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Keep Education Safe: guidance on learning over the summer term

This guidance provides advice on learning and teaching that schools and settings may wish to carry out the remainder of the summer term.

Last updated: 10 June 2020
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Introduction

The response to COVID-19 has tested many leaves the whole of the education and childcare sector. Schools and settings have had to face challenges around how continuous, social distancing and illness and pastoral bereavement. Returning to education in a physical setting raises its own challenges.

Schools and colleges have already stepped up to the challenge of COVID: establishing provision for children of critical workers and vulnerable children, and providing remote learning and support for pupils not attending school. As we move to the next phase, the role of schools, settings and practitioners at this time will be just as critical: nurturing our children and young people, supporting their well-being, and helping them to learn, emotionally and cognitively, you are invaluable to our efforts as a nation in the defence of our health.

On 5 June, the Minister for Education announced that schools would increase operations from the 24 June so that all learners have the opportunity to 'draw together with their friends and their teachers'. Ensuring that all learners are able to 'have the opportunity to attend their school or setting for contact time over the remainder of the summer term'. In practice, this means that schools and settings will be preparing to welcome back, or providing for, their specially vulnerable learners and children attending school in place.

As more learners return to the physical school environment, practitioners will be operating in a very different context. This will continue for the foreseeable future, and will mean that schools and settings will need to be prepared for a blended learning approach. Schools and settings will have to develop new learning and approaches to meet the needs of their learners in response to the COVID-19 crisis. This document provides guidance on learning and teaching and weigh up their priorities, flexibly drawing on a wide range of curricular guidance to support them in this work.

In meeting these challenges all staff will need to draw on the full range of their professional expertise. Schools and settings have a unique and vital contribution to make to the well-being of their learners, and the support given by the profession. Engagement in deep and satisfying learning can provide redeeming respite from the many pressures children and young people face at this time. Teachers and other staff will need to draw on their creativity in providing necessary support and guidance in schools.

The **decision framework for the next phase of education and childcare** provided by the Education Recovery Group, sets out the Government's strategy for the operation of schools and other provisions over the remainder of COVID-19. This reiterated the Minister for Education's four key principles for the next phase which are:

- the safety and mental, emotional and physical well-being of learners and staff
- combining our confidence in the national effect and strategy to fight the spread of COVID-19
- the well-being of learners and parents, staff and trainers – based on evidence and information – so that they can plan ahead
- ability to prioritise learners at key points, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds
- consistency with the Wales Government's framework for decision making: to have guidance in place to support measures such as cleansing, managing attendance and wider preventative actions.

These principles are critical not only to any decisions to increase the operations of schools and settings, but also to inform the priorities for the system in the coming months.

Purpose of this guidance

This guidance provides advice on learning and teaching that schools and settings may wish to carry out the remainder of the summer term. It is not intended to support practitioners' thinking as they prepare for the autumn term. It is aimed at schools and post-16 provision, and does not cover the early years sector. It is also not intended to cover the young people of other ages, such as apprenticeship and adult provision.

We are publishing this guidance to support schools and settings as they re-evaluate learning for the foreseeable future in response to a range of challenges such as:

- supporting learners to be ready to learn again
- developing learning which allows learners to continue to progress
- providing opportunities for learners to socialise with their peers and learning
- developing appropriate learning to adapt to the current context
- using the ethos, principles and guidance of the new Curriculum for Wales and the Welsh Baccalaureate
- encouraging practitioners to use and develop their professional judgement to best benefit learners.

This guidance sets out key principles to guide schools and settings' planning and learning development. It is not intended to replace curriculum guidance, but to draw on it and provide a framework for its application.

This guidance will be reviewed in the coming weeks, based on the feedback provided for schools and settings in advance of the next school year.

To support this, guidance on the practical operations of schools and settings as they return is also available. Therefore, this guidance should be read in conjunction with the **Keeping Education Safe: operational guidance for schools and settings (COVID-19)**. **HS Wales has also been developed to respond to common queries as they arise.**

Expectations for learning over the summer term

This time before the summer break is limited and schools will have realised opportunities to engage with their learners. It is, therefore, important to put the well-being of staff and learners at the forefront of their planning and learning. This time should be used to:

- spend time undertaking activities which support the health and well-being of learners and practitioners
- check in with learners, practitioners and parents to develop their expectations for learning and begin to rebuild school learning as appropriate
- use the Coronavirus (COVID-19): Keeping Education Safe: operational guidance for educational settings to inform planning
- engage with families, understanding learners' well-being needs and building confidence in the overall approach we are taking.

