

Good afternoon,

I hope you are keeping well as we approach the end of another half term under Covid restrictions. The children have adapted incredibly well to the return to school which is a credit to both our internal organisation within the school and also the work you as parents did during both lockdowns.

As the country slowly returns to some sort of normality with many of the restrictions imposed on us all starting to be eased, please be mindful that Covid is still here and schools are still required to follow strict national guidelines.

Ysgol Derwen is operating in line with Welsh Government Guidance, Flintshire CC Guidance and Compliance Health & Safety advice in trying to ensure the safety of pupils, staff and the wider school community. To date this has been done very successfully with no cases of Covid linked to the school (or Key Worker provision provided by the school throughout both lockdowns) and no additional disruption to the children's education through bubble/school closures. Only a couple of schools in Flintshire are yet to have their first group of children isolating with many having to close bubbles regularly. We are still being cautious in line with the guidance as schools are still experiencing class/bubble closures due to Covid.

By following national guidance, it unfortunately still means having to have separate areas for all pupils to eat their dinner, and staggered play and lunch times using different areas of the outside environment for each class/bubble. Lunch provision is provided by an outside agency (Newydd) who must provide food to all pupils within an hour and who also have to follow their own strict guidelines. It will be very welcome when we are once again allowed to use our hall fully at lunch times for all children and go back to eating from plates with proper cutlery! Following discussions with the catering department we do hope to start using metal cutlery after the half term break.

Everyone within the school is also looking forward to a return to normal lunch times as staff must also stay within their bubble throughout the day so are spending the full day with the class with no breaks. As a result, they have no option other than to help serve lunch and eat with their class and supervise most play duties. They also have to wipe down all the tables etc after the children finish eating to get the class clean for the afternoon sessions.

We all really hope that with the improving situation nationally that Ysgol Derwen can start to plan for the school to return to something resembling a pre-Covid school day by the start of the new school year in September.

With more parents now returning to work having had to work from home throughout the pandemic, we are planning on moving the start of the school day closer to the traditional 9am start and likewise at the end of the day being closer to 3pm.

Ysgol Derwen still has no option other than to have staggered start and finish times to the school day as set out in national guidance, but as a transition back

to the old school timings we would like to make some minor changes to the start and end of the school day.

From Monday June 7th we would like to introduce the following changes to the school day. Before Covid children were allowed to enter the school from 8.45am daily. We will move the first drop off to coincide with the normal school opening time.

<u>Bubbles</u>	<u>Drop Off</u>	<u>Pick Up</u>	<u>Where?</u>
Group 1 Year 5 & 6	8.45am*	2.55pm	Year 5 = Car Park Entrance Year 6 = Main Gate
Group 2 Year 3 & 4	8.50am*	3 pm	Year 4 = Car Park Entrance Year 3 = Main Gate
Group 3 Year 1 & 2	8.55am	3.05pm	Year 1 = Car park Entrance Year 2 = Main Gate
Group 4 Nursery & Reception	9am	Nursery - 11.30am Reception - 3.10pm	Nursery = Nursery Door Reception = children will be handed over to their parents from the car park gate as they have been all term.

**Children in the first two bubbles will be given tasks or reading activities to do in the class upon arrival, with registration then taking place at 8.55am (the usual school start time). Please do your best to keep within the timeslot for your class but if you are struggling on any given day we would expect your child to be in school by 8.55am daily ready for the first lesson.*

Children in the Juniors (Years 3, 4, 5 and 6) will continue to be able to pick up their siblings to allow for parents waiting for more than one child to leave the site quicker.

Once you have picked your child/children up please leave the area outside the school as soon as possible so parents in the next "Bubble" pick up can move towards the gates safely.

School developments

Recovery

You may have seen in the news that the Welsh Government have tried to provide schools with additional funding to help with the pupil “recovery” process after two lockdowns. Ysgol Derwen has decided to start using the additional funds to put support in place for our pupils instantly on their return to school following the second lockdown. We have used the funds to employ two additional Teaching Assistants (both qualified teachers) to help deliver catch up activities, additional reading sessions, targeted group work etc. They have been working at the school since Easter and will continue to provide additional support up until the end of the Summer term. This has been very successful in helping the children settle back into school and make the progress needed to try and get back on track. This has been a huge help especially in the Juniors where pre-Covid we had one Teaching Assistant shared between four classes, and now during the recovery period we have one full time Teaching Assistant in each of the four classes.

