

I am writing to you in relation to schooling in Wales from September vis-a-vis COVID-19 and issues of social distancing etc.

I am extremely concerned about the short, medium and long term implications for children if the current plan for so-called "blended learning" goes ahead from September. My understanding is that this would see children attending school for as little as a day a week, with the burden of teaching for the rest of the time falling on parents and care givers. How are parents supposed to juggle working and educating their children? It is simply impossible.

My son is nearly 4. We do not speak Welsh but we chose to send him to Welsh medium school for all kinds of very positive reasons. I was learning Welsh but working from home and looking after him has meant that I haven't been able to continue when the classes went to Zoom. He only started school in January this year but the progress he made in Welsh in the 9 or so weeks he was there pre-lockdown was incredible, I am so proud of him. However, his current view is that "Welsh is for school, English is for home". My understanding is this is pretty normal for children in this position. I CANNOT "do" Welsh with him. He now won't even watch Cyw. We are immensely lucky that he is now back at his fantastic binlingual private nursery, but many parents are not in this position. I am not going to be able to "teach" him in Welsh in September, absolutely no way.

I am not a 'replacement teacher'. Parents cannot and should not be expected to teach their children for long periods of time. Welsh families are really struggling. And what about vulnerable children? Those for whom school is a sanctuary? If schools in England and Scotland are planning on opening as 'normal' in September, why can't we do the same in Wales? Surely the evidence is the same? I know schools are in a very difficult position, and no one knows exactly what is in store in the coming months. But "blended learning" as a fait accompli is doing the children of Ceredigion and of Wales a huge disservice.

I implore you to consider the increasing evidence regarding children and COVID-19 suggesting that attending full time, non socially distanced schooling is relatively low risk, and is crucial to children's education, physical and mental health. New studies are coming out daily, but please see, for example:

Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

<https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/covid-19-research-evidence-summaries>

COVID-19 in 7780 pediatric patients: A systematic review

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/eclinm/article/PIIS2589-5370\(20\)30177-2/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/eclinm/article/PIIS2589-5370(20)30177-2/fulltext)

Moreover, there is also considerable evidence showing that children are at a high risk of negative outcomes due to not being in school full-time. For example:

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/we-dont-need-no-education/>