

CYPE(5)-07-21 - Paper to note 2

Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Lynne Neagle MS
Chair
Children, Young People and Education
Committee Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
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24 February 2021

Dear Lynne

Thank you for your letter of 3 February regarding the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people and their return to education.

Education remains a top priority for the Welsh Government. Foundation Phase learners began to return to their schools and settings from 22 February, along with some vocational learners and apprentices in priority sectors. As the First Minister announced on 19 February if the public health situation continues to improve, we aim to ensure the remainder of primary learners, as well as learners in Years 11 and 13 in secondary schools and those sitting equivalent qualifications in colleges, return from 15 March. Flexibility will also be offered to other learners such as those in Year 12 and in Year 10 who may also have been entered for qualifications this summer.

We recognise that the delivery of blended learning was inconsistent in the initial stages of the disruption. The regional consortia undertook a review of delivery and this informed the development of further more detailed guidance. More recently we have feedback that more and higher quality remote synchronous and asynchronous provision is being offered, however this is not the same for children and young people as being in school. We have created a Blended Learning Working Group, consisting of officers from Welsh Government, Local Authorities and the Regional Consortia, and tasked them with addressing issues of equity of access to learning in periods of disruption.

Further mitigations have been put into place to ensure learners, staff, their families and the wider community can have confidence that schools and settings continue to be safe. This includes revising the guidance on use of face coverings by staff and learners, as well as introducing twice weekly asymptomatic testing for staff as well as learners in Year 10 and above. We are working very closely with education settings to plan for the safe return of learners and staff, as well as building our understanding of the harms to children and young people. This information will form the basis of education recovery planning from summer 2021 onwards.

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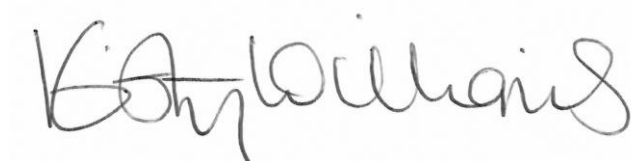
Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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.

Our vaccination strategy sets out that those who are most at risk of catching coronavirus and developing serious illnesses will get the vaccine first. This is based on the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. We will continue to be guided by the advice of the JCVI. Staff in schools and colleges responsible for providing intimate health and care support to groups of young people who have complex medical needs have been included alongside frontline health and social care worker in priority group 2 and were by February 12 offered a first dose of the vaccine.

We continue to work closely with stakeholders to minimise disruption to learning whilst keeping Wales safe.

Yours sincerely

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

Kirsty Williams AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education