

Dear Parent / Guardian,

We know the past few months have been difficult for learners, with many anxious about loss of learning and not being able to see their friends. That is why we welcome the Education Minister's plan which will enable the Local Authority and schools to prepare for the safe reopening of the schools that can do so in the first week of September, with all schools to return the following week.

At the outset, we want to share as much information as we can with you to understand the arrangements that will be in place from September.

Schools have already begun work on amending existing plans following yesterday's announcement. Planning and preparation days will take place at the start of term to review risk assessment, processes and systems to ensure individual schools can welcome pupils back safely.

Parents should expect to receive more specific information from their school and the Local Authority as it becomes available.

Given the current extraordinary circumstances, we know hard working staff in schools, learners and their families may well be under additional emotional, financial and psychological pressure. We will continue to liaise with schools and settings to consider how best to support the ongoing well-being needs of all learners and staff at this time.

Following the announcement, we are working behind the scenes to ensure that appropriate provision for services such as catering and cleaning will be available for the Autumn term. Careful consideration will need to be given to school transport arrangements, and further details on this will be subject to the forthcoming advice being published by Welsh Government.

As I'm sure you will appreciate, each school setting will have its own local challenges to address, including the availability of staff and building considerations, and we will continue to work closely with schools offering support and guidance as needed.

From the second week of term, school attendance will be compulsory. Parents will be asked to contact their school if a pupil is unable to attend for any legitimate reason. The resumption of schooling will also mean that the Childcare Hub provision for key workers will come to an end.

Please keep an eye on the Local Authority's website (valeofglamorgan.gov.uk), the school's website and social media which will be updated with further information as soon as it becomes available.

We recognise that reopening schools in the current climate is challenging. Local authorities and schools are committed to work together to ensure that learners can continue to learn safely. Welsh Government has also outlined plans to make £29m available to 'recruit, recover and raise standards' in Welsh schools in response to the impact still felt from the pandemic.

We would also like to recognise the fantastic work that our school based staff – headteachers, senior leaders, teaching and support staff, and all our colleagues working behind the scenes, for the work that has gone in to support children over the past few months, and for the work they have already started in preparation for a warm welcome for your children back in September. While we will need to continue to adapt to a changing landscape, please be assured that all efforts are being concentrated on delivering the best, and safest, learning experiences possible.

Finally, we would like to thank you. These past few months have placed additional stresses on everyone, but particularly on parents and carers who have had to quickly adjust to educating their children at home at a time which is already very challenging.

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paula Ham', written in a cursive style.

Paula Ham
Director of Learning and Skills