15th June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

As you know, the Welsh Government published their guidelines on the 10th of June in relation to re-opening of schools on the 29th June. We have been working tirelessly as a school carefully planning for the safe and phased re-introduction of learners into school on this date. As a school community, we have sincerely missed seeing our learners and we are very much looking forward to seeing them face to face once again. However, school life, from the 29th June will not look like school, as we know it. It sadly seems that this will be the case for a very long time, but I would like to assure you that we will do our utmost as a school to ensure the best care and provision possible on all levels in these very difficult and unprecedented circumstances. I hope this letter will be helpful to you as parents in making an informed decision about whether your child/children will be returning to school or not at this time.

Parental choice

I would like to underline that it is a parental choice with regards to your child returning to school from the 29th June until the 24th July. As supportive parents, we understand that you will be eager for your child to re-engage with teachers and to build on their previous learning experiences; however, we also understand that this is a difficult choice due to the present circumstances. As a school, we will support your personal choice and would like to assure you, that no Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) will be served if your child does not attend school. Our main aim as a school is to ensure that we work with you as parents in making the right decision that will support learners’ physical, mental and emotional and social well-being.

Teaching/Learning

The Education Minister, Kirsty Williams states that the following four weeks from June 29th will be an opportunity to ‘check in, catch up and prepare for summer and September 2020’. Due to social distancing guidelines, learners will not be following their normal timetable and will not be taught in their normal teaching groups in most cases. Class sizes will be very small, of around 8 learners in most classes. Learners will stay in the same groups for most of the time during their allocated ‘check in’ days and staff rotation will be limited, in order to avoid the risk of transmission. The aim of this next phase will not be to catch up on all work that has been missed, but an opportunity to check-in, catch-up and prepare for September.

We will take a blended approach to learning, combining face to face interaction with our distance learning provision. Distance learning will continue until the end of the summer term and we will further develop our current provision, which can be accessed via our school website. Staff will continue to engage with learners in this way. We kindly ask you, as parents, to ensure that your child is taking full possible advantage of the provision in all subjects, following the published fortnightly timetable.
Social Distancing

Our main priority at Aberdare Community School is to ensure that staff and learners are safe and well. In order to do this, strict social distancing rules will be embedded under the Coronavirus Regulations. All learners and staff will need to adhere to these rules on all occasions so that we mitigate risk. We cannot eliminate the risk of contracting Covid-19, we can only minimise the risk by undertaking a range of safety measures, which are outlined below:

- The school will undertake an appropriate Covid-19 Risk Assessment.
- The 2m rule will be enforced at all times and this will mean remodelling activities in order to avoid physical contact. Classrooms as a result will look very different. **There will be no communal areas for any year groups.** There will be no opportunity to socialise as normal.
- One-way systems will be in place and a staggered entry and exit will occur.
- Learners will mainly remain in the same classroom, thus avoiding moving from room to room, as they normally would. Staff movement from room to room will be kept to a minimum.
- Learners will enter the premises at an identified location. They will be met by a member of staff and instructed to use the hand washing facilities or the hand sanitisers before being directed to their classrooms by a member of staff.
- All learners will have their temperature taken at the start of the school day by staff wearing PPE.
- Learners will also leave school site via designated exits in an orderly manner.
- If your child is walking to and from school, then he/she needs to be fully aware that the 2m social distancing rule must be followed at all times and that he/she will not be able to walk in groups. Children from the same household may walk together.
- During the school day learners will remain in their allocated seats and will not be allowed to walk around the classroom freely.
- Sessions will be led by teachers from the front of the classroom ensuring that the 2m rule is adhered to.
- If a pupil requests to go to the toilet during lesson time, the teacher will communicate with the staff member on duty in order to be able to ensure that the pupil adheres to the 2m rule.
- There will be short, supervised, timetabled breaks for learners within their class group and a teacher will be present at all times. Learners will eat their lunch in their classrooms.
- Learners, as usual, must bring their own basic equipment to school in order that they are ready to learn. They are not allowed to share this equipment with other learners.
- No behaviour that undermines the safe running of the school will be tolerated. Learners who do not follow the safety procedures will not be permitted on site to safeguard staff and students alike.

Groupings for returning to school

As previously stated there will be a phased approach to integrating learners back to school.

Year groups will be split into smaller teaching groups. **We will inform you of all start and end times for the school day and drop off/pick up points in due course after we have established firm arrangements with the Integrated Transport Unit.**

As schools need to ensure that we do not exceed a maximum of a third of learners present at any one time, and that all learners have access to at least three days in school before the start of the summer holidays, we propose the following arrangements for different year groups.

**ACS Weekly Pattern from the 29th June onwards**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Year Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Year 12 – (Option A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Year 10 &amp; Year 12 (Option B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Year 9 &amp; Year 12 (Option C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Year 8 &amp; Year 12 (Option D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Year 7 &amp; Year 12 (Option E)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School Uniform

Learners are not required to wear full school uniform when attending school from the period 29.6.2020 – 24.7.2020. However, learners must wear school trousers/skirt and the school shirt/blouse and school shoes. If your child is not in possession of their school shirt/blouse, they can wear their ACS PE top. We fully realise that your child might have outgrown his/her school uniform and in order to avoid unnecessary costs for the remainder of the school year, we have relaxed school rules in order to assist. However, we strongly believe that a smart school dress code is an essential part of preparing a child to learn and we kindly ask you to work with us in ensuring that your child does not take advantage of this relaxed school uniform policy. Please contact your child’s Progress Leader in advance of them returning to school if you feel that you need to discuss this further.

