

Queen Elizabeth High School



Good afternoon parents/carers,

I hope this update finds both you and your family well. This week commences with us again awaiting an important announcement from Welsh Government as regards schools reopening. The review of the current lockdown procedures will take place on Friday 29th January and as soon as we are able to, we will share that important information with you.

This week we dipped our toes into a new system for an online parents' evening with our Year 9 parents. The response from parents and staff has been overwhelmingly positive and we will now seek to roll this out across the school. Thank you to all parents who signed up and for staff, who, as usual adopted a positive and 'can do' approach to the trial. It was great to catch up with parents in person.

We are constantly reviewing our procedures and trying our very best to ensure we are providing continuity in learning while being mindful on the wellbeing needs of our pupils and students. During the course of last week we ran a series of surveys and pupil forums with pupils and students across year groups to establish an insight into their experiences of online learning to date. In addition, we have had correspondence with several parents who have shared their views with us as regards current online learning arrangements.

Within this update you will find our new arrangements for online learning. We have arrived at what we feel is a sensible and well-balanced strategy to remote learning. Following pupil and parental feedback we have arrived at a strategy for learning that supports pupils while providing flexibility in approach. The key to the new approach is providing staff support for learners while also providing a structure that ensures that pupils are not overwhelmed. In addition we have ensured that all relevant safeguarding, risk assessment and user policies are in place to protect learners and staff alike.

Our approach will be a blended model that incorporates a mix of live streaming, pre-recorded and online task based lessons. Our feedback from learners has reinforced the requirement for regular teacher contact and support, for setting deadlines for tasks that are manageable and has a mix of approaches to learning activities that reflects the variety that pupils experience in school. While some pupils are struggling to engage, others are feeling overwhelmed; hopefully our new structure will help support all our learners.

Recently, especially through press reports, there has been an over emphasis on live streaming approached to teaching online. Live streaming experiences will be made available to all learners, however, this will be just one of a variety of approaches employed. Live streaming has benefits, especially when integrated with other learning approaches, but as a single adopted strategy has many pitfalls. Please be mindful that some of our community of learners might have very limited access to ICT and might have to share that resource with siblings; this might mean that their turn for learning does not always correspond with online timetables. In these instances, pupils and students have found pre-recorded sessions particularly helpful as pupils and students can review instructions at their own pace. Parents should also be aware that simply releasing live streamed recorded lessons is only possible if strict safeguarding and GDPR protocols are in place and that videos have been reviewed by staff. Finally, it is not healthy for pupils, or our staff, to spend 5 hours in front of a screen; building in breaks and opportunities to take some fresh air and exercise during the light hours of the day is really important for wellbeing.

We ourselves are on a journey as we upskill ourselves in the techniques and protocols that are needed to meet the new demands placed upon us. We welcome any feedback and are constantly reviewing our practices as well as seeking feedback from learners. In the interim, as always, I am sure we will meet any forthcoming changes and challenges together, as a strong school community.

Changes to qualifications confirmed by Education Minister Kirsty Williams following further disruption to learning

Last Wednesday, the Welsh Government confirmed that Centre Determined grades will be utilised to award GCSEs for Summer 2021.

The key links for any further information at this stage are:

WG statement:

<https://gov.wales/written-statement-update-general-qualifications-2021-0>

Qualifications Wales:

<https://www.qualificationswales.org/english/news/qualifications-wales-confirms-centre-determined-grades-for-summer-2021/>

WJEC:

<https://www.wjec.co.uk/articles/education-minister-kirsty-williams-confirms-approach-for-summer-2021-assessments/>

What does this mean for QEH learners?

