



**Powys County Council
County Hall
Llandrindod Wells
Powys
LD1 5LG**

Date: 3 December 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

Over recent days, there has been a lot of speculation in the media regarding the end of term dates for schools across Wales.

The end of term date for our learners here in Powys is Friday, December 18. Powys County Council's intention is for our schools to remain open until this date.

We have given significant consideration to whether the council should support an earlier closure and have engaged with our partners in health services and public health as part of that process.

Our conclusion is that schools in Powys should remain fully open for all those of statutory school age until the planned end of term on Friday, December 18.

There is no public health reason why this should not happen. Additionally, concerns have been raised that some learners who have been away from school during Covid-19 outbreaks have been mixing freely outside school settings, raising the risks for everybody in the community.

Throughout the year, our schools have shown outstanding dedication to managing their bubbles to contain infection. They have also responded quickly when outbreaks have taken place, including at weekends. This has played a significant part in helping manage infection rates across Powys, for which we should all be thankful.

We also realise that running schools during these unusual times has been exhausting, and all our schools' staff are looking forward to a much-needed break over Christmas. They have supported children affected by Covid-19, provided online learning and classroom teaching at different times through the last three terms. Some have been required to self-isolate which causes its own stresses for those individuals and their families and colleagues.

We have given careful consideration to how we should manage the period up to Friday, December 18. There are several reasons why we are asking our schools to continue to be open until the planned date – unless a school experiences a public health reason for urgent closure. As a result, we are

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expecting teaching to happen only at school, unless learners are away because of a Covid related closure.

The reasons for staying open for the final week include:

- The need to maintain an orderly approach for our learners through to Christmas, in well managed environments
- The need to support many learners for whom school has been an important part of maintaining a positive outlook over recent months
- The need to support parents who need to be at work in the crucial time leading up to Christmas
- The level of concern that January could well be a more challenging month for all of us, if the freedoms of the Christmas period do result in a significant change to infections rates across Wales.

We are all delighted to know that the vaccination is being rolled out across Powys over the coming days and week. However, it will not arrive in time to affect schools before Christmas.

We therefore urge all our young people, staff and parents to all they can to prevent the spread of the virus within Powys by limiting contact with others whilst maintain social distancing as well as wearing face coverings and washing your hands regularly.

We will continue to work closely with our schools and will explore how the last week of term can be organised to minimise the risks of infection spreading in our schools.

Please follow the advice for coronavirus by visiting <https://gov.wales/coronavirus>

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Phyl Davies
Cabinet Member for Education and Property

Geraint Rees
Strategic Lead for Education

Lynette Lovell
Interim Chief Education Officer