

Queen Elizabeth High School



Dear Parent/Carer,

We have arrived at the end of an eventful year, and an equally eventful term. Can I commence by wishing you all a very happy and relaxing Christmas. Please take the opportunity to enjoy time with your families while keeping each other safe.

This week, after a rigorous process of selection (that included a challenging interview from our own Sixth Form team!), I was successful in securing the post of Headteacher here at QEH. This is a role that I will officially take up in the new academic year. However, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the governing body and Mr Paul Jones, Executive Headteacher, at Bryngwyn and Glan y Mor Federation for their support and help in the last year. I would also like to thank our own governing body for their support and putting their faith in me to lead QEH in the future.

We are a great team in QEH. I have found here, a hardworking, caring and committed community. It has been my pleasure to work with everybody here for the last year and it is absolutely, my privilege, to continue to work with you as parents/carers and all our staff, as we move forward into a very bright future for our school, and its community. We will move forward together/ymlaen gyda'n gilydd to make QEH a centre of excellence for standards and wellbeing. Diolch i chi i gyd yn fawr iawn!

As has been the case during the last year the situation remains fluid and changes and information continue to be presented to us with very short notice. This week has proved no different. There have been two announcements this week which directly affect our school:

Education Minister Kirsty Williams provides further clarity on system to replace exams for general qualifications in 2021

The Minister has confirmed her intention is for general qualifications in Wales to be supported by a three pillar approach made up of:

- non-examination assessments
- internal assessments
- assessments that are externally set and marked

Education Minister Kirsty Williams said:

“I would like to thank Geraint Rees and the group of head teachers and college leaders for working at pace to develop these recommendations and for putting equity for learners at the centre of thinking.

What I am providing details of today is a transparent and rigorous approach to support learners as they progress to their next steps.

It ensures that universities can be confident of the abilities of students from Wales through their qualifications, and it also promotes teaching, learning and consistent assessment across Wales as we all struggle to recover in different ways from the impact coronavirus has had on education.

I was clear that any solution must be mindful of our learners' well-being. I am satisfied we have an approach that is fair for all learners whilst minimising disruption to learning and maintaining confidence and trust in the integrity of qualifications in Wales.

Alternative options would have required centres to design assessment materials, develop and test marking schemes, and then be responsible for appeals in relation to these.

This would take time away from teaching and learning and could also lead to inconsistency for learner experiences across Wales.

I am also confident these plans minimise the impact on teacher workload - teachers and lecturers are already under a great deal of pressure and we do not want to add to this.

This approach confirms that the internal assessments will not begin until after the spring half term, so schools can focus entirely on teaching until then. WJEC will provide further guidance and information in January."

The full statement can be found by following this link:

<https://gov.wales/education-minister-kirsty-williams-provides-further-clarity-system-replace-exams-general>

A very useful and easy to follow timeline for the new assessment arrangements can be found by following the link below:

<https://www.wjec.co.uk/media/dg4laq0k/timeline-for-teachers-2021.pdf>

The arrangements for opening in January 2021

Wales enters a lockdown again on 28th December 2021. There have also been changes to the arrangements for re-opening secondary schools from January 2021. The term will begin for staff only on Monday 4th January with a staff INSET day as previously planned. Further planning days have now been added and the first week of term will focus on off-site blended learning for pupils with a staggered return to school from 11th January onwards. Please see the attached letter from the Director of Education.

To summarise:

- Monday 4th January INSET day (as previously planned) – staff only
- Tuesday 5th and Wednesday 6th January Additional staff planning days – staff only
- Thursday 7th January Pupils begin off-site blended learning – all pupils
- Friday 8th January Off-site blended learning - all pupils
- Monday 11th January onwards Staggered return to school, by year group:

Date	Year Groups in school
• Monday 11 th January	• Years 7, 11 & 13
• Tuesday 12 th January	• Years 7, 11, 12 & 13
• Wednesday 13 th January	• Years 7, 10, 11, 12 & 13

• **Thursday
14th January**

• **Years 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
& 13**

Canolfan Elfed Arrangements

- **Week commencing 4th January-** Planning days on 4th and 5th January- for the remainder of the week each pupil will be offered a full day each direct teaching in school, work will be posted on GC every other day when pupils will be working from home. Staff support will be available online.
- **Week commencing 11th January-** All pupils will be offered two full days direct teaching in school apart from our 6th form class who will be offered three days that week. GC work will be posted for the days where pupils will be working from home. Staff support will be available online.
- **Week commencing 18th January-**All pupils will be in school as usual for full days.

These are national changes brought in by the Welsh government with the anticipation that all pupils will be back in school for face to face learning by Monday 18th January.

