

Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-1121
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/00164/21
Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Chair, Petitions Committee

18 January 2021

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your correspondence in relation to P-05-1121, which refers to only opening schools for children of keyworkers over the lockdown in January 2021.

The Welsh Government's priorities during this pandemic continue to be the safety and welfare of students, school staff and the wider community, and the continuing education of learners.

Since the petition was received, things have moved on at pace. You will be aware that the situation in Wales and across the UK remains very serious, and that the four UK Chief Medical Officers have agreed that the UK is now at the highest level of risk, Joint Biosecurity Council Level 5.

The First Minister has [announced](#) that we will bring the decision-making on schools and colleges into line with the Welsh Government's three-week review timetable. The next review will be on 29 January. Unless the rates of community transmission in Wales reduce significantly by then, schools and colleges will remain closed to most students for face-to-face learning until the February half term. The Minister for Education has written directly to the Heads of secondary schools, primary schools and special schools to outline this decision. We are confident that schools and colleges have online learning provision in place for this immediate period.

Schools and colleges will remain open for children of critical workers and vulnerable learners, as well as for learners who need to complete essential exams or assessments. On this basis, Special Schools and PRU's should remain open if possible.

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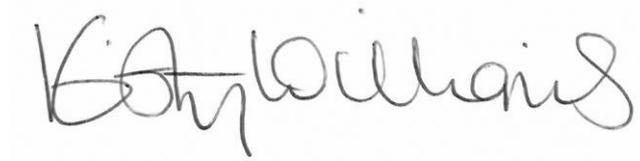
Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

We are keeping plans for the return to schools under review. The scientific advice on schools is a collection of evidence gathered by the Technical Advisory Cell (TAC), rather than based on one key indicator. For information, the latest TAC report can be found [here](#).

We know that schools and colleges have been safe and secure environments throughout the pandemic. However, we also know that education settings being open can contribute to wider social mixing outside the school and college environment. We are confident that schools and colleges have online learning provision in place for this period.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams', written in a cursive style.

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