

# Queen Elizabeth High School



Dear Parent/Carer,

All of us at QEH would like to thank you parents and carers for your unstinting support during this challenging term. We thank you for your patience and your help as we have endeavoured to provide meaningful learning opportunities even in the most challenging of circumstances.

We ourselves, are very proud of the way in which we returned to so much normality this term and provided support to our community and learners. We have worked hard to provide all our learners with the opportunities they needed this term to catch up with learning. Opportunities for our examination groups to progress with their exam courses, including the running of mock examinations and controlled assessments in Year 10 and 11. Pupils and parents /carers were able to review their progress through reports and the parents'/carers evenings that were conducted.

We also ensured that pupils received the wellbeing support they needed. There have been opportunities to meet their peers in structured form times, a return to school based outdoor and online assemblies and a return to sporting events and after school clubs. Equally important have been the chances this term for pupils and students to meet in unstructured, but equally valuable break and lunch times, chatting with friends and to have fun.



A huge thank you must go to our teaching staff who have risen to the challenge and supported learners and colleagues at times when COVID has affected staffing numbers and made supply difficult to come by. Our support staff too have been fantastic and provided important wellbeing support, organised cover and kept our school running at operational level right up to the end of this term. Your messages of support as parents and carers have been much appreciated and I am sure you will join me in thanking them for their efforts and wishing all our

school community a restful and healthy Christmas break.

## Celebrations and Success at QEHS

On Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> November I was lucky to attend the prestigious, UK wide Pearson's teaching awards, to accept a silver award on behalf of the school. The 'Lockdown Hero' silver award was awarded to Canolfan Elfed for their work in engaging our students during lockdown. Thanks



must go to Mrs Lisa Thomas and her team for their hard work in supporting our vulnerable learners. This reward reflected the really hard work put in by our whole community during that difficult lock down period.

There has been much to celebrate in terms of pupil success this term. We have British junior champions in Judo and in kick boxing, U13 girl's football winning their regional final, a Peace Conference and much more. All these awards and other pupil success stories can be seen on our website and by following this link:

<http://www.qehs.carms.sch.uk/about/pupil-achievement-stories/>

## **End of Term & Online Learning**

Wednesday evening saw us having to make the very difficult decision to return to online learning for the last three days of term. COVID impacted on key staff who are essential to the safe running of our school and the decision had to be made, in the interests of everyone's safety, to close the building.

This was not done lightly but with the full support of the county, Director of Education and Chair of Governors. What I can say with absolute certainty is that it was the right thing to do.

It is also fair to say that as a community we were disappointed. We had some fantastic plans for the end of term based around activities and wellbeing which we weren't able to complete. I would also like to take this opportunity to apologise to some pupils who didn't get access to their full diet of online learning. Due to the pace of events not all staff were able to access their laptops and resources for the immediate move to online learning.

## **Start of Term Arrangements January 2022**

You will by now be aware following Welsh Government announcements and Director's letter on Friday that we will have a staggered start to next term. Tuesday January 4<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday January 5<sup>th</sup> have been designated as planning days to ensure the school is prepared operationally for the new term. A Hub will be operating for pupils in year 7 pupils whose parents are critical workers (see below).

- **Tuesday, January 4th – Planning and Preparation Day**
- **Wednesday, January 5th – Planning & preparation Day (Hub operating for critical workers)**
- **Thursday, January 6th – Years 10,11, 12 & 13 on site – Years 7,8 and 9 online learning (Hub operating for critical workers)**
- **Friday, January 7th - Years 10,11, 12 & 13 on site – Years 7,8 and 9 online learning (Hub operating for critical workers)**
- **Monday, January 10th – All pupils on site**

We will once again return to wearing of face coverings in all indoor areas and placing year groups in bubbles.

Our intention is to remain open to learners but to be prepared to return to effective online learning should the need arise. We also have made mitigations around exam arrangements for external and Year 12 and 13 Mock exams. We are determined at this stage to maintain this provision.

As always and regardless of the plans made our priority will be in keeping our learners and staff safe. We will keep you informed.

### **Lateral Flow Testing Increases to Three Times per week**

You will see as part of the Director's letter that schools in Wales are asked to increase routine lateral flow testing to three times per week for those who take part. LFT testing is highly recommended to help reduce potential spread of all variants of the virus. We are also asked to take three tests in the second week of Christmas holidays, before we return to school. From January onwards, testing will take place on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings commencing from Thursday 30th January.



During the holidays LFT kits can be sourced through local pharmacies or online via the NHS. Kits will also be available from reception in school when school re-opens in January.

### **It is also vitally important that results are recorded with the NHS.**

As you are aware, the situation continues to change rapidly and Welsh Government and the Local Authority will continue to monitor the data carefully. There may be further updates that will have an impact on our return to school in January and we will keep you informed as soon as more information becomes available. Please check the school website over the holiday period and before the 5th January where the latest information will be published. In the meantime, further information may become available on the following websites:

#### **Carmarthenshire County Newsroom:**

<http://newsroom.carmarthenshire.gov.uk/>

#### **Welsh Government Coronavirus Updates:**

<https://gov.wales/coronavirus>

#### **WJEC:**

<https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/2022-everything-you-need-to-know/>

Finally, we would like to wish you and your families a happy and restful break over Christmas and look forward to working together again in the New Year. We hope you all have a very Merry Christmas. Below is a poem written by the pupils in 11C that is a fitting send off for this term and reflects all our sentiments at this time of year. Can I say a really big thank you to Mr Ben Davies and the form of 11C for this lovely Christmas message:

A QEH Christmas Poem

It was only a blink of an eye ago,  
That Christmas was almost cancelled.  
Our first thoughts were not of presents,  
or Santa, or cards on the mantle.

We wanted to visit our families,  
We feared being unhappy and alone,  
We FaceTimed, and zoomed, and skyped,  
But a hug can't be given on the phone.

Some houses were empty and silent,  
Some families could not travel home,  
A Christmas without our loved ones,  
Seemed tragic and scary and cold.

But this year we have no such worries  
We will make the most of this gift  
We will treasure each moment with loved ones  
And mend last year's tragic rift.

We will cherish the laughter at Christmas  
We will savour the memories we make  
this year we will remember the last one,  
And will no longer feel that heartache.

And whilst we engage in frivolity  
And indulge at the family table  
We will never take Christmas for granted  
And will be forever humble.

We will raise a glass to the NHS  
For the nurses and doctors and staff  
We will salute the police and key workers  
Who fought on our behalf.

We will begrudgingly thank Mr Williams  
For keeping us safe in our school  
We may not always show it  
But we will show our thanks this Yule

And to all of the teachers at QE High

We show our thanks for you this year  
We know it has not been easy  
But we wish you all Christmas Cheer

We can see our families this Christmas,  
But we know that it's not over at all  
Please stay safe this Holiday  
We wish a Merry Christmas to you all.

Thank you for your continued support, of our school and our community.

Nadolig Llawen,

Dave Williams  
Headteacher