



# Back to school

Our plans for the September return





## MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD



Dear Parents

I find it hard to believe that I am writing this at the end of an academic year. There is one thing for sure, we will not forget this year in a hurry! I know that everyone, staff, parents and pupils will agree that this has definitely been the most challenging year we have ever experienced.

We have however, learnt a great deal as a result of this year. There is absolutely no doubt that all pupils have made tremendous progress with their digital literacy, as have the staff and I am sure many parents!

I was so grateful for your support and very pleased that the efforts made to re-open the school safely are recognised. In the recent survey 100% of you agreed that your child benefited from going back to school, 98% agreed that that the return to school process was well managed by the school, and 98% thought that every possible risk mitigation that the school could have taken was taken. Some of your lovely comments are included at the back of this document. Thank you also for the ideas and requests some of you made as we turn our attention to September.

We do not know for certain what September will bring but we have made plans based on a number of scenarios and have closely followed the evolving government advice. By imagining and then planning for the different possible scenarios we will be faced with in September, I believe we are set up to step into the new academic year with confidence and vigour.

One overall reflection I have is that I want our school to preserve the best that came from this period. How staff adapted their educational methods, how we embraced a new way of doing things, how the students coped with uncertainty and change, and how we built a new and deeper relationship with you, our parent body.

With that context in mind I am excited to share with you in this booklet, some exciting new initiatives, as part of the Cognita family of schools, These initiatives will capitalise on what we have learnt over the last few months, take our educational and wellbeing provision for your child to the next level, and prepare us should a second wave require a localised lockdown.

Thank you once again for your support of the school this Summer Term, and for your encouragement and feedback. I wish you all a happy and safe summer and look forward to an exciting new academic year.

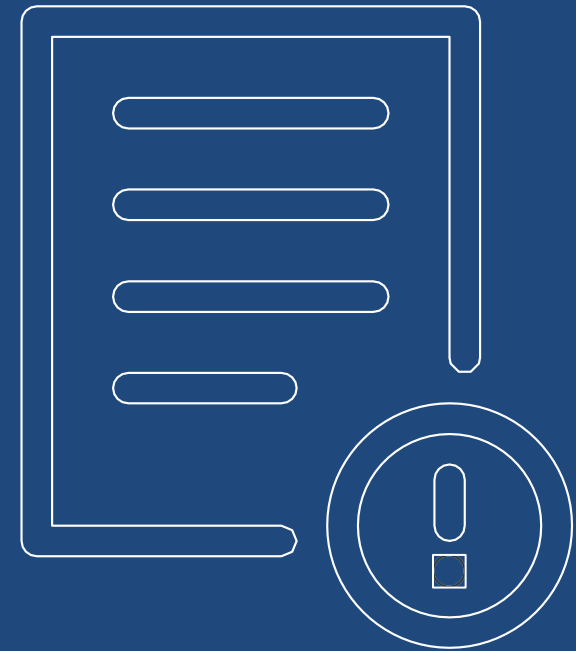
As ever, please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Kind regards

Helen Hier  
Headteacher

# HIGHLIGHTS FOR NEXT YEAR

1. Back to normal - this means open and running a normal day for all year groups, within the government guidelines.
2. Wellbeing - a focus on both students and staff to help them emotionally process the lockdown experience.
3. Safety – risk mitigation to include enhanced cleaning and hygiene measures with new procedures for confirmed cases and outbreaks.
4. Growth mindset - taking the lockdown experience and continuing to innovate and grow from what we have learnt.

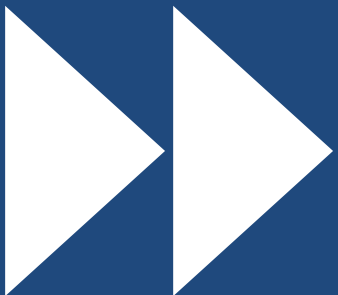


# HOW WILL IT WORK?

**We have done a large amount of scenario planning and we are confident we can get back to normal.**

The Minister for Education announced on 9 July that all learners would return to school in the autumn term.

The Welsh Technical Advisory Group (TAG), which provides scientific and technical advice to Government during emergencies, recommends that schools "plan to open in September with 100% of pupils physically present on school sites, subject to a continuing, steady decline in the presence of COVID-19 in the community."



# GUIDANCE SUMMARY

*Based on the government guidance released on 13 July this is what we are basing our planning on:*

- 'Consistent Groups' is the term used. Group size has now increased. This means our classes can return as full year groups, and we may even have the flexibility to create larger bubbles for a whole key stage for example.
- Senior School (with specialist teachers) - the bubbles will be increased to incorporate 'whole year' bubbles. This will enable us to deliver lessons as per normal with full classes. Specialist teachers will be able to move between classes provided they maintain social distancing.
- The school will limit the sharing of classes and social spaces and gatherings between groups wherever possible
- Continuation of regular hand washing and hand sanitising. There will continue to be hand sanitising stations throughout the school.
- Continued focus on hygiene and cleaning.
- Some other features from this term may need to remain such as staggered timings and one-way systems. More detail will follow before the start of next term.
- School services such as catering and transport can return to relative normality with some adaptations to mitigate viral spread.

