

Queen Elizabeth High School

Update for Parents – 10th November
2020



Good afternoon all,

It has been fantastic to welcome our learners from Years 9 to 13 back today across our whole community. Last week was quite odd for us as a school community; without its full complement of pupils and students QEHS felt very lifeless. Hopefully, we will be able to maintain all our year groups in school, though should there be further disruption I am confident in our ability to continue to support our learners.

Given Kirsty Williams' announcement to-day, it is more important than ever for parents to ensure that pupils, especially in examination classes, engage with their learning and where possible, return to school. The need for evidence to support teacher predictions/Centre Assessed Grades will be of real importance this year.

There are new regulations in place across Wales as we move out of the 'fire break'. Welsh Government now asks us to:

- Stay out of each other's homes, except in very limited circumstances.
- Limit the times you leave your home, and the distance you travel.
- When you do leave home, please try and be restrained in how many different people you see. It is better to see the same one or two people regularly than to see lots of different people occasionally. maintain social distancing, including outdoors.
- Meet people outdoors rather than indoors where possible, even in circumstances where the law allows you to meet indoors.
- Work from home if you can.
- Wash your hands regularly and follow other advice on hygiene.
- Self-isolate if you show symptoms of coronavirus.

You can find a useful FAQs for all on the guidance at:

<https://gov.wales/coronavirus-regulations-guidance>

Wales' approach for qualifications in 2021 confirmed by Education Minister Kirsty Williams

Education Minister Kirsty Williams has today (Tuesday 10 November) confirmed Wales' approach for qualifications in 2021 and her decision that there will be no end of year exams for learners taking GCSEs, AS levels or A levels

Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education has outlined the decision of Welsh Government as regards the process of assessing students and pupils this year.

The Minister outlined:

- that in place of exams, the Welsh Government intended to work with schools and colleges to take forward teacher-managed assessments
- that this should include assessments that will be externally set and marked but delivered within a classroom environment under teacher supervision
- her expectation this work will form the basis for centre-based outcomes which will be linked to an agreed national approach to provide consistency across Wales

Confirming her policy decision, Education Minister Kirsty Williams said:

“The well-being of learners and ensuring fairness across the system is central in our decision making process.

In line with the recommendations of both Qualifications Wales and the Independent Review, there will be no exams for GCSE or AS level learners next year. A-level students will also not be required to sit exams.

We remain optimistic that the public health situation will improve, but the primary reason for my decision is down to fairness; the time learners will spend in schools and colleges will vary hugely and, in this situation, it is impossible to guarantee a level playing field for exams to take place.

We have consulted with universities across the UK and they have confirmed that they are used to accepting many different types of qualifications.

They expect a transparent and robust approach which provides evidence of a learner’s knowledge and ability.

Our intended approach does just that, as it is designed to maximise the time for teaching and learning.

Cancelling exams provides time for teaching and learning to continue throughout the summer term, to build the knowledge, skills and confidence in our learners to progress in whatever they decide to do next.”

The full statement can be read here:

<https://gov.wales/wales-approach-qualifications-2021-confirmed-education-minister-kirsty-williams>

The key points are these:

- No end of year exams for GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in 2021.
- Instead of exams, WG will work with schools and colleges to take forward teacher-managed assessments.
- These should include assessments that will be externally set and marked by the exam boards, but will be sat in a classroom under teacher supervision.
- These assessments will form the basis for school/teacher based outcomes which will be linked to an agreed national approach to provide consistency across Wales.
- Removing exams frees up the entire summer term for additional teaching and learning.
- A Design and Delivery Advisory Group has been set up to decide on the types of centre-based outcomes, the appeals process and arrangements for private candidates.
- Guidance for schools and supporting resources/materials will be in place for the start of the spring term, in January.
- Welsh Government has engaged with universities across the UK; Welsh learners will not be disadvantaged.

- Advice on Vocational Qualifications will follow once discussions have been completed between exam boards and Qualifications in Wales.

The announcement today has a focus on Assessed Grades/Teacher Assessment based on classroom assessment. It is vitally important that parents who have children in exam year groups ensure that pupils engage with online learning and attend all online/school based lessons. It will be essential for pupils/students in exam years to complete the assessments set by the exam boards. For teachers to provide their input there must be evidence in place; pupils must have submitted tasks, home works and assessments. **Not engaging or attending will put pupils at risk and will be to their detriment and disadvantage.**

Updated Risk assessment from Local Authority

We recently received an updated and reviewed risk assessment from the local authority. Some key information is included below:

- Face coverings must be triple layered and when not in use must be stored in a waterproof bag.
- Staff are now required to provide seating plans for pupils in their classrooms. These must be adhered to by pupils at all times in order to assist the Track and Trace team. A copy of seating plans will be held centrally by SLT for reference purposes and to aid TTP procedures.
- D&T/PE/Music/Drama and Engineering subjects have specific guidance/risk assessments which reflect their practical nature. Staff have been made aware of the guidance and all pupils will be expected to adhere to these routines.
- There is an emphasis on rooms being well ventilated. Heating will be on in school but windows have to be open. Fans and fan heaters can be used but only in **very well ventilated rooms**.

Assessment Weeks

There will be a series of assessment weeks across KS4 and KS5 this year. This is in order to ensure that we do have the evidence to support CAGs and teacher predictions. There will be two this term, ahead of Christmas, to replace mock exams and give us a foundation for our assessment evidence.

