



MOUNTAIN ASH COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL



RETURN TO SCHOOL FOR MARCH 2021: GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/CARERS

The Governors and Staff of Mountain Ash Comprehensive School would like to take this opportunity to thank all parents/ carers and pupils for your help, support and patience through this very challenging time.

We are really looking forward to welcoming pupils back to school after this most recent lockdown. The school will continue to follow Covid-19 guidance for the health and safety of all pupils and staff. When pupils return to school, there will still be significant restrictions in place to maintain social distancing, to limit the contact between groups of pupils and to ensure that the school is a Covid-controlled environment.

The school has used the guidance from Welsh Government which supports the proposed phased approach to all schools opening from March 15th 2021, as outlined by the Education Minister Kirsty Williams.

Our arrangements are based on and in accordance with RCT and Welsh Government guidance for schools. Please see the link below;

<https://gov.wales/operational-guidance-schools-and-settings-15-march-html>

We understand that parents, carers and pupils may be anxious about the return to school for all pupils. We wish to reassure you that the wellbeing of pupils and staff is our top priority.

A staged return for pupils has been planned from March 15th 2021 as follows, with a view to all pupils returning to school after Easter:-

On their return, all pupils will have a short induction to remind them how the school will operate and this form time will be used to explain the measures that we have in place for pupil and staff health and safety throughout the day. Clear guidance will be supplied on support mechanisms.

However, it must be noted that we cannot guarantee that everyone is 100% safe in school from the coronavirus. The measures outlined in this document are designed to manage and reduce risk as much as possible.

The information below is an overview of the plan for pupils to return to school from September onwards and important guidance for the health and safety of all.



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Our plan for return is as follows:-

| Date | Plan for return |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Monday March 15 th | Years 11, 12 and 13 in school |
| Monday March 22 nd | Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 in school |
| Tuesday March 23 rd | Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 in school |
| Wednesday March 24 th | Years 9, 11, 12 and 13 in school |
| Thursday March 25 th | Years 8, 11, 12, and 13 in school |
| Friday March 26 th | Years 7, 11, 12, and 13 in school |

Day to day arrangements in school will maintain the previous stringent measures with some additional procedures:-

- **Pupil 'contact groups':** Pupil movement at school will be minimised. Pupils will be in a 'contact group' which will be a half-year group for Years 7 and 8 and the whole year group for Years 9-11. Sixth form pupils will form a 'contact group'.
- **Lesson movement:** Teachers, not pupils, will move as much as possible. Breaktimes and lunchtimes and the start and end of the day will be staggered to minimise contact.
- **Catering:** The school canteens have been divided to keep pupils from different contact groups apart and will operate on a staggered break and lunch to minimise the numbers on break/lunch at any one time. Food can be ordered through an order form in registration. Pupils are welcome, as always, to bring in their own drinks, snacks and packed lunch if they prefer.
- **Classroom layout:** All classrooms have been re-organised so that pupils will be seated facing forward, rather than in groups. Teachers have seating plans in place.
- **One-way systems:** A one-way system will operate wherever possible. Where this is not possible, a clear demarcation of the corridors will operate with pupils keeping to the left as they pass. There are designated sets of toilets for pupils.
- **Hygiene:** Pupils will be encouraged to wash their hands as much as possible and to avoid touching their faces. Hand sanitiser will also be available at key points around the school.
- **School Uniform:** We are encouraging school uniform to be worn wherever possible. We would suggest that pupils continue to wear their school PE kit for the days when they have PE, as previously.
- **Face Coverings:** Recent WG and LA guidance has clarified that from the return to school on March 15th face coverings will be required to be worn by pupils in classrooms as well as on school transport. This is a change to previous guidance. Face coverings must also be worn in all communal areas, both inside and outside the school building where social distancing is difficult to maintain. Pupils will not be required to wear face coverings outside if they can



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maintain social distancing from others and where they are participating in PE lessons. Control mechanisms such as one-way systems, bubble zones and clear signage to keep to the left remain in place. However, there will be occasions on arrival to school, between lessons, at break/lunch and at the end of the day where it may be busy and social distancing will be difficult to maintain. In order to reduce the risk of transmission everyone should wear a face covering when walking through corridors/ in communal areas in all school buildings.

