

## Reopening of Bridgend schools from September 2020

### Frequently asked questions (FAQ)

#### Curriculum, learning, assessment, data and qualifications

##### Background

This FAQ document provides an overview of the current situation and expectation from the Welsh Government and other statutory bodies regarding school arrangements from September 2020.

It is important to note that this guidance is accurate at time of writing. However, due to emerging information, it will be necessary to update this document periodically to reflect the most recent Welsh Government guidance.

##### How has the legislation changed?

On 24 June 2020, the basic curriculum requirements for Wales and associated assessment arrangements for schools and non-maintained nursery settings were suspended as part of the Coronavirus Act 2020. This was intended to provide schools and settings with the necessary space and flexibility to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

There will be a need for schools and settings to adapt their approach to learning during the autumn term as they negotiate a range of challenges and we will take this into account in all decisions. The Welsh Government will clarify the expectations for legislation in due course and our focus will continue to be the needs and interests of learners in unprecedented times.

##### What guidance has the Welsh Government provided?

The Welsh Government has provided 'learner guidance'. The purpose of this guidance is to give schools and supporting partners a common set of priorities for learning, regardless of the level of operations in response to COVID-19. The guidance can be found here:

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-07/guidance-on-learning-in-schools-and-settings-from-the-autumn-term.pdf>

(Please note this guidance is subject to updates. At the time of writing this document relates to the most recent guidance provided by the Welsh Government)

## **Will learning and teaching continue to be affected by COVID-19?**

Yes.

Learning and teaching will continue to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2020-2021 school year. The approaches taken by schools and settings will continue to evolve to provide learning both in school and elsewhere if the need arises. The balance between learning in schools and settings, and time spent learning elsewhere may well change at particular points in response to the pandemic.

## **How will schools be supported during the period?**

The local authority (LA) and Central South Consortium (CSC) will continue to support schools and school leaders.

## **What approach should schools take from September 2020 to learning and teaching?**

Schools will need to adapt their curriculum planning and approaches to be flexible and responsive to changing circumstances. As schools and settings develop approaches to provide learning in school and outside school, they are able to draw on blended learning guidance which has been developed by schools, local authorities, regional consortia and Estyn.

## **Has learning been affected?**

Yes.

We know most learning will have been impacted in some form over recent months, with more significant impacts expected in vulnerable or disadvantaged groups. There is also a specific impact on learners taking formal qualifications in 2021 (ie pupils entering Years 11, 12 and 13).

The Welsh Government has announced £29m to recruit, recover and raise standards, bringing teachers in to schools to provide more in-depth focused support for those who have specific challenges to enable them to achieve their potential. The local authority and regional consortia will work proactively alongside schools to support them through this period.

Later in the summer, the Welsh Government will supply supplementary guidance on supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged learners.

## What should learning look like?

A school or setting's approach to learning will need to adapt to the changing circumstances that we may face during the response to COVID-19. Schools should therefore develop an approach to learning which is flexible enough to adapt to different scenarios and differing amounts of in-school learning and learning at home or elsewhere. In the context of these uncertainties, a set of broad principles is required which can and should be applied regardless of the scenario.

The aim is to provide clarity, focus and direction for learning both at the school/setting and at home or elsewhere, with flexibility for schools to adapt to a range of scenarios. This ensures learners have coherent, consistent and joined-up experiences of learning rather than conflicting demands, unnecessary repetition or a lack of connection between the two contexts.

There will be additional considerations for specific learners, including our youngest learners and learners who face barriers to learning. In the case of learners preparing for qualifications, there will be need to be additional support and details of this can be found below.

## What are the priorities from September 2020?

When considering their approach to autumn term learning, schools and settings should consider six priorities as follows:

### **Health and well-being**

Learning should support learners' mental, emotional, physical and social well-being as well as recognising the importance of outdoor learning and play.

### **Purpose**

All learning should have a clear purpose in mind, focused around what is important for learners now and in the longer-term.

### **Literacy, numeracy and digital competence**

Learners should have opportunities to develop and apply these skills across the curriculum.

## **Broad and balanced**

Learners should have learning experiences which span a broad curriculum and which include opportunities to develop a breadth of understanding and a range of knowledge and skills.

## **Progression and assessment**

Learners should make meaningful progress throughout this period. Learning should be designed to support increasing depth and sophistication of learning over time. The use of assessments to help learners move to the next steps in their learning is encouraged.

## **Partnership with parents, carers and learners**

Schools should develop a common understanding and language with parents, carers and learners. This can help underpin learning and support learning experiences.