- grades will be determined by their school or college based on an assessment of the learner's work using a range of evidence to determine the grades to be awarded to their learners, including Non-Examination Assessment elements, mock-exams, and classwork
- In addition, the WJEC will offer a set of adapted past papers which can enable schools to continue to assess learning within their teaching plans, providing extra support for teachers and learners.
- Qualifications Wales will work with WJEC, to provide an **assessment framework** to support schools and colleges in developing their **assessment plans**, which should demonstrate sufficient coverage of key concepts to allow learners to be assessed. These **assessment plans will be quality assured by WJEC**.
- Recognising the challenges posed by the ongoing disruption and remote learning, the deadlines and controls around Non-Exam Assessment are being removed and it will **not** be moderated by the WJEC. However where possible schools and colleges will be encouraged to support learners to undertake some of their Non-Examination Assessment to continue to build learning and skills. Building knowledge and skills, and covering core concepts to support progression, remains a priority and should continue to be a focus, supported by guidance and approach to distance learning as appropriate.
- Alongside the Assessment Framework, WJEC will **publish guidance** to support schools and colleges to develop internal quality assurance processes and the Design and Delivery Group will consider an **approach to promote consistency across Wales**.
- Once quality assurance has been completed at the centre, the grade will be submitted to WJEC. **There will be no intervening action on the grades**.
- Alongside the framework and guidance, there will be training for all schools so that processes are applied consistently, equitably, and fairly.
- Where learners in **Year 10** are due to complete a qualification this year then this approach will apply, but it won't apply to learners due to take **individual units** of assessment.
- There is still no clarity of information on vocational exams and the Skills Challenge Certificate of the Welsh Bac together with Electronics and Sociology qualifications which are sat through English

Awarding Bodies. We will continue to seek guidance on this and update learners and parents accordingly.

Provision of Online Learning

This strategy will be introduced from Thursday 28th January

Guidance and Expectations for Pupils

KS3 & KS4

- Pupils in KS3 and KS4 should follow their timetables. This will provide structure to their days and to their learning.
- Teachers will be available in the first 10 minutes of every lesson to support pupils and answer their questions either by live streaming or via chat facilities.
- Pupils can expect there to be a specific task set every lesson. These tasks will vary in nature. The tasks set will be appropriate to the ability of pupils. 'Marks' will not be allocated to every task. Where the task is note taking, for example, the task will be ungraded. Only work that is to be assessed will have a 'mark' allocated to it.
- Tasks should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Lessons will be no longer than 45minutes at KS3 and KS4 this allows an opportunity for staff and pupils to take breaks between lessons.
- **For each class, teachers will leave 1 in every 5 lessons as a 'reflect + review' session.** Teachers will be available to pupils but no additional work will be set. This session provides pupils the opportunity to:
 - Catch up on missed work
 - Seek help in areas they are struggling
 - Consolidate their understanding
 - Reflect on feedback and make improvements

For those pupils who are up to date and thriving in their online learning, this is an opportunity for extension tasks that pupils may find rewarding. Staff will select when these sessions will take place and will communicate this with their classes directly.

- Each task will be accompanied by a clear set of instructions and resources.
- The work set will have a clear schedule. This means that each task will have a deadline set and will normally have to be completed that day. This will avoid work building up and impacting on the following day's learning.
- Pupils should try to complete tasks within the timescales set by the teacher. We appreciate that in some households the access to ICT has to be shared or is limited. Pupils should always inform staff where there are issues completing or keeping up with work.
- Where a pupil regularly fails to complete tasks or engage in learning online the Head of Learning will be contacted. A member of staff from school will then contact home to establish the problems and offer support.
- We will continue to monitor our provision and pupil engagement closely and we will be sure to communicate any further developments as time goes on and the national picture becomes clearer.
- If there are problems regarding ICT or access, then please contact our ICT help desk using this email address lthelp@qehs.carms.sch.uk
- For any other issues or support please contact the school on: 01267245300

KS5

- Students receive a combination of live streamed, blended learning and Google Classroom tasks.
- Pupils in KS5 should follow their timetables. This will provide structure to their days and to their learning.
- Lessons/Tasks should take approximately 1hr to complete.

Pupils & Students agree to:

- be punctual for all online lessons
- access the relevant files for each lesson in advance and have the materials to hand
- make sure they have all power adaptors and laptops ready before the lesson begins and are logged into the lesson
- show respect for everyone in the online classroom
- dress appropriately for all lessons, thinking about respect for others
- ensure the location they log in from is appropriate and change their 'background' setting as agreed with the teacher (for video conferencing lessons)
- seek to contribute to the lesson in a positive manner and not be disruptive at any time
- not make or share images of the lesson, pupils or teacher.