At this time more than ever, the focus should be on identifying and supporting the needs of individual learners.

Welsh Government will clarify the expectations for the next academic year in the next update to this guidance.

Supporting health and well-being

The critical importance of well-being

As a human species however, learner and staff well-being should be the primary concern. The reality of social distancing also means that learners will still spend a significant amount of their learning remotely.

When we refer to health and well-being, we are not simply talking about the absence of illness or disease. We are talking about the physical, mental, emotional and relationship implications of social distancing, isolation and potentially bereavement will be much more relevant.

Well-being is both vital in its own right and a key enabler of learning, physical, mental and emotional well-being can all support learning in and as learners to be ready to learn. Schools and settings will need to be aware of the potential implications of learning and pastoral interventions and make a conscious effort to support the mental health and well-being of young people. Learners and practitioners will need to be supported to feel safe and secure. Schools and settings should focus on supporting well-being as a foundation for learning. This should be the starting point for schools during the summer term.

Practitioners will need to have particular regard for learners who, for whatever reason are unable to attend a school or setting to receive any contact time and who may be at a disadvantage.

There is a real expectation, in addition, of well-being and our ability to be affected by the challenges we face. The pandemic is likely to have exacerbated the well-being needs of many learners and staff and young people who may find it difficult to engage with learning and school.

The different experiences learners will have had at home and with their families will play a large part in how readily they adapt to attending school or settling in a familiar room. For all learners, this is likely to feel very different to the school they left at the beginning of March. For some, this will be a very, very much more support than others in meeting the transition back to school. Staff will need to consider how to support all learners to respond to:

- the long period at home, especially for those in challenging circumstances or who have found this hard to manage or those who may be anxious about returning or find the prospect of returning traumatic
- issues and concerns related to COVID-19 and the response to it
- pre-existing issues that may have increased as a result of COVID-19
- the process of integrating into a physical setting for education.

The support necessary will range from that offered to the majority who require free and universal interventions to school relationships with teachers and peers, to those who will need a high level of pastoral and specialist support. The frequency of this will of course depend on the individual learner.

Mental and emotional well-being

The return to school can offer learners a range of mental health benefits. It provides a routine, structure, and a place to socialise with peers. It can also spend time with adults in school who have become important to them.

Communication and conversation can be an important support. For some learners, being able to talk in a safe and trusting space will can be one of the therapeutic and more immediate than being referred to another professional or service. Practitioners will need to be prepared to listen to what learners will be critical throughout the period. Staff should encourage learners to discuss their questions and concerns. Learners should recognise that it is natural to feel a range of emotions and that practitioners will be there to listen to staff if they have any questions or concerns, especially around COVID-19 and information should be provided in an honest, developmentally appropriate manner.

For many learners, simply engaging in meaningful learning experiences will be important and beneficial. Learning should be a balance of enjoyment, progression and engagement in learning.

Schools can support learners to respond to the disruption of routine and school structure and the impacts of long periods at home which may have been difficult. Learners may well have suffered or will suffer bereavements, or have family or friends who have been affected by COVID-19. Schools and practitioners remaining at home for long periods may have also found it an advantage to adapt or the mental health of the whole household. Schools can give learners a routine and structure to their day, if they can.

Returning to school staff may well need more anxiety and stress than usual, especially younger in the most vulnerable will find the disruption of partial attendance difficult. Schools should be aware of the impact of this and be ready to support learners that find challenges in this and some learners will find it more difficult to adjust to.

All learners should have access to a range of tools and support for their emotional and mental well-being at school. Universal provision is not about diagnosis and intervention, but about providing a framework for all learners. It is about practitioners providing time to support learners in understanding their own well-being, in establishing resilience and developing coping mechanisms to support well-being and learning. It is also about ensuring that those who need extra pastoral or clinical pastoral support can be used.

For many learners, school provides additional specific interventions beyond learning to help them manage their mental health. The summer term also provides the opportunity for schools to identify these needs in advance of the next academic year. Schools should be ready to support learners who have issues where a learner's engagement has been traumatic or abrupt, serious or these or not on the **safeguarding** process.

It is also important to remember that for an overall learner, some aspects of lockdown may have been relatively positive. Providing more time, a less pressured environment and a focus on well-being and positive learning. Schools should continue to encourage families to do so.

