

P-05-972 Minimum amount of live teaching

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 07 July 2020
Petitions Committee | 07 Gorffennaf 2020

Reference: RS20/12937-4

Petition Number: P-05-972

Petition title: To provide a minimum of 4 hours a day of live teaching during COVID closures for all school children

Text of petition: Welsh children have not been in school since March 20th and very few in the state education sector have received any face to face teaching. We the undersigned want a minimum of 4 hours a day face to face live teaching on line.

1. Background

1.1. Current on-site provision in schools

Schools closed for the provision of statutory education on Friday 20 March on public health grounds due to COVID-19. They have since remained open for vulnerable children and children of key workers with no safe alternative childcare, as part of a 'new purpose' enabling the response to COVID-19. Following their



closure to the vast majority of pupils, schools have been expected to support pupils' learning from home, through the use of online resources such as **Hwb**.

A gradual, staggered return to school began on Monday 29 June. The purpose is for pupils to '**Check in, Catch up and Prepare**' for what the **Minister for Education, Kirsty Williams MS, has warned** is 'likely to be a very long and challenging autumn term'.

Other than pupils who are **shielding or showing coronavirus symptoms**, all pupils should be getting the opportunity to attend their school for educational purposes on several occasions from 29 June until the end of the summer term. However, social distancing requirements mean that not all pupils can attend at the same time.

Welsh Government **operational guidance** envisages that schools will vary in how many pupils they can safely accommodate but overall **no more than a third of pupils will be present at any one time**. The Welsh Government expects that in most schools, learners would have the opportunity to **attend on three occasions before the summer holidays**. However this may be more often in some cases.

The Welsh Government intends that this will break up a long period away from school and help teachers and pupils get ready for a 'new normal'. It is not known what school provision will look like from September; whether pupils will be able to attend full-time or whether social distancing measures will continue to limit capacity and therefore how much time each pupil can spend in school.

1.2. 'Blended learning'

The Welsh Government has used powers under the **Coronavirus Act 2020** to **disapply requirements on schools to deliver the curriculum**. It says this is necessary to ensure schools have the flexibility to focus on the health and well-being of learners, supporting them to re-integrate back into a school environment.

Although pupils currently have the opportunity to attend their school, this only amounts to a few days during the remainder of the summer term. Children and young people therefore continue to learn at home, in addition to attending school. This is described as a '**blended learning approach**' as it **combines face to face learning in school with remote learning at home**. It is likely that blended learning will continue in September when schools and pupils begin the new

academic year and potentially for a significant period beyond that ([Ministerial statement of 3 June](#), para 263).

The Welsh Government has published [guidance on learning over the summer term](#), following the [Stay Safe. Stay Learning guidance](#) it issued in April. Teachers and pupils are advised not to attempt to 'cover' or 'catch up' in the summer term on all of the activity they have missed. The Welsh Government wants them to focus on developing 'learning fitness' and readiness for the next steps rather than focusing on attainment levels and learning loss.

Two Senedd Research blog articles, in [April](#) and [June](#), provide further information on decisions over the closure and reopening of schools, and continuity of learning whilst schools are not operating as normal.

2. The Welsh Government's policy on distance learning and 'live lessons'

The [Stay Home. Stay Learning suite of guidance](#) the Welsh Government published at the end of April (to coincide with the start of the summer term following Easter) included guidance for schools on [Developing approaches to support distance learning](#). This states:

Schools should **closely adhere to their safeguarding policies when determining whether live streaming is appropriate** to host lessons. Should a decision be made to use live streaming then schools should refer to the 'Stay Safe. Stay Learning'. Safeguarding principles and practices of live streaming guidance document and any relevant local authority guidance. [my emphasis]

The [Safeguarding principles and practices of live streaming guidance](#) describes two types of remote learning, which:

- take place more independently at different points in time, based on the learner's wishes or home circumstances (asynchronous)
- take place with multiple learners and teachers at the same time, usually online (synchronous).

