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Covid-19 Bulletin – 20th March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

It has been an emotional day! We have bid a fond farewell to our wonderful Year 11 and Year 13 students in circumstances that will live long in the memory. We have also waved off every other pupil until we know not when. It would be a close call trying to decide whose eyes were the most moist, pupils or staff (although I must also admit that a few pupils appeared deliriously happy!)

Below, I have drawn together the multitude of messages from colleagues in the UK and Welsh Governments, Local Authority and wider partners. I appreciate that there is a lot to take in, but would gently encourage you to take the time to read it all through carefully so you don't miss anything important. Early next week, I will provide a further update.

The Government has made clear that we all need to do what we can to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus. That is why they have given clear guidance on:

- **Self-isolation:** <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/>
- **Household isolation:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>
- **Social distancing:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people>

1. Does this mean I should make every effort to keep my child at home?

In a word, YES! The most recent scientific advice on how to further limit the spread of COVID-19 is clear. **IF CHILDREN CAN STAY SAFELY AT HOME, THEY SHOULD, TO LIMIT THE CHANCE OF THE VIRUS SPREADING**

That is why the government has asked parents to keep their children at home, **wherever possible**, and asked schools to remain open **only for those children who absolutely need to attend**. This means that **even where it is very inconvenient but safe for your child to remain at home, they need to stay at home**. This will help keep other children safe who absolutely need to attend school. The fewer children making the journey to school, and the fewer children in school, the lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals in wider society.

However, we are being asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children - children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the Covid-19 response **and cannot be safely cared for at home**.



2. Which 'vulnerable children' are eligible to attend school from Monday (if, and only if, they cannot be safely cared for at home)?

Welsh Government has published a very useful Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page for parents and schools which can be accessed here <https://gov.wales/school-closures-20-march-2020-faqs>. They have also defined 'vulnerable children' as those with 'safeguarding needs and supported by social care, which includes children with care and support or support plans, children on the child protection register and looked after children, young carers, disabled children and those with Statements of special educational needs'. The full statement can be read here <https://gov.wales/written-statement-eligibility-ongoing-provision-children-who-are-vulnerable-or-whose-parents-are-0>

3. Which 'key workers' are eligible to send their children to school for childcare from Monday (if, and only if, they cannot be safely cared for at home)?

Parents whose work is critical to the COVID-19 response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors outlined below. Many parents working in these sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. **And every child who can be safely cared for at home should be.**

Please, therefore, follow these key principles:

1. **If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.**
2. **If a child needs specialist support, is vulnerable or has a parent who is a critical worker, then educational provision will be available for them.**
3. **Parents should not rely for childcare upon those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category such as grandparents, friends, or family members with underlying conditions.**
4. **Parents should also do everything they can to ensure children are not mixing socially in a way which can continue to spread the virus. They should observe the same social distancing principles as adults.**

If your work is critical to the COVID-19 response, or you work in one of the critical sectors listed below, **and you cannot keep your child safe at home** then your child(ren) will be prioritised for childcare/education provision:

Health and social care	This includes but is not limited to doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, care workers, and other frontline health and social care staff including volunteers; the support and specialist staff required to maintain the UK's health and social care sector; those working as part of the health and social care supply chain, including producers and distributors of medicines and medical and personal protective equipment.
Education and childcare	This includes nursery and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who must remain active during the Covid-19 response to deliver this approach.
Key public services	This includes those essential to the running of the justice system, religious staff, charities and workers delivering key frontline services, those responsible for the management of the deceased, and journalists and broadcasters who are providing public service broadcasting.
Local and national government	This only includes those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the Covid-19 response or delivering essential public services such as the payment of benefits, including in government agencies and arms length bodies.