In order to maintain high hygiene standards, when possible, we kindly request that you wash your child’s clothing after every school day. The same request will apply to staff. The amendment to our school uniform considers suitable clothes that are easily washable.

School meals

School meals will not be served during the school day at all. All café and restaurant areas in the school will be closed to learners and staff. Learners will need to bring a packed lunch to school along with bottled water/drinks. Learners will not be allowed to leave school site to purchase food. If a child forgets his/her packed lunch, we will be contacting you to make arrangements to bring this to school. Staff are not allowed to prepare food on school premises and children will not be allowed to share food.

A ‘Grab and Go’ packed lunch will be provided on a daily basis for learners eligible for Free School Meals.

Hygiene

- In working towards mitigating risk of transmission, responsibility for hygiene is paramount and we kindly ask you to reinforce this with your child. Regular handwashing is essential and learners will have to undertake handwashing during the school day. We have ensured that we have plentiful supplies of soap and hand sanitisers.
- Our school cleaning team are fully aware of the guidelines regarding hygiene and cleaning and school buildings will be thoroughly cleaned every morning and evening in line with local authority guidance.
- All classrooms will be equipped with hand sanitisers, antibacterial wipes and sprays. Teachers will be fully informed of guidelines on how to promote high hygiene standards with learners during the day.
- Learners and staff should cough into a tissue, if available, or into their elbow. We will be encouraging children not to touch their face.
- Rooms will be cleaned if different groups use a room.
- Tissues will be placed in separate waste bins and these will be emptied regularly and safely during the day.

Transport

We have been informed by the Integrated Transport Unit that the capacity on school buses has been reduced by 80% due to having to operate very strict social distancing requirements. Pupil capacity is obviously very restricted. Therefore, we have kindly asked you to make alternate provision to transport your child and to access transport only if you have no other alternative. In the event that you are unable to do this, then the Integrated Transport Unit will make the decision as to whether your child will be allocated a seat on the school bus. Bus times will remain the same on each route and we request that you note on the online questionnaire whether you will require a seat on a school bus.

The Transport Department have advised us that they will be contacting parents individually with regards to this decision. As this is not a school decision, we kindly ask you to refer any questions regarding transport to the relevant department at RCTCBC.

In order to ensure the health and safety of all that travel on the bus, children will be allocated specific seats and we kindly ask you to reinforce the importance to adhering to these seats with your child. Strict social distancing rules will
be enforced on all buses and in the event of breaking these safety rules, your child will not be allowed to attend school or travel on the bus for the remainder of the school term and possibly in future. We have full support of the Governing Body to reserve the right to refuse attendance and entry to school should any pupil be foolish enough to disregard or challenge vital social distancing rules whilst travelling on the bus.

Childcare provision and vulnerable learners

Aberdare Community School will run their own Hub provision for the children of Key Workers and Vulnerable learners between 8.00 a.m -5.00 p.m from Monday to Friday from the 29th of June. There will no longer be weekend provision. On the 19.6.2020, on-line applications will commence for emergency childcare for a two-week period for the week commencing 29.6.2020 and 6.7.2020. Applications should be made via the Council website.

Administrative staff

- In order to maintain strict social distancing rules a physical reception will not exist, but there will be sufficient administrative staff to receive phone calls and enquiries during the school day.
- No visitors will be allowed on the school site.
- All communication will have to be electronic.

Face Coverings

In conjunction with Government Guidelines, we will not be enforcing learners or staff to wear face coverings/face masks. However, if a pupil or member of staff wishes to do so, this will be allowed.

I appreciate that there are many key factors to consider before you make your informed decision regarding sending your child back to school. As a school, we believe in being transparent and comprehensive in the information we share with you as parents. I hope you appreciate that this is an ever-changing situation, and we may have to amend the information shared in this letter as Welsh Government and local authority guidelines are updated and shared with us.

This initial overview will be developed as we progress through the next few weeks and we will aim to keep you all updated with bulletins such as this.

For now, I would be grateful if you could begin to prepare your child for the ‘new’ school environment and thank you for continuing to work with us on our distance learning work.

It is extremely important that we all play our own small part in keeping our communities safe. If you have any concerns please note them at the end of the questionnaire as we will produce a FAQ document in response to your feedback which will assist all parents, carers and learners in their decisions moving forward.

Thank you for your continued support during this challenging time.

Please complete the survey below by midday Tuesday 16th June.

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=bPOPNJ1VLUlH7pyAjenG5FHdtg8P3lMu6m840HznSZUMkZCRTdLSjZaWjNFQTZaRVJaTjiO4lc3RC4u

Yours sincerely

Mrs C Morgans
Headteacher