- **School Day:** As before, the school day will run from 8:45am until 3pm but there will be a staggered arrival of pupils on site as well as a staggered end to the school day in order to minimise contact.
- **Visitors:** We will continue to limit the number of visitors to the school site. All parents/carers are encouraged to contact school via email or telephone in the first instance. If a visit to school is essential, visits will be by appointment only. There will be a social distanced queuing system in place at Reception.
- **Sixth form:** Year 12 and Year 13 pupils will attend school from Monday 15th March and all CVC lessons for Year 12 and Year 13 pupils will run with pupils being able to travel to the other schools in the Consortium from that date and vice versa.
- **Pupil Behaviour:** The school's 'Positive Behaviour Policy' will continue to be rigorously enforced. Good behaviour will be essential. Poor behaviour that puts the health of staff and other pupils in jeopardy will not be tolerated. Serious breaches of social distancing or reckless acts of coughing or spitting at others will result in an immediate fixed term exclusion and pupils could also be at risk of being permanently excluded. Pupils will need to show a high level of maturity and personal responsibility whilst on the school site. *(Please see the updated Positive Behaviour Policy on the school website).*
- **Personal Protective Equipment:** current Government advice states that personal protective equipment, such as masks and gloves, are not required in schools unless social distancing cannot be maintained. All staff will be issued with medical grade face coverings which will further mitigate risk. Pupils will be issued with face coverings on their return to school, unless they choose to wear their own

We will presume that any parent or carer sending their child/children to school will be doing so in the knowledge that they do not have any symptoms of coronavirus and that they are well enough to be at school.

Symptoms include:-

- A high temperature
- A new continuous cough
- A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste



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Should your child display any symptoms, the normal guidance of self-isolating should be adhered to.

Further information

Arrival

- Staggered starts and finish times have been planned to minimise contact. Staff will be stationed in the bus bay and front yard and will direct pupils to their designated entrance into school. PLEASE NOTE: the back entrance of the school will NOT be open for cars but pupils will be able to access school on foot via the Caedrawnant entrance.

Start of the school day

- Cars: pupils to be dropped off by 8.35a.m
- Buses: arrival on site 8.30- 8.40a.m.
- Walkers: arrival on site 8.45a.m.

Finish

- Walkers – pupils released from class at 2.50 p.m.
- Cars – pupils released from class at 2.55 p.m.
- Buses – pupils released from class at 3.00 p.m.

Entrances to school are as follows:-

- Year 7 to use doors by LRC
- Year 8 to use doors by Technology and use of first stairs
- Year 9 next to room 101
- Year 10 middle doors in Maths corridor
- Year 11 and Sixth form – Pupil Entrance
- At each school entrance point, pupils will be asked to use the hand sanitiser and will be directed immediately to their designated classroom/ area. Temperature checks will only be used if a pupil presents looking or reporting feeling unwell. Teachers will be waiting in their classrooms and will direct pupils to their designated seat.

During the day

- On the first day that pupils attend school, there will be a short induction for pupils on the rules and expectations, including a Health and Safety Induction. The consequences for failing to adhere to social distancing or engaging in reckless behaviour such as spitting and/or coughing on others will be clearly explained to all pupils. These rules were adopted by the Governing Body in 2020, as amendments to our current Positive Behaviour Policy.
- Food orders will be taken during registration for the canteen



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- Breaks will be staggered. There will be an opportunity for fresh air and exercise in a designated area of the school site as follows:-
 - Year 7 to use the Year 7 yard and Caffi Macs
 - Year 8 to use the Year 8 yard and Caffi Macs
 - Year 9 to use the Fire Yard area and Upper Hall
 - Year 10 to use the Front area of the school and Upper Hall
 - Year 11 to use the Upper Hall and back of the school by the coffee shop
 - Sixth form to use the Coffee Shop and Upper Hall.

We recommend that pupils have wet-weather coats/ umbrellas so that they can go outside and get fresh air at breaktimes and lunchtimes.

- Toilets will operate on a 'one in, one out' basis with a maximum of two in at any one time, with each group of pupils allocated a specific set of toilets. There is hand-sanitiser at the entrance to every toilet block

End of the day

- There will be a staggered finish to the school day to minimise the risk of pupils mixing as follows:-
 - Pupils walking: 2.50p.m.
 - Pupils being collected by car: 2.55p.m.
 - Pupils on buses: 3.00p.m
- Staff will be on hand inside the buildings, at the front of the school and in the bus bay area to enforce social distancing. Parents are asked to park responsibly (in the designated area for parent parking) and observe social distancing. Parents should not park in the bus bay area or staff car park area. Everyone should leave the school site immediately and not linger.