Relationships and social well-being

A physical return to school has the potential to be a renewed opportunity for learners to socialise with their peers and practitioners. Learners and young adults in school also become important to them. Some learners will need additional support to reconnect. Feeling of belonging and connectedness are critical to well-being and to learning. Schools should be ready to support this. Therefore play a vital part in developing a sense of belonging and connectedness in their learners. This includes:

- Education settings actively contribute to a sense of belonging and connectedness in a number of ways including through:
  - nurturing both positive relationships and trust between staff and learners
  - ensuring learners feel valued, listened to and heard
  - giving learners opportunities to work collaboratively, in purposeful learning
  - developing a sense of community.

Relationships with other learners and staff are a key aspect of learners' well-being. Its critical they take to interacting other key relationships, so that the relationships with grandparents, having opportunity to rekindle relationships or establish new ones.

After many weeks without face-to-face year interaction, being allowed into school and being with their peers and practitioners will be very exciting and upsetting for many learners. Learners will require time, support and understanding to develop new behaviours and opportunities to play, socialise and learn. Schools should be ready to support learners in this and practitioners should ensure that learners have time, space and structure. Activities to re-form relationships with other learners and with staff. Practitioners will need to be ready and able to be supportive in developing between learner and teacher.

For some learners, these relationships may have continued online which will have been a positive experience and practitioners will need to be ready to work with their friends. However, practitioners should remain alert to the potential increased instances of harmful behaviors online.

The role of practitioners should be that and foremost to nurture children and young people. Learners should be supported positively to understand and develop their relationships with other learners and practitioners. Schools should ensure that expectations of learners are reasonable and support their well-being.

Physical well-being

Schools can provide important opportunities to support learners' physical well-being. This gives young people opportunities to enjoy a range of physical activity and to develop their physical skills. Schools should be ready to support personal diet and access and ready to use and to be supportive. Learners who have had a significant impact on learners' access to fresh. Their changing diet and access to food may well be affected by COVID-19. Schools should be ready and aware of this and be ready to be especially difficult in the current the nature of some schools and settings. Schools should consider how learners will be able to access healthy food and how they will be able to support those in pressing healthy behaviours. Particular emphasis should be placed on physical enjoyment, as this supports them to develop health-affirming behaviours.

Schools should be ready to support learners who have been affected by bereavement and trauma. Some learners will find these difficult to adjust to at school, or may have received conflicting or confusing advice from elsewhere.

The role of play and outdoor learning

Practitioners should consider how play and outdoor learning can support learners' well-being. Both provide wide ranging opportunities to support learners' well-being, including their emotional well-being, their physical well-being and their social well-being. They should therefore be considered central to any approach to present return.

Play for all learners

Practitioners should recognise the important role of play for learners of all ages. This is critical to their development, their well-being and their socialisation. Even while seeking to maintain social distancing, practitioners should ensure learners have the opportunity to play.

All learners should be given opportunities to play and socialise both through structured and unstructured play. Practitioners should consider, for example, by having very small groups or holding play activities inside, outdoors. Break times could be staggered to support this.

Outdoor learning

Schools should maximise the time learners spend outdoors. The physical mental and educational benefits of outdoor learning opportunities are clear:

- learning 'in the outdoors has been shown to support both physical and mental health and well-being
- learning 'about the outdoors provides a context to develop ambitious, challenging and relevant learning across the curriculum
- learning 'for the outdoors can be about understanding the importance of emergency and environmental sustainability, leading to the development of ethical citizen-hood.

It also has important benefits during the COVID-19 outbreak as:

- evidence indicates that the risk of infection is reduced outdoors
- evidence suggests that the virus suffers if sunlight
- the risk of COVID-19 is lower when people are outdoors and socialising.

Practitioners should ensure that learners have time, space and structure. Activities to re-form relationships with other learners and with staff. Practitioners will need to be ready and able to be supportive in developing between learner and teacher.

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Developing learning experiences

Clarifying expectations for the summer term

In addition to the emphasis on well-being, schools should as appropriate, begin to widen learning and teaching. This should include supporting learners to be as far as possible learners are ready for the next academic year.

This guidance on learning is in part to support schools, recognising that some learners will have had very little contact with their teachers. It is also useful for schools and settings in planning for a continuation of school operations in the next academic year. More detailed guidance will be sent in the coming weeks.

At present, schools may wish to draw on existing curriculum guidance that should also consider how new curriculum guidance will be implemented next year. In the limited time available before the summer holidays, the focus should be on well-being, and on ensuring that learners are ready to progress most of the learning within the classroom and offers learners the opportunities beyond the classroom (e.g. homework) to a teacher-led environment. Practitioners should use their professional judgement and offers some opportunities for learning within the classroom.

Practitioners should not attempt to 'cover' or catch up on all that the activity they would have done in the first that learners were ready for their return. This is not expected of them and should not be the focus of learning during this time.

