visit if you or your family display symptoms or have tested positive.

I appreciate that these are very challenging times, however your support, patience and understanding is very much appreciated.

The IMT is satisfied that the School is doing all that it can to prevent the spread of infection however, as stated above improvement can only be achieved if everyone plays their part.

I therefore urge you to please take note of the above requirements.

Kind regards,

Ceri Edwards

Chair of the Caerphilly County Borough Council Covid 19 Incident Management Team