It also states (page 2):

g. Decision-making at a school level may determine whether live streaming is appropriate for you to host lessons with your learners. As in

any school setting, **all accountability is owned by the headteacher and governing body of the school**. Therefore this guidance must be observed alongside local authority guidance. [my emphasis]

h. The Welsh Government recommends that:

- all live-streamed lessons should be carried out using Microsoft Teams via Hwb, rather than an external provider;
- the teacher utilises a school issued device;
- due regard should be given to the considerations outlined in this guidance to ensure you and your learners are appropriately protected and safeguarded.

As the Minister for Education's letter to the Committee regarding this petition states, the **Welsh Government does not prescribe the amount of live streaming of lessons** that will be delivered as individual schools have the responsibility for the use of live streaming of lessons according to their capability to do so and local arrangements for interaction with their learners. The Minister adds that **any arrangements for the use of live streaming of lessons will remain the responsibility of individual schools in conjunction with their local authorities** and as such they will need to confirm the agreed position with their local authority.

It is therefore likely that the provision of live lessons varies across Wales between different schools, different local authorities and different consortia regions.

3. Senedd Cymru action

The Senedd's Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Committee is scrutinising the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people. It has held evidence sessions with the Minister for Education on 19 March and 28 April, with a further session scheduled on 7 July (the same day as this Committee's meeting).

The CYPE Committee has also issued an open call for evidence and is publishing submissions on a weekly basis.

4. Potential for remote teaching and learning to widen inequality in educational experiences and outcomes

One of the issues emerging from the CYPE Committee's scrutiny is the **potential inequality arising from differing home learning experiences** of children and young people.

Factors contributing to this include access to technology and other digital learning aids (although the Welsh Government has **allocated £3 million** to address this), housing and living conditions, and parental capacity to support home learning. In addition, there could be implications for pupils with less capability and propensity to learn relatively unguided and unsupervised, for example learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and others more reliant on one-to-one and/or face-to-face teaching.

In April, the Sutton Trust published a report on the **impact of school shutdown on social mobility**, which indicated a **correlation between families' socio-economic circumstances and the amount of home learning undertaken** by children. The report is based on research on England, although its findings are likely to also be applicable in Wales.

A further **report in May from the Institute for Fiscal Studies**, based on research in England, found that:

Children from better-off families are spending 30% more time on home learning than are those from poorer families. Children in the highest-income fifth of families spend 5.8 hours a day on educational activities, over 75 minutes more than their peers in the poorest fifth of households (4.5 hours).

The IFS also reported that **school closures are 'almost certain to increase educational inequalities'**:

Pupils from better-off families are spending longer on home learning; they have access to more individualised resources such as private tutoring or chats with teachers; they have a better home set-up for distance learning; and their parents report feeling more able to support

them. Policymakers should already be thinking about how to address the gaps in education that the crisis is widening.

Subsequent research from UCL Institute of Education ([LLAKES Research Paper 67](#)) suggested that the IFS finding that pupils were doing an average of approximately five hours home learning per day was an overstatement as it measured time in whole hour units even where the time undertaken was less than an hour. UCL concluded:

The closure of schools, and their only-partial re-opening, constitute a potential threat to the educational development of a generation of children. (...)

The inequality between regions and social groups [is] substantial.

UCL found, based on surveys in all parts of the UK, that pupils are doing an average of 2.5 hours schoolwork per day, ranging as follows:

- 19.6% are doing none or less than one hour schoolwork per day (21.6% in Wales);
- 62.9% are doing between one and four hours (63.4% in Wales);
- 17.5% are doing four or more hours (15.0% in Wales).

[See Table 3 of the LLAKES report]

The figures for Wales were relatively similar to the Northern and Midlands regions, but lower than the South East and South West, regions of England. They also suggest pupils in Wales are doing slightly more work than those in Scotland but less than in Northern Ireland.

The UK Government has announced a [£1 billion fund to tackle the impact of lost teaching time in England](#). It is not yet known what the size of any Barnett consequential funding for Wales from this will be.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