## **What should we expect from schools in terms what they teach and what they assess? Will it be the same as before?**

The narrative below sets out the expectation from the Welsh Government.

### **Progression**

Over the course of the disruption caused by COVID-19, our expectation is that all learners should continue to make meaningful progress. This is critical to learners' long-term education and their lifelong well-being. As learners progress, they develop an increasingly sophisticated understanding of concepts and application of knowledge, skills and learning should support them to do this.

It is important to see progression in this way: deepening understanding and application of knowledge and skills, rather than simply covering more and different content or topics.

Learners will make progress at a different pace and each individual should be challenged and supported appropriately to move their learning forward, taking account of any barriers to their learning that need to be addressed.

### **Assessment**

The purpose of assessment is to support each individual learner to make progress at an appropriate pace, ensuring that they are challenged and supported appropriately.

As learners continue to learn in different places, assessment should not be about 'testing' in an attempt to 'catch up' and cover everything they would have done before the COVID-19 outbreak.

It should help develop a holistic picture of the learner – their strengths, how they learn and areas for development – in order to enable them to be ready to learn and to agree their next steps.

### **What is assessment of learning?**

Assessment of learning is making summative end of year judgements about what stage a pupil has reached. In the foundation phase this might be called an outcome, while in key stage 2 and key stage 3 it might be an end of year level.

### **What is assessment for learning?**

Assessment for learning is making diagnostic judgements (often when working alongside a pupil) and then using the diagnostic judgements to plan the immediate next steps in learning.

### **Is there specific guidance for primary schools and secondary schools?**

Yes.

This can be found in the 'learner guidance' provided by the Welsh Government (specific advice can be found on page 15 and 16).

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-07/guidance-on-learning-in-schools-and-settings-from-the-autumn-term.pdf>

### **What will happen to GCSEs and A levels next year?**

The Welsh Government's 'Recruit, recover and raise standards' plan will seek to build up learning confidence, knowledge and skills in the cohort of learners undertaking formal examinations in 2021. This is intended to support learners and ensure they are not disadvantaged.

The Welsh Government will seek to gather information and develop feedback on how learners in this cohort are progressing with this additional support and will share it with Qualifications Wales to help inform their considerations for 2021.

Qualifications Wales, working with Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC), is also considering changes that can be made to examinations in 2021 to provide learners

with an appropriate opportunity to demonstrate their ability recognising the significant disruption to teaching and learning.

These adaptations need to preserve the integrity and validity of qualifications. In support of this, the Welsh Government has announced that in 2020-2021, as for 2019-2020, qualification awards data will not be used to report on attainment outcomes at a school, local authority or regional consortia level and must not be used to hold schools to account for their learners' outcomes.

Schools should consider this, and the wider learning priorities set out in this guidance, when planning their approach to learning in the next academic year. This should include consideration as to the number of qualifications it is reasonable to expect learners to undertake, to allow them to both demonstrate their full potential and to perform to the best of their ability.

Qualifications Wales and WJEC have consistently kept their website up-to-date on their latest announcements and considerations, including the intention to hold the usual November exam series, primarily to support learners who wish to take examinations to try to improve the grade they were awarded in the summer.

#### **Will schools be required to set academic and attendance targets for 2020-2021?**

No.

The Welsh Government has suspended this requirement.

#### **Will school performance data be available next year?**

No.

The Welsh Government has suspended this requirement.

#### **Will school categorisation happen next year?**

No.

The Welsh Government has suspended this requirement, although they have made it clear that schools are still expected to undertake ongoing improvement activities aimed at improving outcomes for learners. The local authority (in partnership with CSC) will continue to support schools, as necessary, with improvement and evaluation activities.

## **Will performance management still happen?**

Yes.

The Welsh Government has provided the following guidance regarding arrangements for performance management:

<https://gov.wales/school-staff-and-their-employment-coronavirus#section-44297>

Schools should consult with human resources (HR) colleagues for further local information.

## **Will schools still be able to access professional learning from September 2020?**

Yes.

Central South Consortium (CSC) will be continuing to offer a significant package of professional learning from September 2020. The focus will be based on regional and local needs to meet national priorities.

Details of the events on offer can be found on several platforms as follows:

- Twitter and Facebook
- CSC website
- CSC schools bulletin
- Cronfa

## **Early Help Services**

### **Will parents be issued with fixed penalty notices if their children do not attend school?**

All learners will return to their school or setting in the autumn term unless they have a medical/health reason not to. The Welsh Government's view is that it would be difficult for a local authority/school to justify issuing a fixed penalty notice (FPN) or commencing proceedings for non-school attendance. The Welsh Government will monitor the situation over the first half term.

