



*Ysgol Uwchradd*  
**CASTELL ALUN**  
*High School*

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22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020

Dear parent / carer,

As we reach the close of this difficult half term, I wanted to thank all of you for the hard-fought collective effort which has seen us through a highly emotional and physically demanding time. It is indeed true that we have laughed and cried together as we have faced very great emotional and physical challenges. Thank you so much for your support and hard work in helping your families and the broader school community through this period personally and collectively.

We held a time of reflection for Chantelle this week in school, and have various other personal, group and school community plans in order to celebrate her life and grow stronger as we consider the values which Chantelle so clearly represented. Our hearts are heavy, and we miss her moment by moment.

To date students in Years 7, 8, 9, 12 and 13 have experienced a period of self-isolation. The Welsh Government announcement this week has made it clear that our return after half term will not be as planned due to a 'Fire-Break', and that similar situations could potentially re-occur over coming months.

The Welsh Government has declared that scheduled external exams in English and Maths, along with Oxford and Cambridge entrance tests, will still take place for Years 11, 12 and 13, as planned, during the week beginning Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> November. Students sitting these exams will be able to use school buses but should only be on campus for the duration of their exam. Please be so good as to plan for student drop off / pick up, as necessary. Our Year 7 and 8 students will be in school throughout the week but learning for those in Years 9 to 13 will be online from home. This would absolutely not be our preference, but we understand that it is essential to come together in the common purpose of beating this virus.

Our students have proved to be both resilient and extremely keen to engage effectively with their studies in nearly all cases this term, whether from school or when distance-learning. For this they deserve our admiration and praise. As adults we currently face many challenges, but we should also recognise the various difficulties presented to our young people in present circumstances. Most students have handled periods of strict self-isolation, or even general time out of school, with genuine self-discipline and in a praiseworthy manner. In a very small number of cases students have required reminders about appropriate behaviour in their local community, and these will continue as long as it is deemed necessary. We would continue to ask for your kind assistance in this.

We face an uncertain future and must ensure that Castell Alun students are both well looked after and sufficiently resourced to allow them to continue to make strong progress in their learning. Blended Learning has been further developed throughout the school curriculum over recent weeks, and we hope that we will be able to overcome certain current limitations with an ICT infrastructure upgrade over the half term break, which should lead to the further enhancement of our provision. Irrespective of the length of time students are called upon to learn from home, it is vital that 'new learning' continues to take place in all subjects.

We await further news from Welsh Government about planned external examinations for next summer and more support in terms of the necessary technology to meet the needs most effectively of all students, irrespective of circumstance.

I sincerely hope that the half term break allows everyone a short time at least to reflect and re-energise. There is doubtless a bumpy road ahead, but we will travel this together and provide every means of support possible to our students, come what may.

Best wishes,

Paul Edwards