

Senedd Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

Ymchwiliad i effaith argyfwng Covid-19 ar blant
a phobl ifanc yng Nghymru

COV 158
Ymateb gan: Unigolyn

Welsh Parliament
Children, Young People and Education Committee

Inquiry into the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on
children and young people in Wales

COV 158
Response from: Individual

I am writing to express my concern regarding the current position regarding the education of children in Wales.

I would first like to say I am pleased children have been able to return to school for the catch up and check in sessions, and that this has been provided to all year groups. This is definitely positive progress and a very small step in the right direction.

I hope this three week period is used to see what does and does not work so time can be spent over the summer period, creatively and productively, looking at how schools can operate fully come September. The current arrangements are not sustainable and are detrimental to children's wellbeing.

As non Welsh speaking parents we decided for a number of reasons to place our children in a Welsh medium school as we feel there are many benefits to this. However if significant progress can not be made around the amount of time children can spend in school come September then I do not feel it is viable for us to continue with this. As parents we are unable to support our children in the same way as we could if they attended a English speaking school.

I also believe there is something fundamentally wrong with a society and a government which prioritises the opening of Primark and premier league football over that of education. A number of professionals and studies have spoken out regarding the detrimental impact of children being out of school, and I echo this both as a mother and a social work professional.

As such after the term finishes in July it would be nothing short of appalling to not spend the summer holidays planning and being creative around how schools can return in a fuller and more meaningful capacity in September. Other devolved nations have already set out their vision to provide this come September.

Surely the summer period should be spent comprehensively planning, and parents, children and teachers should be made aware of the Government's position ready for September and for there to be time to resolve any issues raised by teaching unions in good time.

As all other governments have outlined their initial plans, why is it again that Wales is the last to provide their plan and position. Is education in Wales viewed as less important than in other nations?

As a labour government education is a core value - I would hope this is not lip service and is being addressed and looked at. The impact on education, social wellbeing and mental health will be felt for much longer, the longer children are deprived from being in the class room on a full time basis.

When concerns were raised regarding NHS capacity and how GP appointments could operate, there was fast tracking of buildings and moving to a new way of working. Creativity was used and at an unprecedented pace - why has the same approach and attitude not been taken with education? Is our children's education, emotional wellbeing and social skills less important?

Evidence is clear around the reduced risk of the virus to children, and good track and test systems should help reduce risk to teachers and other staff. Surely this is 'following the science' I would also hope careful consideration is given to the two meters being abolished in schools, as the removal of this is in the interest of children's emotional wellbeing and mental health.

I appreciate the current situation is unprecedented and everyone is still learning about the virus and it's impact. However i would urge education and the plans for September to be prioritised and published in a timely manner.