Transport

- School transport will be running as normal. Pupils are required to wear a face covering on the bus.

Pupil equipment: the requirements are the same as before:-

- Pupils **MUST** bring their own equipment to school and should not share or supply other pupils with equipment. Staff will not be lending equipment to pupils. Pupils will only need to bring their books/ files and following items in for learning and should avoid bringing in unnecessary items from home:
 - Pens (some spares if they run out)
 - pencil
 - 30cm ruler



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- rubber
 - glue stick
 - pencil sharpener
 - scientific calculator
 - coloured pencils
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- Practical lessons that may require the sharing of tools or equipment will be limited and carefully managed

First Aid

- Full PPE will be worn by any member of staff administering first aid. This will include if any pupil shows symptoms of COVID-19. RCT procedures will be followed in this circumstance. If any pupil tests positive for COVID-19 who has been in school, this will trigger the RCT protocol outlined in the sections below.

Curriculum

- The school timetable will run as normally as possible, with some changes to day to day operations.
- Pupils in Years 7 and 8 will have a designated 'area' and 'base' classroom and teachers will move around school to teach them in these bases.
- Years 9 – 11 will have a designated 'area' of the school where classrooms will be identified as Core subject rooms (Mathematics, English, Science) and others will be rooms where their Option subjects will be taught. Pupils and staff will move rooms within these areas; pupils will move first and staff will settle them into the room before moving themselves, to minimise contact
- Sixth form teaching will take place in designated classrooms
- Guidance recommends that pupils have opportunities for exercise and to get outdoors. Pupils will need to wear school PE kit to school for the day on the days that they have PE lessons. This is to avoid using the PE changing rooms and to minimise contact.

Catering

- Parents have been encouraged to register online for biometric payments so that we can limit the use of the payment machines in school
- Pupils are welcome to bring in their own snacks/packed lunches, should they so wish
- The canteen will only provide food at lunchtime
- Food orders will be taken during registration at the start of the week and pupils will collect food from the canteen
- Pupils will be encouraged to go outside to their designated areas to get fresh air once they have eaten.
- Tables in the canteens are thoroughly cleaned between each break/lunch
- Numbers of pupils at each table are strictly controlled



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Supporting the Wellbeing of Learners and Staff

- These challenging and uncertain times have undoubtedly placed pupils, parents/carers and school staff under significant pressure. Supporting pupils and staff to feel safe in the school environment has been the most important consideration throughout this planning process, as in previous planning processes. Pupils will be encouraged to express any worries and concerns they have so that they can be supported in an appropriate manner.

Additional resources have been made available to support young people, teachers and leaders, and others. A Young Person's Mental Health Toolkit can be found on Hwb. This comprises a variety of online resources, which can help them through lockdown and beyond. It contains information on websites, apps, helplines, and more, which support mental health and well-being:

- Anxiety <https://hwb.gov.wales/go/agg9pn>
- Coronavirus and your well-being <https://hwb.gov.wales/go/ffkbs1>
- Crisis <https://hwb.gov.wales/go/4ypw1s>
- Keeping healthy <https://hwb.gov.wales/go/nz95en>
- Loss <https://hwb.gov.wales/go/lvy6hx>
- Low mood <https://hwb.gov.wales/go/bi4vbc>
- Staff will also be impacted by the current situation. The school has been very mindful of this when planning for the return of pupils. Our expectations are realistic and it is clear that staff cannot 'do everything'. Clear guidance on expectations will be given to all staff before they return. The school will be as flexible as possible to accommodate staff as well as pupil needs.

Effective Hygiene

- There are important actions that pupils, parents and staff can take during the coronavirus outbreak, to help prevent the spread of the virus. In school, preventing the spread of coronavirus involves dealing with direct transmission (for instance, when in close contact with those sneezing and coughing) and indirect transmission (via touching contaminated surfaces).
- Government guidance states that all staff and pupils regularly wash their hands. They should be washed with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. All toilets have posters advising on effective hand washing techniques. Regular hand washing or use of hand sanitiser should include on arrival and when leaving the school; before and after handling food; before and after handling objects and equipment that may have been used by others; where there has been any physical contact and after people blow their nose, sneeze or cough. Hand washing is preferable to the use of hand sanitisers but hand sanitisers will also be provided in school. Pupils are encouraged to bring in a small bottle of their own personal supply of hand-sanitiser, should they so wish.