# NEW INITIATIVES FOR NEXT YEAR

*During the lockdown period we also took action to develop a number of other initiatives which have enabled us to lead the way in online learning and teaching and we intend to build on this next year.*



- **Masterclasses** - our teachers have benefited from working with global experts on how to build curricula that offer a **blended educational experience** and how we can approach **assessment** of student's progress in new ways
- **Partnerships** - with innovative learning platforms that use artificial intelligence to create adaptive and personalised learning paths for students – more 'books' on our shared 'virtual bookshelf'
- **Wellbeing monitoring** – we will continue with **AS (Affective Social) Tracking**, an adolescent mental health tracking tool that enables schools to identify pupils' hidden risks early. This equips teachers with targeted action plans to reduce pupil mental health and wellbeing risks and is part of our global commitment to putting mental health and wellbeing at the centre of a well-balanced education.
- **Inspiring Futures programme** - developed for our Year 11 and 13 cohorts to help them get prepared for the future. The programme focused on non-academic character development such as leadership, communication, teamwork, creativity and emotional intelligence. We will continue to develop this working with some expert partners to stretch and challenge all those involved in the programme.
- **Collecting the best content from our global family** - as a Group we are developing an online platform which will host bespoke content curated from our expert educationalists from across our 80 schools. It is early days for this exciting project so more to follow soon.

# FAQS



## **WILL THERE STILL BE A FEE FREEZE FOR NEXT YEAR?**

Yes. Given the exceptional circumstances, the economic situation and the value we place on our relationship with our parent cohort the usual annual percentage increase for this coming year will not be applied.

## **ARE SPORTS, CLUBS & TRIPS RETURNING?**

Yes, where possible. We are keen to return to 'business as usual' as much as possible, and this component of education is important.

Certain non-contact sports are approved, and clubs can generally re-start, although there are some restrictions in the latest guidance that we will work through over the summer. We are also planning to have the wrap around care offer of before and after school clubs.

Domestic trips are permitted, but not residential. Overseas trips are not yet permitted. We keep a sharp eye on government advice on these topics as guidance changes frequently.

## **WILL SCHOOL TRANSPORT RESUME?**

Yes. We are following government advice closely on this and working with our transport suppliers. Risk mitigations we are investigating are the suitability of face coverings (like on public transport), cleaning regimes, and route reviews.

## **WILL CATERING RETURN TO NORMAL?**

Yes. We may need to operate staggered mealtimes, and apply some other operational safeguards, but we intend to return to catering as it was before as far as we can, within the guidelines.

## **WHAT ABOUT LOCAL LOCKDOWNS?**

We are planning in detail what happens if the school needs to temporarily close in the case of an outbreak or localised lockdown. If the call comes, we can respond quickly, following a pre-agreed plan.

## **WHAT ABOUT INFECTION CONTROL?**

We will continue our robust cleaning regime next year and work closely with our cleaning staff to ensure every possible risk mitigation is taken. We are also reviewing our infection control procedures over the summer to allow us to track confirmed or suspected cases and communicate with parents in the smoothest way possible.

## **CAN MY CHILD USE THEIR OWN DEVICE?**

We have consciously and purposefully decided against a so-called 'bring your own device' policy (Year 12 and 13 having always been the exception). Research indicates that it can have a negative impact because the broad range of devices means teachers spend too much time supporting students to fix issues; a role teachers should not be doing. It also presents a security risk to the school network, will not necessarily be suitable for academic work, and will not always have replacement insurance.

In-school technology will continue to be available and any shared mobile devices will be thoroughly sanitised between lessons. Devices cannot be shared by students within classes.

# QUESTIONS FROM RETURN TO SCHOOL SURVEY



## **HOW ARE YOU ENSURING PUPILS MOVE AROUND THE BUILDINGS SAFELY?**

We pride ourselves on the respectful behaviour of our students around the site. Students are always expected to enter and leave classrooms one at a time, in a safe and orderly manner. This expectation is now more important than ever and will be monitored closely by all staff.

## **WILL PUPILS' TEMPERATURES BE TAKEN ON ARRIVAL?**

The Welsh Government Guidelines currently stipulate that parents / guardians take pupils' temperatures, prior to their arrival at school. We have also asked staff to take their temperatures in the same way. Our expectation is that you inform us immediately if your child has a fever (or any other symptoms of COVID19) and they remain at home, following the Welsh Government's self-isolating guidelines. If anyone within your household is symptomatic, your son/daughter must remain at home and continue to follow the same self-isolation guidelines, informing the school in the same way.

## **WILL CHILDREN THAT USUALLY TAKE PACKED LUNCHES STILL EAT IN THE DINING HALL?**

At the current time, the dining hall will still be open to students that usually take packed lunches. If we have fine weather in the autumn term, we will encourage as many students as possible to use the picnic tables outside the dining hall, either to eat their packed lunch or school meal. However, as stated in the FAQs on the previous page, we will need to review the timings of mealtimes.

# RETURN TO SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS

**100%** of parents agreed that their child benefitted returning to school

**96%** of parents agreed that their family benefitted from the return to school

**98%** of parents agreed that the return to school process was well managed by the school

**98%** of parents agreed every possible risk mitigation that could have been taken was taken by the school

Thank you for your lovely comments and support:

*"Many thanks for the excellent teaching during lockdown and for making coming back to school such a positive experience."*

*"The school has dealt with this unprecedented circumstance exceptionally well, I look forward to them returning to full time school in September."*

*"The re-opening of school process was fantastic, with clear communication from start to finish."*

*"Exceptional measures taken and the children were welcomed back by staff with huge smiles and introduced to new measures with ease. Well done St. Clare's for making my child feel so welcome and so comfortable."*

*"I felt the whole transition was extremely well managed and had complete confidence in my daughter's safety and well being thanks to the dedication, clear team work and lovely warm welcome from every member of staff. Thank you team St Clares!"*

*"Excellent planning, preparation and communication on the part of the school this term so I have no concerns about September."*