They may principles which should guide any learning both over the remainder of the summer term and the partial return during the next academic year are as follows.

Over the summer term, there should be:

- an increased focus on well-being, play and outdoor learning (highlighted in the section above)
- a focus on consolidating previous learning' 'R- learning should have a clear focus on helping learners to learn again, on their progression and next steps, rather than focusing on new attainment or a need to 'catch up' on what they have missed. The focus should be only, very high, on learners progress in a supportive way
- where learning is reintroduced, learning experiences developed in accordance with the new Curriculum for Wales should be used to access physical and remote learning and practitioners will need to be flexible and to support those, rather than carry on with 'business as usual'
- the schools and settings have to think about learning and teaching for the next school year, they should also consider the following principles:
  - A focus on the purposes and principles of the new curriculum for Wales' learning: many of the answers for schools on the focus, flexibility and approaches to learning will be found in the guidance for the Curriculum for Wales guidance.
  - Achieved 'in school' and 'out of school' learning should be a single continuum of learning. Although the delivery of the Welsh curriculum in practitioners will need to think how learning in classroom supports the valuable and limited contact time.

Preparing learners for learning Stages

Learning should focus on preparing learners to be ready to learn in school again, to make progress and identifying their next steps, rather than focusing on level attainment or learning loss. Learners will need time and support to settle back into school life, to be able to be ready to learn and to be learners' next steps to progression, rather than trying to 'catch up'.

Learners will need time and support to re-adjust and may need to rebuild the confidence and resilience for learning again. For those underlying potential exams next academic year, they may feel that they are having further uncertainty.

Assessment and progression

As learning is carried is reintroduced, assessment should be used to support each individual learner as they engage with learning, to encourage progression and to identify next steps. Assessment should be used as far as practicable for the curriculum before the summer break.

- for those providing for EOTAS learners, what specific support is required?
- what is the most effective way for the assessment of learners' progress and needs can be used collaborative?
- is any additional support for literacy, numeracy and digital skills necessary for learners to be successful?
- what are the minimum relevant language of learning and assessment different to the language used at school? How can these needs be supported? Is there a need for a 'bridging' language?
- how can the setting recognise and celebrate learning outside of school to date?

This guidance on assessment is essential to support all learners, including those in Years 10 and 12 currently studying for qualifications. They will have had their learning and teaching for their qualifications significantly disrupted term and their mental, emotional and physical well-being and their future and financial priority for practitioners during this time.

Using new curriculum principles to support learning

As schools begin to think about learning and teaching for the next school year and beyond, the ethos, principles and guidance of the new Curriculum for Wales and the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted, more than ever, the need for the first purposes in learners' education. Practitioners will be developing and changing their approaches to learning and teaching, in the light of the experience of the first purposes offer a central focus for the learning and teaching. Developing Many of the answers to the flexibility, autonomy and challenges of the curriculum for Wales, the Welsh Baccalaureate and the Welsh Language Charter will provide practitioners with practitioners with ideas and guidance in this area. The new curriculum should not be seen as an additional burden, but rather an opportunity to support learners in this challenging time.

In particular, the health and well-being focus of planning and expressions element of the guidance provides important support that schools can draw on in this time. The guidance on the Curriculum for Wales provides a range of ideas learners to support their mental and emotional and physical health and form and maintain healthy relationships, make health affirming decisions and develop their well-being and resilience. Practitioners, in their own, should be critical to learners at this time.

Schools and settings should also use the current flexibility to make learning opportunities out of the current situation. The current situation can provide and make sense of the current situation and to use it as a gateway for wider learning. For example:

- the importance of protection from infection in Health and Well-being
- the impact of COVID-19 on the world of work, including the impact of technological solutions to reduce the risk of transmission in Science and Technology
- the impact on employment growth in Mathematics and Numeracy
- the unprecedented scale of immigration and economic migration.

'In school curriculum' supported by remote learning

Learning approaches should recognise that current curriculum programmes of study were not designed for blended learning. However, approaches can draw on the principles of the new Curriculum for Wales and provide a framework for pupil in the new curriculum along with the new curriculum guidance as a whole. The Curriculum for Wales guidance has been developed with the profession in mind and provides a framework for learning and teaching which is deliberately pedagogic with a national framework.

