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## COVID-19 – update for parents and carers

Dear parents / carers

I have not written for a while about Covid-19, but we seem to have returned to a situation where events are moving at pace again.

Not only have we seen an increase in Covid 19 cases in some of our schools over the last week or so but the news about the Omicron variant has clearly caused concern.

In response to this we have received new guidance from the Welsh Government that states that secondary school pupils and staff should wear masks in all areas inside the school where social distancing cannot be maintained, this includes classrooms. The feedback I have received from Headteachers indicates that pupils have responded positively in general. (exemptions for health reasons still apply).

Secondary schools have spare face coverings for those who have forgotten them as well as plenty of LFD tests and we would encourage you to use these tests regularly at home. We will continue with this practice until the end of term and then I expect a review of the situation.

However, it is important that we and the Welsh Government monitor this as schools may have to take some measures short of closure due to increased levels of staff absence and shortage of supply staff.

The guidance from Welsh Government can be viewed here <https://gov.wales/school-operations-coronavirus>

There are lots of rumours in the media that the Welsh Government is discussing the early closure of schools at the end of the term. We are not aware of any such plans at this time, but the next Welsh government 3-week review takes place on Friday 10th December, so we will need to wait to see if there are any further changes to current guidance

In the meantime, please be patient with schools, they are doing everything they can to keep pupils in school safe and limiting any potential disruption to their learning.

Thank you for your continued support and understanding in these uncertain times.

I sincerely hope that you will enjoy a safe, family Christmas.

Regards

*Keri*

Keri Cole

Chief Education Officer, Caerphilly County Borough Council

