

8 March 2021

Dear Parent / Carer

“There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered” – Nelson Mandela

I am sure that we will have all faced our own adversity throughout this period of lockdown, but it is hopefully a pleasure to be thinking of a return to some sense of normality over the coming days and weeks ahead of us.

The start of this year has been a momentous challenge for the whole country - but we are looking forward to having our Wales family together physically for what will be the first time this year.

I wanted to take this opportunity to look positively ahead in the build up to our Easter holidays and to see the coming weeks as a real opportunity to make the most of the time that we will have. Perhaps in the future there will be an occasion when we can look back upon these weeks and be proud of how we all came together, to ensure that our community and our students feel safe in their return to school. We should have a real sense of pride knowing that we have all played our part in what Boris might call the first step of the ‘roadmap’.

We know that each of our students will be feeling very differently about their return to school; some more anxious and uncertain about things to come, some longing for socialisation with their friends they won't have seen in such a long time and some just excited to get back into their classrooms. All Heads of Years will be running a ‘final’ remote assembly before your child returns to school and it would be fantastic if you were able to join in and listen as they hear the plans.

Perhaps what I am most proud of is that this long period of remote learning has made abundantly clear our student's ability to adapt, their determination to succeed and their consistent hard work, and this is something they should be very proud of too. We have no doubt that once students have settled back into the rhythms and routines of school life, they will continue to demonstrate resilience and positivity going forward.

As previously indicated in our family bulletin, sent out on the 1 March, the only significant change to our protocols when we return on the 8 March, is the compulsory wearing of face masks in lessons (unless exemptions apply). All other adjustments, such as year group bubbles, wearing of masks on corridors and social areas and the one-way system, have remain unchanged, hopefully providing further reassurance and confidence for students returning.

With regards to the staggered return, all year groups have now received a letter explaining the date of return and the process by which students will be tested as they arrive at school. The letter clearly explains how the testing process will run and it is important that you read this letter carefully. The bus timetable remains unchanged. All letters are on the website should you wish to revisit them via this link <https://www.waleshigh.com/letters-home/> Once students have undertaken three lateral flow tests in school, they will transition to home testing during the Summer term. More information will follow in due course.

You will have no doubt seen the recent media coverage around the changes to this year's summer assessment for examination year groups. All those scheduled to sit examinations this year will receive an additional letter before the end of next week, specifically outlining the plans for the Summer Assessments.

In this update, I have tried to convey just how much we are looking forward to having all students back with us. I do, however, have a short video that we have produced especially for the 8 March return, which I am confident will not only provide further reassurance of the welcome your child will receive, but I predict it will bring a smile to your face; I know it certainly lifted my mood! Please use this link to access the welcome back video <https://vimeo.com/519452560/5042eae12b>

Later in one of those long hot summer evenings that we all long for, we can look back to this moment as one in which we united as a community, to get a new sense of normality through the combination of leadership, teamwork, resilience and sheer determination that is so prevalent throughout Wales and our wider community.

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch with your child's Head of Year, who will be ready to support in whatever way is needed.

I haven't been able to say this for some time...I look forward to **seeing** all our students in school next week!

Pepe Di'lasio
Headteacher