It will be for schools and settings to decide the approach to learning that will be most beneficial for their learners based on considerations such as:

- what support do learners need to be able to build their learning Stream?
- what approaches are most effective for the learners' well-being and to learning that will supported?
- are there key experiences that are essential for particular year groups to have had, or for particular groups of learners, that can be built into the curriculum before the summer break?
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learning

As schools and settings prepare for a longer period over the autumn, the blend of 'in school' and 'out of school' learning should be supported by a single curriculum, driven by the learning undertaken during the time spent 'in school'. It is critical that learners should not experience two parallel curriculums which would lead to a confusing and disjointed learning experience.

The contact time learners have will be valuable and precious. Practitioners should think about the balance and relationship between these: using contact time carefully and effectively and identifying how remote learning can support that. Contact time should not be spent doing things that learners can do from home. Rather practitioners should consider how they can empower learners to undertake meaningful investigations and learning experiences at home. Time at home can give learners opportunity to research, prepare and think, before exploring and consolidating concepts and skills during contact time.

Practitioners will need to consider carefully how learning and teaching uses the physical space available and that the use of physical space enables learning rather than presenting an obstacle. For example, if learners are sat at the same desk all day, this is very likely to inhibit effective learning. Likewise, learners may feel more exposed sat in a distanced desk. This may affect their willingness to participate and they may need more support and encouragement.

Remote learning which supports this is especially key. Practitioners should also draw on the expectations and supporting documentation set out through **Stay Safe, Stay Learning** which will support practitioners in developing the 'how' of remote learning. This has important implications for pedagogy.

Wider system collaboration and support

In light of capacity challenges, schools and settings should look for opportunities to co-construct, and if need be co-deliver provision in partnership with their clusters and networks. This has potential to allow settings to help manage capacity issues, especially around remote learning. Similarly, schools should seek to draw on the potential for engagement and collaboration with other agencies such as youth services and library services.

As the operations of schools increase, practitioners should look for opportunities to use the new curriculum to inform their approaches. Professional learning should support practitioners to develop approaches to curriculum design, informed by the Curriculum for Wales guidance and in particular '**Designing your curriculum'**.

During this period, we do not expect key stage assessments to be undertaken, nor data about the outcomes of such assessments to be gathered. It is not appropriate during this time for schools to use summative assessment for the purpose of tracking. Schools should focus on supporting each individual learner to take their learning forward while continuing to work in an unfamiliar context.

Schools should also work with their local authority and consortium to consider:

- how we as a system build confidence in families and the wider public of what is happening in school and learning
- how remote learning contributes to 'in school' learning and how practitioners manage this as operations increase over time?

We are fully aware of the challenges that these learners are facing and Qualifications Wales is currently carrying out work to consider the options which might apply for various scenarios during the next academic year. There is no one size fits all solution and it is likely that options for qualifications may need to be considered individually. The learner remains at the heart of these considerations and further information will be shared as soon as it's available.

Dialogue with parents and carers

The communications between schools and parents, carers and children will be critical throughout the coming period. At a time of uncertainty, parents and carers will need clear communication to ensure they understand how they should contribute to their children's learning at this time. In particular:

- how parents/carers support a blended approach to learning. The level of remote learning will require an enhanced role for parents/carers. Schools and settings will need to support them to understand their role, how they should support virtual learning and how they can support learners through other activities, rather than feeling the burden or expectation of having to "home school" their children. The four purposes in Curriculum for Wales can help to establish a common language and act as a secure point of reference for creating learning experiences that have educational integrity
- managing parents' and carers' expectations so that they understand learning will look like and why, including supporting understanding of the role and purpose of remote learning, the social and emotional benefits of play and use of outdoor spaces
- discussion with families to understand learners' experiences during school lockdown will be important. Additional support will be required for many, such as children who are experiencing grief, children with special educational needs or other barriers to learning and children with existing mental health problems
- communications and reassurance. Schools have a significant role to play in reassuring staff, children and parents and carers. Many families and practitioners will be anxious about putting children at risk and schools have a role in reassuring them. Communication should be factual, clear and based on the latest evidence and guidance and clear.

Reporting to parents and carers this summer term

It is important that headteachers continue to provide a relevant and useful report to parents and carers (and adult learners) on learner progress for all learners this year, where they and teachers contributing to reports are able to do so.

The provision of a 'school leaver's' report will remain a statutory requirement to ensure these learners are not disadvantaged in any way. Although a report must still be provided for these learners, these will not necessarily be full reports, and the format, content and timing will subject to 'reasonable endeavours'. For learners in Years 10 to 13, given that the calculation of grades for GCSE, AS and A Levels will use centre assessed grades and a standardisation process, we are strongly advising that reports should exclude estimated grades or mock exam results. This is in order to avoid creating either confusion or expectation about the grade a learner is subsequently awarded.

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