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Dear Parents & Carers,

Following my letter of Friday 11th December concerning the arrangements for the end of this term, I write to set out the arrangements for the start of term in January 2021.

The COVID-19 incidence rates in Monmouthshire continue to show that the virus is highly prevalent in our communities and we do not know yet what the impact of the change to the Christmas regulations will be. We do know that, in the run up to Christmas, several schools across Monmouthshire have experienced staffing shortages. With expectations of a continued rise in the infection levels and still two weeks before the start of term it was appropriate that we put in place plans to help schools manage the return in January.

In order to effectively plan for the safe return of all of our learners as soon as possible we have determined that the first two days of the spring term (January 4th and 5th) will be remote learning for all pupils. This will allow our schools to understand the impact of the Christmas break on their staffing compliment and ensure that they can return to face-to-face provision for pupils safely on Wednesday 6th January.

On Thursday 17th December, the Welsh Government and Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) wrote to all local authorities setting out their expectations for the return to school. They stated: '*As schools assess their staffing levels ahead of, and during, the first week, our expectation is that schools will be providing face to face learning for the majority of their pupils by 11th January...*'. In returning to face-to-face learning on the 6th January, Monmouthshire Schools are taking a sensible, practical approach to ensure safety whilst not delaying the return of the full cohort any more than necessary.

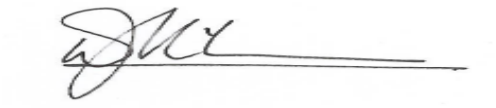
There will not be any face-to-face support for critical workers' children or vulnerable learners for the first two days. This is in line with the Welsh Government's expectations that this provision is provided from the third day of school openings.

All of Monmouthshire's schools are entirely committed to opening at the earliest opportunity in January. I believe that the approach set out above provides schools with the necessary time to ensure that their return on 6th January is as smooth as possible.

Your schools will be in contact to advise you how to access remote learning materials for the first days of term.

I would like to conclude by thanking you for all your support for our schools during what has been one of the most challenging terms.

I wish you a peaceful and safe Christmas,



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