If a learner is unable to attend the physical setting of the school it is vital that the school continues to engage regularly with the learner remotely. Schools and settings should keep a record of attendance and families should notify their school if their child is unable to attend and explain the reason for this to enable the school to record

attendance correctly. This will help schools, settings and local authorities plan for, and understand any barriers to, learners returning to school and identify any further support needed. It will be critical that all learners engage with the school and any concerns about engagement, or the welfare of a learner, are followed up immediately. The Education Welfare Service, alongside Early Help services, can assist in these situations.

It is critical that all learners, their families and staff follow Public Health Wales advice in respect of the virus and under no circumstances should learners or staff attend schools/settings if they:

- feel unwell, have any of the three identified COVID-19 symptoms (a new continuous cough, or a high temperature or loss of or change to their sense of taste or smell) or they have tested positive to COVID-19 in the past 7 days; or
- live in a household or are part of an extended household with someone who has symptoms of COVID-19 or has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days.

These individuals will have received a shielding letter from the Chief Medical Officer. Staff and learners who have received a shielding letter must not be asked to attend schools or settings but should be supported to work or learn from home.

If a learner or staff member lives in a household with someone who is at increased risk or is 'shielding', they should only attend a school or setting where they are able to adhere to the social/physical distancing measures and the learner is able to understand and follow those instructions.

### **As a parent, I'm really worried about my child returning to school and contracting the virus. What should I do? Will I get in trouble?**

If parents/carers of learners are concerned about their children returning to school, we recommend parents should discuss this with their child's school/setting.

Schools and settings should be clear with parents/carers that learners of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies (eg the learner has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness or is absent for a necessary religious observance).

### **What additional support is available to children and families who have been affected by the pandemic?**

Early Help and Social Services continue to be available to children and families in need of support or safeguarding.

Early Help services can provide support linked to parenting, wellbeing, counselling, financial advice and employment/training, should families require it. Early Help services work closely with schools and other services including parents/carers, who can refer children and families for support via [earlyhelp@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:earlyhelp@bridgend.gov.uk)

If there are safeguarding concerns, contact must be made with Social Services via [mashcentra@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:mashcentra@bridgend.gov.uk)

### **Will school uniform have to be worn in September?**

The Welsh Government updated its guidance on the 11 August 2020 which can be found here:

<https://gov.wales/operational-guidance-schools-and-settings-autumn-term-covid-19>

Within that guidance it is explained that a school uniform is a governing body's decision. Welsh Government state that school uniform can play a valuable role in contributing to the ethos of a school and setting an appropriate tone.

However, if a governing body decides to relax its uniform policy, the local authority will be supportive of that decision.

### **How can I access a school uniform grant for my child?**

The Welsh Government Pupil Development Access Grant (PDG) provides assistance to families on low incomes. More information can be found under benefits and support, grants for pupils on Bridgend County Borough Council website.

Parents/carers can contact individual schools for details of how and when the grant will be issued.

## **Health and safety**

### **Will the local authority provide a Coronavirus (COVID-19) risk assessment framework for schools?**

The local authority is currently reviewing the revised Welsh Government guidance for schools opening for the autumn term. A revised risk assessments framework, building on the available guidance, feedback received from schools and other stakeholders from previous assessments, and from the advice and support that has been requested by schools to date, is currently under development.

## **What support will be available to headteachers and schools to complete the risk assessment process?**

As previously provided, prior to opening for the summer term, the local authority will work with schools to finalise risk assessments and establish appropriate arrangements based on national guidance before schools return in September 2020. The assessments will identify the controls that schools will put in place to manage the risk of COVID-19 within the school environment.

## **Have schools been provided with personal protective equipment (PPE) for undertaking tasks within the school such as personal care or first aid?**

All schools and settings have been provided with COVID-19 related PPE supplies and guidance on where it should be used appropriately (eg working in very close proximity to individuals for personal care, first aid, or possibly when supporting an individual displaying symptoms who is awaiting collection to return home).

## **Will schools have procedures for dealing with anyone becoming unwell with COVID-19-related symptoms within the school?**

All parents will receive letters advising them not to send their child to school if they are displaying COVID-19 symptoms and similar arrangements are in place for staff. Schools will have guidance on how to deal with anyone who becomes unwell while at school displaying COVID-19 symptoms including isolation, supervision and additional cleaning requirements.

The requirements of the NHS Wales 'Test, Trace and Protect' Service will be followed in any case connected with the school or setting.