In this context, we will be mindful of the pressures on students. It is a very uncertain time for them and definitely a time of heightened anxiety. We will strive to make allowances and help our learners cope with these new demands by trying to provide plenty of notice, creating a supportive atmosphere in the classroom and encouraging them to do their best

Feedback to Welsh Government

Can I thank Standards Leaders and teaching colleagues who have been feeding back information from their experiences of last week's fire-break.

This information is being collected on behalf of the LEA and will be used in their discussion with Welsh Government officials. Since the original request last week, county has now received two further requests for evidence to the Senedd's Children and Young People's Committee by the 12th of December- reflecting on last week's Distance Teaching and Learning and a request from the Minister in respect of the success and challenges associated with blended learning and attendance after the half term holidays.

During this term we will be running a learner and parent questionnaire to receive feedback on learner/parent experience with online learning during periods of lockdown. We will feed back the information received to the LEA.

Transition

The deadline for application to Queen Elizabeth High School is 18th December 2020. All applications need to be made online before this date. Information can be found by following this link:

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

If a parent/potential parent has any difficulty in accessing the link or completing forms online then please contact the school on 01267 245300.

In response to these unprecedented times and new challenges faced we have just launched our transition video for Year 6 on our website. It really is a fantastic video that gives pupils in primary a sense of what a special community we have here. Please take the opportunity to view the video, can I thank all those pupils in Year 7 who helped make the video such a success. A special thank you must also go to Sophie and Ben, our Head Girl and Boy and the teachers who worked on the project: Mrs. Lewis, Mrs. Ostendorf, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Williams and Gareth Evans for their work on this it looks very professional – well done! The video can be found by following this link:

<https://www.facebook.com/564163413678033/videos/388149675716369/>

We are now planning a virtual tour of the school and a 6th Form promotional video, please keep an eye on our new look website for these new videos, school news, achievements and the celebration of success.

Supporting Parents Online

We have had a fantastic response from parents to our offer of helping them to understand and use our Google Classroom learning platform. Over 230 parents have already signed up for online lessons with Miss Beth Jones and Mr. Gareth Roberts. If you are interested in joining please respond with your email address to the message you received on Sunday 8th November.

We are also currently in the process of filming some “Cooking on a Budget”, videos to support our community in these difficult times. Thank you to Mrs Simpson and Mr Griffiths in D&T for their work on this, we do believe that Mrs Simpson might become QEH’s Nigella!!

If you have any further ideas on how we can support you as parents or our learners please contact us via our email:

Office@gehs.carms.uk



Remembrance Day

At a time of unprecedented challenge for our generation, this week we will be committing our thoughts to generations in the past who had to meet the huge challenges of their era. In these difficult times it is important to cast our minds back to those who gave their lives to provide us with the freedoms we so value today.

On Wednesday, 11th November, we will be conducting a two minute silence and online service of remembrance for the fallen of the two world wars and the conflicts that have followed. There are also links to this very important time of remembrance on our website.

Looking Good! – Buildings & Facilities Improvements at QEH



Our school has undergone some significant improvements during the last year. Following meetings with school council and feedback from pupil voice new benches have been introduced to school corridors. Colour coded seating has been introduced in humanities as part of a scheme that will see us rolling out new classroom seating across the school.

The school is working in partnership with Refit Cymru, to invest in sustainable schemes that will enhance the environment while reducing the running costs of the school. As phase 1 of the scheme new lighting has been introduced in corridor areas and has certainly brightened up the school!



Behind the scenes, well actually behind ceilings and walls there has been a major electrical refit to future proof the school. This work has been carried out by the Local Authority, together with a major refit of toilets this summer, and we extend our thanks to them for their support.



There has also been significant works completed on the facilities we share with Carmarthen Leisure Centre. As you might recall we gave up use of the Leisure Centre when it became a 'Nightingale Hospital'. Our indoor facilities have been returned to us this term with new flooring throughout our PE theory area, new toilet facilities, a resurfaced sports hall and improved changing facilities.



Outside, a new all-weather pitch has been installed. We're hoping that the new athletics track will be in place by November. At this stage the sporting facilities available to pupils in QEH will be second to none and again I would like to extend our thanks to the team at the Leisure Centre and the Local Authority for their help and support.



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 is awaiting a test result for covid then please do not send them to school until you have received that test result.

In the event of a positive case of COVID-19, immediate action is taken, and we work closely with the Test, Trace, Protect team to identify individuals that might need to self-isolate and prevent any transmission within the school.

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 14 days. This means they can't leave the house; they can't go to school or 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

Online Learning

Thank you for all the positive feedback that we received last week on our delivery of online learning for Years 9-11. The week enabled us to trial and refine many systems, protocols and techniques that we can use to ensure continuity of education in the case of further lockdowns/firebreaks or in the case of year groups having to self-isolate. As you can imagine, this is a huge learning curve for our staff and your positive feedback on our efforts last week was much appreciated.

Going forward, in the case of further disruption to the opening of the school site, we will continue to develop this provision, and will deliver a mix of "live" stream provision and work set online when students are instructed to stay at home, reacting to the lessons we are learning that 5 hours in front of a screen is not beneficial to a pupils wellbeing. As a result of this a mix of "live" video streaming and work that can be accessed online will be provided, to both enable students to take breaks from screen time, as well as give flexibility for students to access their work around family and home circumstances.

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

Acting Headteacher