Laptops

Pre-Covid the school had approximately 30 laptops across the whole school with many of those starting to slow down. Thanks to targeted support from the Welsh Government, Ysgol Derwen has been in receipt of grant funding to improve IT provision at the school. Whilst the additional funding has been very welcome, there is also an expectation for the school to match fund some aspects of increasing IT resources from the delegated budget.

Thanks to both the investment from the school along with grant funding from the Welsh Government we now have 18 laptops in each of our Year 5 and 6 Classes and 15 laptops in each of our Year 3 and 4 classes. In addition to these devices we have funded new PCs for each class and will be funding an additional 20 laptops for the Year 5/ 6 classes by September 2021. We are also awaiting the delivery of 50 iPads for the Foundation Phase. These additions to the IT teaching resources available to the children and staff at Ysgol Derwen will greatly help with the delivery of the New Curriculum in Wales.

National Tests

Welsh Government has stated that national tests should be done on a “reasonable endeavours” basis this year. As the statement is quite ambiguous, different schools are interpreting the statement in many different ways with some choosing not to do them at all and others only doing them with certain groups of children. With the prospect of not having data from all schools across Wales, having a standardised score for each pupil will also be difficult.

When children returned to school following lockdown, all children were assessed by class teachers based on their academic and emotional wellbeing needs. Staff time can be better spent supporting the recovery process rather than preparing for, and administering tests, which will add to the stress and anxiety of staff and pupils. The school has already targeted the children and plans put in place to provide the best opportunities to catch up.

The tests are now online but from previous experiences they are not “personalised” for pupils, especially those with Additional Learning Needs. This has caused much anxiety amongst pupils in previous (non-Covid) years leading to pupils being very upset and crying when undertaking the tests. This is an additional burden we are not prepared to place on our pupils during such an important period in their recovery process. Pupils need to feel they are getting back on track and are succeeding and happy at school.

The tests for pupils in Years 2 to 6 will take place purely as a practice exercise this year and will take place during the course of the normal timetable, either as a whole class or in groups. With national testing probably becoming statutory again next year, it will give the children an opportunity to see how the tests work without the added pressure of trying to calculate an algebra question early on in the Year 2 test (that was a question last time!). We will then hope to resume testing in line with Welsh Government guidance from September.

Year 4 PGL Refund

Year 4 were due to go on a three-day residential visit to PGL Boreatton Park earlier in the year which had to be cancelled due to Covid. The parents of pupils who were going to participate have paid £25 deposit per child. We are now in a position to start getting the refunds back to parents. The only way we can do this however is through a cheque. All parents due a refund will receive their cheques during the next half term.

Year 6 Transition to High School

We have children going to five different high schools this year with the majority of pupils transferring to Castell Alun. Each school will have different methods of engaging in transition but the current advice from Flintshire County Council is that high schools shouldn't be engaging in large transition events which would result in pupils from many schools mixing bubbles for a day. Castell Alun is currently looking into all options and hope to share their plans with the cluster and parents after half term.

Vacancy – Clerk to the Governors

With effect from June 2021 a vacancy has arisen for the position of part-time clerk to the Governing Body at Ysgol Derwen. To express an interest or to find out more about this varied and interesting role please contact the school on 01244 660291, email on kimail@hwbcymru.net .

Parking Llys Derwen

I have been asked by some of the residents from Llys Derwen if I can ask parents to please be considerate when dropping off or picking up from school. They are finding people either parking on their drives and designated spaces, or actually parking across their drives. Remember that you can also park at the Royal Oak and Village Hall and walk the final short distance to school.

FODS

Prior to the first lockdown there was a large selection of good quality second hand school uniform available to purchase from the school office. All the uniform has since been washed and bagged up in packages according to size. If you would like to purchase some school inform for a donation to FODS, please look for further information on the FODS Facebook page.

Kinnerton Kids Club / Little Acorns

Applications for the following wrap around clubs can now be made online at:

<http://www.kinnertonlittleacorns.co.uk/>

- **Breakfast Club – 7.45am until start of school**
- **After School Club – End of the school day until 6pm**
- **Little Acorns (Nursery Plus) 11.30am until 3pm**

SCHOOL HOLIDAY DATES FOR SUMMER TERM 2021

Half Term Closes	Friday 28 May
Half Term Opens	Monday 7 June
Term Closes	Thursday 15 July
<i>Staff Training Day</i>	Friday 16 July
<u>Start of Autumn Term 2021</u>	
Staff Training	Wednesday September 1st
School Open to Pupils	Thursday September 2nd