Please Note:

These arrangements may be subject to change as we receive further updates on health, from Welsh Government or changes in local circumstances.

We appreciate that there will be genuine uncertainty and anxiety around this since it depends upon infection rates following the Christmas period, the incidence of positive cases and the availability of staff to safely open schools. However, we will aim to make provision for pupils of critical workers and from 7th January. Details of how to access this provision will follow in the new year. Our school will be open to support vulnerable learners and families and to deliver on line learning from the 7th January 2021.

Christmas Celebration

Friday 11th December was National Christmas Jumper Day and was our opportunity to say goodbye to pupils. Can I thank all staff once again for their support and for making that day a special day for pupils and staff alike. Thank you to the music department, especially Mrs Kirby and Mrs Robinson for their fantastic "12 songs of Christmas" now appearing on our website.

There is a full gallery of all the fantastic efforts made to decorate the doors and of Santa and his Elves. Please follow the links provided below;

Facebook Christmas video/slideshow: <https://fb.watch/2slO7X6dhD/>

Gallery Website: <https://www.gehs.carms.sch.uk/about/gallery/>

Fond Farewells and Welcome Backs

We have several staff leaving us this Christmas. Can I take this opportunity to thank them all for the positive contributions they have made to our community and wish them all the best with all their future plans. We wish Mr. Morgan well with his new career, best wishes to Mr. Preece and his family on their new adventure and also wish Ashley Butcher all the very best as he takes up a new role in his new school. Thank you all once again for the way in which you have supported those in most need of support in our community.

I am also really pleased to be welcoming back into the fold Mrs Thomas, who we are really pleased to see back amongst our SLT team. We also extend a warm welcome back to Mrs. Harriet Thomas to our Sixth Form Team. Welcome back both!

January Pearson's External Exams

BTEC Qualifications are run by English exam boards. This means that some pupils still have external exams and that the timetabled BTEC examinations will still go ahead. Further information will be

provided closer to the date. Information for the pupils concerned has been sent out to individual parents via the “xpressions” app.

Transport will be provided on those days in which exams take place. There will also be online support with revision and exam preparation ahead of the exams. Pupils and students need to check in with their teacher via Google Classroom to find the supporting information and arrangements.

The table below outlines the examination that will take place in January.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>Exam</u>	<u>Year Group</u>
6 th Wednesday January	Introduction to Hospitality	Year 10 / 11
6 th Wednesday January	Developing a Marketing Campaign	Year 12
8 th Friday January	The role and work of the Public Services	Year 10 / 11
11 th Monday January	Working in Health and Social Care	Year 12 / 13
12 th Tuesday January	Personal and Business Finance	Year 13
12 th Tuesday January	Biology	Year 12
13 th Wednesday January	Chemistry	Year 12
13 th Wednesday January	Creating Systems to Manage Information	Year 12
14 th Thursday January	Physics	Year 12
14 th Thursday January	Creating Systems to Manage Information	Year 12
15 th Friday January	Finance for Business	Year 10 / 11
18 th Monday January	ICT	Year 12 / 13

Transition

The deadline for application to Queen Elizabeth High School is, today **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.

Our transition video for Year 6 is available on our website. It really is a fantastic video that gives pupils in primary a sense of what a special community we have here.

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

Free School Meals

We can confirm that direct payments will be made to families who usually receive free school meals for the week beginning 14th December and throughout the Christmas break. The Local Authority processes these payments in batches and has alerted us that there may be delays in their receipt. The Local Authority respectfully ask you to be patient and assure you that they are working as quickly as possible to complete all payments due. If you have any issues regarding this or would like to apply for free school meals, please contact; freeschoolmeals@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

or telephone 01267 246526

Stationery

In the new year, we will continue with the current situation where students bring their own stationery and equipment to school in order to avoid sharing items. Please can you all ensure that from January onwards all pupils continue to bring their own pencil case equipped with everything they need for the school day.

Test Trace Protect Reporting a positive test over the Christmas period – CHANGE

The situation in Carmarthenshire has changed over the Christmas period i.e. 18th December until 5th January 2021.

If any pupils receive a positive test result during the holiday period, parents are asked to inform the local authority by telephoning Delta Wellbeing on 0300 333 2222 or by email on TTP@deltawellbeing.org.

TTP will contact you in the usual way to offer advice, answer any questions, and consider any potential contacts.

They will then inform the school on your behalf.

Can I once again extend a very big thank you to each and every parent/carer for your support during this challenging time. Please enjoy the Christmas holidays and take care of one another. As a staff we would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a wonderful and healthy Christmas. Nadolig Llawen i ch gyd!

Kind regards,

Dave Williams

Headteacher

Queen Elizabeth High School