Food and other necessary goods	This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution, sale and delivery as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (for example hygienic and veterinary medicines).
Public safety and national security	This includes police and support staff, Ministry of Defence civilians, contractor and armed forces personnel (those critical to the delivery of key defence and national security outputs and essential to the response to the Covid-19 pandemic), fire and rescue service employees (including support staff), National Crime Agency staff, those maintaining border security, prison and probation staff and other national security roles, including those overseas.
Transport	This includes those who will keep the air, water, road and rail passenger and freight transport modes operating during the Covid-19 response, including those working on transport systems through which supply chains pass.
Utilities, communication and financial services	This includes staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure), the oil, gas, electricity and water sectors (including sewerage), information technology and data infrastructure sector and primary industry supplies to continue during the Covid-19 response, as well as key staff working in the civil nuclear, chemicals, telecommunications (including but not limited to network operations, field engineering, call centre staff, IT and data infrastructure, 999 and 111 critical services), postal services and delivery, payments providers and waste disposal sectors.

If you think you fall within the critical categories above, you should confirm with your employer that, based on their business continuity arrangements, your specific role is necessary for the continuation of this essential public service.

Even if your role falls within the critical categories and your role is essential, many parents working in these sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. **If your child can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.**

4. I am EITHER a parent of a child on the ‘vulnerable children’ list, OR a key worker as defined by the table above, and cannot arrange for my child to be safely cared for at home. How can I secure childcare provision for my child from Monday?

Don't worry, we're here to help! Please contact the school office and let us know the name of your child. On Monday and Tuesday next week, transport arrangements will continue to run as normal for your child and they can attend school to receive childcare at the usual times.

By the end of Tuesday, I will send details about the new arrangements that will begin on Wednesday. We will do all we can to keep you on the frontline of our national effort to overcome the challenges caused by COVID-19.

5. My child is eligible for free school meals. Are they able to continue receiving a meal when schools close?

We appreciate how important free school meals are for the children and young people who receive them. Please let us know if your child needs meals from Monday and we'll get that sorted. This may involve a sit-down meal at school, a 'grab and go' takeaway or distribution of food parcels if you're unable to get your child to school. **Be sure to let us know if your child has a special diet or allergies.**

6. What work is available for my child to complete at home?

For nearly all pupils, Monday will mark the start of their Easter holidays. They **do not need to complete school work over the Easter holidays** (but are welcome to do so voluntarily!) To be clear, schools will be closed to the majority of pupils for at least four weeks from now. It is **not** Welsh Government's expectation that schools will be opening and functioning as normal at the end of the Easter holidays (20 April). This will be kept under constant review based on the latest public health advice.

I understand that you may have deep concerns about how your child's learning will take place at the end of the holidays. Please rest assured that their subject teachers are busily compiling online learning activities your child can access when the holidays come to an end. A further bulletin will explain how your child can access this work, how they should prioritise completion of the tasks and how they can receive feedback on work completed. I am sure they'll all be jolly relieved to hear that there will be plenty to do for as long as needed!?!

7. Is there an update on how my child's exam grades are going to be decided now that all exams are cancelled?

Earlier today, Qualifications Wales and Welsh Government published this letter. They have made clear that this information is no more than an early indication of their intended approach. More detail will follow in due course: <https://www.qualificationswales.org/english/publications/issuing-grades-for-qualifications-summer-2020/>

Schools in England received the following announcement which *may* help shed further light on the possible way forward: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-details-on-exams-and-grades-announced?utm_source=96f31727-1fb9-408b-a7fa-d91d4ceae6b&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate

As further details emerge about how your child's results will be decided, I will let you know.

...and finally for now...

Just two important points to close. First, please remember, **the most important issue is for us all to do our very best to limit the spread of the virus. Therefore, once more, even if you are eligible for childcare next week, we urge you not to send your child to school unless it is absolutely essential and there is really no other option.**

Second, I appreciate that some of you may not have the support network enjoyed by others. So if there is **anything** I can do to help, even if you just need a quick chinwag with someone over the age of 12, please do not hesitate to contact me by email (office@llanidloes-hs.powys.sch.uk) or phone 01686 412289. It looks like we're in for a marathon rather than a sprint and, to quote Zak Efron, 'we're all in it together!'



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