## **Home-to-school transport and admissions**

### **Will school transport be available from 1 September 2020?**

It is the local authority's intention to operate school transport as normally as possible from the start of autumn term 2020. However, we recommend that parents should seek where possible to make their own arrangements to transport their child to school for the time-being.

### **Will there be school transport available for non-eligible learners?**

No.

There will be no change in eligibility as a result of the current situation.

### **What arrangements are you making regarding social distancing on school buses?**

It is unlikely that the current two metre social distancing requirements will apply to school transport. The local authority is awaiting further advice from the Welsh Government on this matter.

### **My child is brought into school in a taxi. Will that continue?**

For the time-being some children may be provided with an alternative vehicle eg minibus to ensure social distancing requirements are adhered to. However, taxis may be used on some contracts.

### **Should my child wear a face mask on school transport?**

The use of a face masks for school learners is optional. There is currently no requirement for learners to wear face masks on school transport, although if a child feels comfortable wearing one, they are able to do so.

### **Does a parent need to accompany their child to a bus stop?**

Learners in primary schools who are eligible for home-to-school transport need to be accompanied to their nearest bus stop by a responsible adult (from the same household) unless they have a prior arrangement with the local authority for exemption.

Secondary school learners do not need to be accompanied to the bus stop/pick-up point.

Nationally agreed social distancing should be adhered to at all times.

### **Will a parent/carer need to be available to collect their child at the bus stop/pick-up point at the end of the school day?**

All learners in primary school must be received at their bus stop/pick-up point by a responsible adult at the end of the school day, unless they have a prior arrangement with the local authority for exemption.

### **Many school transport vehicles normally have an escort with them on the transport. Will this continue?**

For some children, where an escort has been provided previously, this may not be possible moving forward. There is no statutory requirement to provide escorts,

although the local authority will assess the needs of learners and determine the appropriateness and availability of escorts in all cases.

### **Are all eligible children guaranteed home home-to-school transport from September 2020?**

School transport will continue to be prioritised for vulnerable learners. The local authority does not anticipate any significant issues with school transport availability for September. However, if the number and capacity of suitable vehicles is limited, the local authority may not be able to transport all eligible learners at the start of the autumn term. The local authority will make every effort to do so and as soon as possible and any changes will be communicated directly to parents/carers as soon as possible.

### **Are secondary school-age pupils required to show their bus passes when they board the school bus?**

No.

The 'no-pass, no-travel' requirement has been suspended for the autumn term 2020. The local authority will review this requirement for the start of the spring term in January 2021.

### **What are the start and finish times for the school day?**

The Welsh Government updated its guidance on the 11 August 2020 which can be found here:

<https://gov.wales/operational-guidance-schools-and-settings-autumn-term-covid-19>

The Welsh Government asks schools to consider introducing staggered starts or adjusting start and finish times to keep groups of learners apart as they arrive and leave school and to allow more journeys to take place outside of peak hours.

Each individual school will be able to advise on their start and finish times.

### **How do I apply for a school place?**

School admissions information and a timetable, which includes when the next round of applications open can be found under school admissions on Bridgend County Borough Council website.

Please contact Learner Support at [pupilservices@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:pupilservices@bridgend.gov.uk) if you require further information.

## **School meals**

### **My child normally attends breakfast club. Will there be free breakfast available for them when my child returns to school in September?**

It is unlikely that breakfast clubs will be available on 1 September.

However, each school will assess its current arrangements for free breakfast provision for learners with a view that the arrangements are reinstated as early in the autumn term as possible, but only where it is safe to do so. The future reopening of breakfast clubs will be communicated in due course.

### **My child is eligible for free school meals (eFSM). As they are unlikely to be able to attend school full-time until 14 September, will they get both a weekly food parcel as well as a free school meal until that time?**

Free school meals will be available on the days your child attends school. The local authority is also considering the ongoing provision of a weekly food parcel for eFSM pupils until 11 September. A decision on this will be communicated in due course.

### **Is my child eligible for free school meals?**

Please email [FSM@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:FSM@bridgend.gov.uk) or contact (01656) 643396 for information about free school meal eligibility criteria.

### **Will school meals be available to purchase when my child returns to school in September?**

Yes.

However, individual schools may need to limit the menu choices for a short period of time.

### **Can I provide my child with a home produced packed lunch for September?**

This is a decision that will be made by individual schools and you are therefore advised to contact your child's school directly.

### **My child normally has a medical specialist diet. Will this be available on the days my child attends school for September?**

Medical specialist diets will be available for your child, but parents would be expected to update the school on any changes to a previously provided specialist diet, to ensure that the Catering Service can be informed prior to your child attending.

