

# MAESTEG SCHOOL

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**Headteacher / Pennaeth: H. Jones B.A. (Hons) N.P.Q.H.**

**12.01.2021**

Dear Parent/Carer,

Thankyou all for your patience, understanding and messages of support over the last few days as we have tried to navigate our way through the choppy waters of Covid variants, lockdown, exams and assessments and home-schooling preparation! It has been challenging to say the least.

Kirsty Williams, the Welsh Government Minister for Education, wrote to us on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> January with the following message:

*'We have seen a difficult start to 2021 with Wales on alert level 4, and schools and colleges moving to remote learning, due to increased transmission of the new COVID-19 strain.*

*The First Minister will confirm today that we will bring the decision-making on schools and colleges into line with the Welsh Government's three-week review timetable of 29 January. This means that students will continue to learn remotely and vulnerable children will have access to on-site provision along with learners undertaking essential exams and assessments, until then.*

*At that point, unless the rates of community transmission in Wales reduce significantly by 29 January, most students in schools and colleges will continue working remotely until the February half term.*

*Qualifications Wales have also announced the cancelation of the spring internal assessment window (due between 22 February and 23 April) for GCSE, AS and A levels. Revised assessment arrangements for the award of these qualifications in summer 2021 will be put in place shortly.'*

Our plans to adopt a phased return for all pupils from Monday 11<sup>th</sup> January were immediately replaced by renewed plans to deliver online lessons for all children. We know that this poses significant challenges to all involved – not least to you, the parents, who are trying to support your child at home. You will receive information from Mrs Matthews later today providing further updates with regard to 'live lessons' which I urge you to read. We are doing our very best to continue to develop and improve the 'blended learning offer' that your child receives and value the feedback that we are getting from our parents and our pupils. The greatest challenge for our teachers is judging the amount of work that our children can manage each day. Some parents have raised concerns that the amount of work set is too much, whilst others are concerned that their child isn't receiving enough work. I know that Mrs Matthews is compiling a questionnaire which will be circulated this week to gauge the views of as many of you as possible. What is apparent is that learning from home and on-line is going to be the only means of educating your child for the foreseeable future and it is now essential that all children are engaged in this process. Please do not hesitate to contact the helpdesk or your child's form tutor in the first instance if you have any difficulties accessing the work that our teachers are setting.

As a parent of a daughter in year 11, I too am extremely concerned about the lack of clarity that exists around this summer's exam series. All we can advise at the moment is that our teachers are setting work and producing materials that will allow our students to produce evidence that will be used to support any 'Centre Assessed Grade' process. It is essential, therefore, that our year 11 and year 13 learners give of their very best to each task. If there is no option for an external assessment process in the summer term, then it is the teacher's evaluation of the pupil's work that will form the basis of an A level or GCSE grade. Please work with us to ensure that your child achieves what they deserve.

We are all desperate to be back in school, to have our lives return to normal and to see our young people interact with one another as they should. There is no doubt that our 11-18 year olds are suffering more than most. However, as the message from our minister clearly states,

*'We are taking this action because the new variant is far more infectious and is leading to increased numbers of people falling ill and being hospitalised.'*

This will not last forever. It is a temporary situation that is testing the emotional strength and resilience of each and every one of us. Supporting our children to learn at home is not easy (I speak from first-hand experience and bear the scars). Our teachers are here to support you. If you have any concerns at all, no matter how trivial you think they may appear, please contact us. Our priority is to ensure that our pupils are safe, happy and learning.

I look forward to seeing you all soon. In the meantime, stay safe and give your teachers your best efforts.

With warm regard,

**Mrs Helen Jones**

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*Motivated to Strive / Ysgogi i Ymdrechu*

