

APSE Briefing: Keep Education Safe: Operational guidance for schools and settings (COVID-19)

To all APSE Wales and for information in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland

Key issues

- On 3 June, the Minister for Education (Wales) announced that schools would increase operations from 29 June until 24 July.
- The Welsh Government published guidance on 10 June 2020 for schools in Wales to advise on preparing for and increasing operations during a phased return up to the end of the summer term.

1. Introduction

The [decision framework for the next phase of education and childcare](#) was published on 15 May by the Welsh Government as a working document with the aim of providing advice on approaches to changing the operation of schools and other providers over time in response to COVID-19.

Further guidance was published on 10 June 2020, to support schools and settings to safely increase their on-site operations for staff and learners.

This briefing provides an overview of the guidance. The full document can be accessed via the following link:-

[Keep education safe: operational guidance schools and settings COVID-19-19](#)

It should be noted that the guidance is only applicable to Wales and that Scottish, Northern Irish and English authorities should refer to guidance published by their respective Governments.

2. The guidance

The document contains 3 sections which can be summarised as follows: -

Preparing for an increase in operations

The guidance sets out the expectation that all learners should have the opportunity to attend school for educational purposes for the remainder of the summer term.

It is acknowledged that in the shorter term a school or setting's capacity will mean that overall, at most, a third of learners present at any one time. Therefore, it is anticipated that in most schools learners

would have the opportunity to attend school on 3 occasions before the summer holidays, however, in some schools, it may be more.

The guidance advises that schools should work with local authorities to identify the capacity for the summer term, how this can be increased for the autumn term and to resolve issues with staffing capacity.

As operations increase over the summer term, there is an expectation that children attending hubs provision will move back to their own school or setting. However, for learners who are currently using hubs provision, the guidance states that schools and settings should continue to make additional provision for those learners, alongside the learning that they are entitled to for the remainder of the summer term. There is no requirement for the hub provision to continue for the summer holidays.

Keeping people safe and well

The guidance states that local authorities are already working with schools and settings to consider how best to support the ongoing well-being needs of all learners at this time.

It is advised that it is also crucial that services are delivered in a way that is consistent with the expert scientific advice provided and the guidance outlines specific areas of focus including:-

- **Hygiene** – This aspect of the guidance has an emphasis on handwashing, states that there is a need for schools to work with local authorities to ensure the effective supply of hygiene and cleaning products, and the requirement to be mindful of the physical environment, for example increasing the airflow and ventilation.
- **Learners and staff showing symptoms** – This section of the guidance provides an overview of what needs to be in place in this scenario including, having clear procedures in place for reporting, cleaning the surfaces carefully that the individual has come into contact with, and the requirement for anyone displaying symptoms to stay at home for seven days and get tested.
- **Social distancing** – This aspect of the guidance focuses on social distancing and measures that should be taken in circumstances where it is not possible to maintain 2 metres distance, for example in primary schools.
- **Timing considerations** – This part of the guidance states that schools should seek to stagger arrival and departure times as well as lunchtimes and breaks to ensure that movement and concentration of staff and learners is minimised.
- **Rotating learners and staff** – This aspect of the guidance provides advice regarding learners attending school in blocks and confirms that this does not need to be done by year group, for example, children from the same household attending in the same block.
- **Test, Trace, Protect** - This section outlines the government's strategy for test, trace and protect providing details of how it works, the requirement for schools to reinforce the governments messaging and the process to adopt in the event of a person receiving a positive test result.
- **What happens if there is an outbreak in a school?** – In this instance, it is advised that the school will need to work with the NHS and local authorities who will provide advice based on

the individual situation and ensure that the school will be supported in preventing further spread.

- **Personal protective equipment (PPE)** – It is clearly stated in this aspect of the guidance that PPE is not required when conducting normal activities. However, further information is provided regarding situations where PPE is required including in a suspected COVID-19 case and intimate care.
- **Use of face coverings for health purposes** – This aspect of the guidance sets out the circumstances that require a face covering to be worn and there is an additional section outlining the implications of face masks for deaf children.
- **Supporting the well-being of learners and staff** – The guidance provides an overview of Learners' well-being, Intensive / specialist support, Staff well-being and safeguarding. For each of the areas, there are references to further guidance and support that is available.
- **Cleaning and disinfection** – This aspect of the guidance sets out the cleaning regimes that need to be in place for both general hygiene purposes and for where an individual has shown symptoms. Reference is made to the [cleaning in non-healthcare settings](#) guidance that was updated on 15 May 2020.
- **Transport** – The guidance sets out the considerations that should be given to travelling to and from the education setting and states that local authorities should work with schools to determine the demand for transport and should endeavour to meet the need.
- **Layout and use of space** – This part of the guidance provides details of the measures that should be taken in the physical environment for example layout of rooms and movement around the space.
- **Use of outdoor spaces** – The guidance promotes the use of outdoor space and advises that the use of these areas should be maximised.
- **Uniform and equipment** – This section of the guidance acknowledges that the uniform is the responsibility of the school governors. However, it encourages schools to set a temporary uniform policy that avoids items of uniform that cannot be machine washed easily. There is also reference in this section regarding how equipment should be handled.
- **Catering** – This aspect of the guidance sets out what needs to be considered when putting in place the school catering arrangements and sets out the available options. In addition, it advises that schools should work with local authorities regarding the food provision and states that all meals provided should be based on the Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Wales) Regulations 2013.

- **Risk assessments** – The guidance is clear that a risk benefit approach should be taken to the phased opening of schools and this section sets out the steps that schools should take to assess the risks. Like other aspects of the guidance, it states that schools and settings should work with local authorities to develop their COVID-19 risk assessments and provides an overview of the five steps that schools need to undertake.
- **Communicating with parents / carers** - This section of the guidance focuses on the school's communication with parent and carers and is very explicit that concise communication is paramount and sets out details of what needs to be communicated to ensure parents and carers understand the expectations. The guidance also advises that a mechanism should be put in place to allow parents and carers to ask questions and raise concerns.

APSE COMMENT

The guidance outlines the need for schools and local authorities to work together to enable the wider opening of schools and education settings. Therefore, councils have a critical role to play in developing strategies and delivering services at a local level to facilitate the Welsh Governments' aim to return children to education settings.

Further support

The APSE COVID-19 support hub was set up to ensure quick information is available on frontline services to our member councils. You can access the hub using [this link](#).

APSE has also introduced new services to support our members including a rapid response network query service, dedicated WhatsApp groups, dedicated COVID-19 briefings and online forums for remobilisation of council services. To access these services please enter your details using [this link](#).

If your council is not a member of APSE you can enquire about joining using [this link](#).

Vickie Hacking

APSE Principal Advisor