### **Will children still receive their free milk in the infants?**

Yes, individual schools will be liaising with the milk provider to resume their free school milk provision throughout the autumn term.

### **Where will my child eat lunch?**

Individual schools will be following Welsh Government guidance and local risk assessments, and will therefore determine the suitability of pupils eating in dining halls or in their classrooms/designated desks.

### **Will the cashless catering system be functioning?**

Yes.

However, parents/carers will need to ensure there is sufficient balance on their child's account. If parents have not received a recent email with their child's account balance, they can contact the school administrator to ask for this information.

It is unlikely that cash revaluation machines in secondary schools will be accessible initially and parents/carers are therefore advised of the need to credit school meal accounts via the ['Pay it'](#) function on the Bridgend County Borough Council website.

## **Inclusion Services**

### **How many people can attend a planning meeting?**

Due to social distancing guidelines the pupil, parent/carer and a school staff member are the only people who can attend a planning meeting. All other professionals will provide an email update.

### **How can specialist staff teach touch typing and Braille skills with restrictions in place?**

Social distancing must be maintained wherever possible. Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) will be provided if social distancing guidelines cannot be adhered to in exceptional circumstances. A discussion will be held with the line manager beforehand and a risk assessment completed.

The number of pupils who require this support will be identified and the sessions planned beforehand.

### **How will pupils who use British Sign Language, be effectively communicated with?**

Discreet signing sessions will be implemented, distractions will be minimised and social distancing will be adhered to where possible. There will be discussion with class teachers to agree the best placement of the pupils and specialist staff.

### **Will pupils from the primary hearing impairment resource base (HIRB) integrate into mainstream classes?**

The individual needs of the pupils will be considered. Proposals for discreet teaching and integration will also be discussed. Full consideration will be given to the needs of the pupil and specialist staff will be able to offer support during integration.

### **Will pre-schoolers access speech and language therapy (SALT) in September?**

We are currently awaiting further guidance from Welsh Government. Currently, telephone conversations, activities and sign-posting continues.

### **Will the sensory playgroup continue?**

We are awaiting further advice from Welsh Government.

We are currently exploring the possibility of using Microsoft Teams to provide one-to-one remote sessions with families where possible.

### **Will fortnightly Neurodevelopmental (ND) Forums and observations resume in September?**

The ND Forum will resume virtually via Microsoft Teams. Forum dates will be shared via the Education and Family Support Directorate's Monday Mailshot as the autumn term commences.

To request an ND observation from a specialist teacher, an observation request form with parental consent will need to be completed and return to the Communications and Relationships Team (CART).

**Will specialist provision applications for observation classes, moderate learning difficulties (MLD) learning resource centres (LRCs) and communication autism resource education (CARE) LRCs be submitted in the autumn term as in previous years?**

Specialist provision application forms will be sent via the Education and Family Support Directorate's Monday Mailshot at the start of the autumn term. The closing date for applications will be 31 October 2020. Further details regarding electronic and mail submissions will follow in September.

**Will Team Teach training, delivered by local authority trainers, resume in the autumn term?**

Team Teach are working towards a blended, six-hour course. Trainers within the local authority will receive training and update schools in September 2020 once training has been completed.

**Will there be ancillary reviews and new application panels for ancillary support in the autumn term?**

Yes.

There will be a full review of all existing ancillary at the end of autumn term 2020. New ancillary applications are being finalised and schools will be notified in September 2020. A document with all panel dates for 2020-2021 will be communicated in the Education and Family Support Directorate Monday mailshot.

**Will staff from CART attend meetings in schools from September?**

Wherever possible, virtual meetings will be held and team members will attend by invitation. However, where essential face-to-face meetings are required, for example, consultation with parents, team members will attend. Please be advised that capacity will be limited as the number of schools staff can visit in one day is limited.

**Are Special Needs Support Assistants (SNSAs) able to move between two school placements in any given day?**

Yes.

SNSAs are able to fulfil their contracted hours in two schools (but no more than two) in one day.

### **Can statutory and school reviews take place in the autumn term?**

Yes.

Reviews have been undertaken successfully throughout lockdown remotely. These will continue remotely in the autumn term, where possible to reduce the risk of transmission and staff from outside school being introduced into contact groups unnecessarily.

### **Will there be any changes to the statutory assessment process and timelines for statements?**

We are still awaiting further guidance from Welsh Government but currently the process and timelines remain unchanged. However, consideration is being given that direct assessments may not have been possible and further information may need to be gathered later when appropriate.