If your child is unwell or unable to engage in their online work for any reason that we are not aware of, please contact the school in the usual way to report an absence.

Please be aware that online lessons will be recorded.

BBC Bitesize and Educational Programmes

As a third national lockdown is under way, the BBC is bringing hundreds of educational resources together to help with home-schooling.

On TV

- Secondary students will be able to watch two hours of programmes supporting the curriculum on BBC Two every weekday. These will be complemented by drama adaptations, as well as relevant BBC science, history and factual programmes.
- Bitesize Daily will also air every day on BBC Red Button, and episodes will be [available on demand on BBC iPlayer](#).
- Welsh language packages will be broadcast on S4C every day from Monday 18 January.

Broadcast schedules

[Click here for a full broadcast schedule for W/C 25 January \(Secondary\)](#)

[Click here for a full broadcast schedule for W/C 25 January \(Welsh language content\)](#)

Online

Of course, BBC Bitesize is here with lots of easy-to-follow lessons for home learning, as well as collections of resources for all ages.

KS3

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/this-terms-topics>

KS4

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/levels/z98jmp3>

Wellbeing Support

We are very much aware that these times remain difficult for us all, especially our young people, and so we will be continuing to make welfare checks with students as we did last week. We would also like to make you all aware that there are a number of updated resources on our website designed to help this situation. They can be found on our Safeguarding Page, in the section "Wellbeing Resources".

<https://www.qehs.carms.sch.uk/safeguarding/>

Pupils are also, in the absence of being on site, still able to self-refer themselves to the area 43 counselling service via the link below:

<https://www.area43.co.uk/counselling/>

Wellbeing Resources are also available via BBC bitesize online at:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/support>

Support is available to all pupils either by contacting their Head of Learning online or by contacting the school directly.

We are currently planning a form period in each year group commencing next Monday 1st February with Year 7. (Year 8 Tuesday, Year 9 Wednesday, Year 10 Thursday and Year 11 Friday). Further details of times and arrangements will follow this week. These will be voluntary drop-in sessions; there is no expectation or pressure for pupils to attend. However, should you need support, a chance to chat or just the opportunity to catch up with friends then please join us.

During the course of the day all pupils and students should attempt to take some exercise or be out in the fresh air. In KS3 and KS4 this will sometimes be incorporated as part of their Health and Wellbeing Classrooms. At KS5 students should use some of their non-contact time to incorporate some exercise.

Health and Wellbeing

As you are aware, the health and wellbeing of children is of paramount importance to us all. Daily exercise can make us feel physically and mentally well, reduce stress and increase self-esteem. The PE department has set up three Health and Wellbeing year group classrooms one for year 7, 8 and 9:

Year 7: 6lyrmp

Year 8: iukadvu

Year 9: hofg5q5

They have been posting fitness activities, challenges and links to circuit sessions such as Joe Wicks. Our Active officer Alisha puts on a live circuit session on a Friday lunchtime.

Moving forward we want to get children away from their screens and get out and be active. We will provide a menu of activities that the PE department will post into each year group classroom on a Monday mornings. When pupils have games or PE or when they feel they need a break they can try one of the activities in the menu. There will be no obligation on them to fill in activity tracking sheets or tell us what they have done as the idea is to get them away from their screens. Pupils, if they want, can tell the PE department what activity they completed, upload a photo of their session or simply tell us how far they walked, run or cycled that day/week. For our GCSE PE and BTEC Sport lessons we are providing live lessons and will meet with pupils each lesson.

We think it's really important to try and get pupils away from their screens, out and exercising and taking part in something that they can do with family members if they so wish.

We recommend that all learners take a minimum of 20 minutes of exercise a day, preferably outside in an activity of their choice e.g. walking, cycling or "Couch to 5K". The link below also offers 21 different

workouts that should appeal to everyone. Please encourage your children to try out as many as they can before they come back to school.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/55151792>

Year 9 Options

This is an important time for our Year 9 pupils in choosing their future pathways and choices of subjects at Key Stage 4. Following a successful parents' evening last week, on Friday 29th January we will be sending out our options booklet, outlining full details for every course on offer. More details will follow on this in the coming week via the Year 9 page on our website.