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- Staff and pupils, insofar as it is possible, should be encouraged not to touch their faces, especially when using a tissue or elbow to cough. Any used tissues/ single use face coverings, are to be deposited in designated pedal bins. Pedal bins are in every classroom and toilet block.
- Pupils in KS4 who may move classrooms during the day for different subjects are encouraged to wipe down their workspace at the start of each lesson with the anti-bacterial wipes provided, as an enhanced measure.
- There is no need for anything other than normal personal hygiene following a day in an educational or childcare setting.

Effective Cleaning

- School buildings will be cleaned regularly and at least once a day. Particular attention will be given to clean 'high-touch' areas and surfaces, which will be cleaned throughout the day and more frequently in high use areas based on local assessment, including bathrooms, railings, tables, equipment and door handles. The handling of objects between individuals, including staff, parents/carers and children, will be minimised. Handling of objects by multiple individuals without cleaning will be avoided.

Symptomatic Learners and Staff

- Under no circumstances should pupils or staff attend school if they:
 - feel unwell, have any of the identified COVID-19 symptoms (a new continuous cough, a high temperature or loss of taste or smell) or they have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 10 days;
 - live in a household with someone who has symptoms of COVID-19; or has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 10 days.

Suspected Cases

- If anyone becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature in school, they will be sent home and advised to follow the stay at home guidance.
- If a pupil is awaiting collection, they will be moved to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door, with a window opened for ventilation.
- If they need to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they will use a separate bathroom. The bathroom will be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else.



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- Gloves, aprons and a fluid-resistant surgical mask will be worn if a child or young person becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 and needs direct personal care. Eye protection should also be worn if a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of splashing to the eyes such as from coughing, spitting, or vomiting. Gloves and aprons should be used when cleaning the areas where a person suspected of having COVID-19 has been
- In an emergency, 999 will be called if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk.
- If a member of staff has helped someone who was unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, they do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves or if the child subsequently tests positive. They will wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell. Cleaning the affected area with normal household disinfectant after someone with symptoms has left will reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people. Please see the cleaning section for further information.

Confirmed Cases

- When a pupil or staff member develops symptoms compatible with coronavirus, they should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 10 days. Their fellow household members should self-isolate for 10 days.

Lateral Flow Tests

Staff

- Rapid-result coronavirus (COVID-19) tests (lateral flow tests - LFD tests) are available to all staff working in schools. The introduction of this is to quickly detect asymptomatic adults, ask them to self-isolate as soon as possible, reduce the likelihood of clusters and outbreaks in settings and reduce the disruption that brings to education. Welsh Government's statement regarding this offer can be accessed via <https://gov.wales/written-statement-testing-offer-schools-colleges-and-childcare-settings>.
- Anyone who tests positive using a Lateral Flow Test (LFT) must not attend school. They and everyone they live with must self-isolate immediately according to the [self-isolation guidance](#) whilst they undertake the following actions:

Pupils

- The Minister for Education and the Minister for Health and Social Services announced on 22nd February that the offer of regular, twice weekly, Lateral Flow Tests will be extended to all those of upper secondary age as follows:-
 - These tests will be for use at home.
 - This will start with offering tests to pupils in Years 10 and above, all FE college learners and learners on work-based Apprenticeship and Traineeship programmes.



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Further information is available via Welsh Government's [Online Document Platform](#) which provides the latest documents and guides, as well as additional resources regarding this testing offer.

Information on the Instructions for Use are available via this [link](#).

What happens if there is an outbreak in a school?

- If there are multiple cases of COVID-19 in a school, then experts from across the NHS and local government will work together to prevent ongoing transmission within the school. This will involve identifying those exposed, and any child or staff member who is at increased risk and providing tailored infection control advice. Advice based on the assessment of each individual situation will be provided to support the school in preventing further spread.
- The process will be handled sensitively and in confidence, for instance identities should not be revealed by senior leaders.

The following school policies have been amended to take account of Covid-19 regulations and advice and ratified by the school's Governing Body:-

- Positive Behaviour Strategy
- Fire Safety Policy

These policies with the amendments are available on our school website : www.macs.uk.net