

To: To all Headteachers and
Chairs of Governing Bodies

Gofynnwch

Gaynor Davies

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Dyddiad: 7.12.20
Date:

Dear colleagues

There have been significant discussions in recent weeks regarding the end of term arrangements for our schools and the feedback you have provided has been extremely helpful in shaping our decision making.

As you will be aware, we've recently seen an increasing number of Covid-19 cases in our communities and whilst this pattern is mirrored to some degree in our schools, the level of infection remains relatively low when considering the number of learners and staff in our schools. This is due to the excellent preventative measures that you have put in place and your effective management of confirmed cases when these arise in your school communities. The swift responses you've adopted to confirmed cases and the rapid identification and self-isolation of close contacts has been critical to minimising transmission risks. You have played an invaluable role in keeping learners, staff and our communities safe during this pandemic. School staff have also gone the extra mile to support us in this endeavour.

Welsh Government is committed to keeping our schools open to learners until the end of the term but also recognise that the impact of Covid-19 on communities varies significantly across Wales. A pan Wales approach to the end of term arrangements is unlikely to meet the differing needs of communities across Wales. Welsh Government officials acknowledge that a more bespoke approach might be required in certain circumstances and it is proposed that this stance is adopted in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

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Gaynor Davies
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Dewiswch iaith a diwyg eich dogfen | Available in alternative formats and languages

Croesawn ohebu yn Gymraeg a fydd gohebu yn y Gymraeg ddim yn arwain at oedi. Rhowch wybod inni beth yw'ch dewis iaith e.e Cymraeg neu'n ddwyieithog.
We welcome correspondence in Welsh and corresponding with us in Welsh will not lead to a delay. Let us know your language choice if Welsh or bilingual.

In order to ensure that we maintain health and safety and continuity in learning for our children and young people the following actions are required:

- All schools remain open for learners on the 14th, 15th and 16th of December. INSET should not be arranged on these dates.
- Distance/digital learning should be provided for all school learners on the 17th and 18th of December, unless schools have pre-arranged INSET that is already planned and confirmed with staff and parents. These learners should be coded as a Y code.
- All schools should continue to provide direct teaching on school sites for all high priority vulnerable learners on the 17th and 18th of December unless there is pre-arranged INSET already planned.
- Education and Children's Services will work in partnership to identify high priority vulnerable learners and the information will be shared with schools to ensure that appropriate provision is made. In addition to these high priority learners, school leaders should also identify other vulnerable groups of children that require direct teaching and wellbeing support to be delivered in school. These should include priority vulnerable groups of learners, including those: with ALN; a history of child protection issues; in need of care and support; identified as young carers; and are looked after.
- All school staff and vulnerable learners educated on school sites should adhere to 2 metre social distancing, where possible, and wear face coverings in accordance with the Council's guidance. Primary aged learners are not required to wear a face covering, unless they wish to do so.
- All high priority vulnerable learners that are eligible for school transport should continue to receive this to access school. School leaders will need to ensure that this information is communicated to school transport by the 11th of December at the latest.
- Confirmed numbers of children accessing school on the 17th and 18th of December should be shared with Catering Services by the 11th of December at the latest, to ensure that appropriate school meals can be provided.
- School leaders should continue to work in partnership with the Council to ensure that contact tracing is still undertaken on the 19th, 20th and 21st of December. This should enable all close contacts of confirmed cases from the preceding week to be identified and appropriate actions taken. All referrals should continue to be made to the Education Directorate and appropriate communication sent to families and contact tracers up until the 21th of December.
- TTP will then manage all contact tracing from the 22nd onwards for the duration of the Christmas break. Headteachers will not be required to submit Microsoft Forms for confirmed cases, undertake contact tracing or make direct contact with families from the 22nd of December. Normal procedures will resume on the 4th of January, including the submission of the necessary Microsoft Forms for any outstanding notifications of confirmed cases received between the 22nd of December and the 3rd of January 2021. This will ensure that we have accurate cumulative data for each school.

School leaders will need to ensure that there is sufficient staffing on the school site to support vulnerable learners, deliver direct teaching and wellbeing support. If school staff can undertake their duties safely and effectively in the home context then this can be permitted. However, if professional roles are not suited to home working then these should be undertaken in the school context, in line with the school's established Health and Safety Covid-19 Risk Assessment.

Learners that do not attend school on the 17th and 18th of December 2020 and are eligible for free school meal payments will receive BACS payments. Any parents that do not send their FSM eligible children to school on the 14th, 15th or 16th of December will not receive any payment unless they are required to self-isolate and are eligible to receive this payment.

Every effort will be made to ensure that school leaders are not contacted from the 22nd of December onwards. However, in the event of an incident occurring that needs an emergency response then telephone contact from the emergency planning team will continue to be required. However, this contact will not be made unless it is essential.

As test results are now consistently returning within a 48-hour time frame it is anticipated that the number of cases warranting contact tracing between the 19th and 21st will be very small. I hope you will appreciate that it would be extremely difficult for the Council to reliably identify close contacts in school and communicate with the individuals requiring self-isolation without your support. This arrangement will help to keep our children, staff and communities safe and minimise the transmission risks of Covid-19. The firebreak resulted in a significant reduction in the cases of Covid-19 in our school settings and it is hoped that these local measures will have a similar impact.

Can you please reinforce the need for our children and young people to actively engage in the distance learning offer during school hours and remind them:

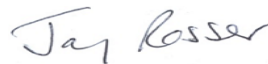
- to stay out of each other's homes, except in very limited circumstances;
- to limit the times they leave their home, and the distance travelled;
- when they do [leave home](#), that they restrict the number of people they come into contact with;
- to maintain [social distancing](#), including outdoors;
- to meet people outdoors rather than indoors where possible;
- to wash their hands regularly and follow [other advice on hygiene](#); and
- to immediately self-isolate if they show symptoms of coronavirus.

As you will be acutely aware, the festive season brings significant hardship and additional pressures to our most vulnerable families so enhanced wellbeing support for those in need will be essential during the period of home learning.

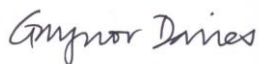
We'd like to thank you all again for your continued support and exceptional hard work during 2020. Our best wishes for a wonderful Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.



Cllr Andrew Morgan
Leader of the Council



Cllr Joy Rosser
Cabinet Member for Education & Inclusion



Gaynor Davies
Director of Education and Inclusion Service



Richard Evans
Director of Human Resources