In the meantime, we recommend pupils and parents take time to look at the resources on the link below that provide support in selecting subjects for GCSEs:

<https://careerswales.gov.wales/courses-and-training/year-8-and-9-subject-options>

Year Group Pages on School Website

During the coming week each year group will have its own dedicated page on the school website. This page will have information specific to that year group as well as news of up and coming online events and a chance to celebrate successes and achievements. The pages will go live on Friday 29th January and can be found under the 'students' drop down menu on the front page of the website.

Vocational Qualifications Consultation for Parents

Consultation is now open to give you an opportunity to share your views with the body who will shortly make a decision regarding assessment procedures for Vocational Qualifications in 2021. Please click the link below if any parents or learners would like to feed any information into the process: The consultation will close on 29th January 2021

[Click here for consultation on assessment for vocational qualifications](#)

Year 6 Applications to QEH for September 2021

The closing date for these applications was 18th December 2020. Applications that are received after 18th December 2020 are marked as late and this could affect the chances of pupils successfully obtaining a school place. There is no automatic transfer to Secondary School.

However, it is not too late to apply. Applications online can be made by following this link:

<https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/home/council-services/education-schools/school-admissions-changing-schools/moving-up-to-secondary-school/#.YA69Cej7Q2w>

If parents have problems accessing the system online then please contact the school directly. We will be happy to assist.

Free School Meal Arrangements

If your child is entitled to Free School Meals you will receive direct payment whilst they are learning from home initially until 29th January 2021.

For further information on this as well as the latest school updates and FAQs please visit:

<https://www.Carmarthenshire.gov.wales/education>

Childcare

As communicated last week by ourselves and the Local Authority, we will also be providing provision for vulnerable and the children of critical workers on site.

If you qualify for this support, and need to, please contact us at Office@qehs.carms.sch.uk to start a conversation as to how we can help

Test Trace Protect

If your child has any of the symptoms of Covid then please book a test via the contact number below.

If your child receives a positive test result for Covid 19 then please email the school **even during the current lock down arrangements.**

Parents in Carmarthenshire are asked to inform both the school and Delta Wellbeing should your child receive a positive result for COVID-19. If your child receives a positive test result for Covid 19 then please email the school using the email address Office@qehs.carms.sch.uk and inform Delta be email on: TTP@deltawellbeing.org.uk or by telephone on 0300 333 2222

If your child is identified as a contact of someone who has tested positive for Covid-19, they will need to self-isolate at home for 10 days. This means they can't leave the house; they can't go the shops or exercise anywhere outside your home/garden, and they can't have any visitors to your home/garden. Everyone else in the household can continue as normal in line with the fire-break regulations - however if your child becomes symptomatic, the whole household would then need to self-isolate.

Find out more, visit the Carmarthenshire County Council website:

<https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/home/council-services/education-schools/re-opening-schools/?type=45926>

If in doubt about what advice to follow then please contact the school.

QEH School	01267 245300 Office@qehs.carms.sch.uk
Delta Wellbeing (if your child has COVID symptoms)	0300 333 2222
To book a test call or Use the booking portal	Call 119 Booking Portal: https://gov.wales/apply-coronavirus-test

Communications

We will continue to keep in touch with parents/carers via newsletters, information on our website <https://www.qehs.carms.sch.uk/> , via Xpressions App, Parentpay and on social media feeds i.e. Facebook. We may also need to contact parents/carers by text/email, therefore it is important that if you change your contact details that you let the school know as soon as possible.

If you need to contact us please continue to ring the School on 01267 245300 or email on office@qehs.carms.sch.uk

I would like to use this opportunity to thank you all, once again, for your ongoing support which is hugely appreciated. We know that this remains a difficult and anxious time for families. Together we will support our community through these challenges.

Kind regards,

Dave Williams

Headteacher

Queen Elizabeth High School