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GUIDANCE

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

This guidance provides practical guidance on preparing for and increasing operations during a phased return up to the end of the summer term. It helps schools and settings have regard to guidance around hygiene, social distancing, self-isolation and testing if a person shows symptoms.

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Introduction

The response to COVID-19 has raised many issues for the whole of the education community. Both learners and staff will have faced a range of challenges arising from lockdown, social distancing and illness and possibly bereavement. Returning to education in a physical setting raises its own challenges.

Schools and practitioners have already stepped up in the defence against COVID-19: establishing provision for children of critical workers and vulnerable children and managing remote learning on an unprecedented scale with astonishing pace. As we move to this next phase, the role of schools, settings and practitioners at this time will be just as critical: nurturing our children and supporting them to continue to learn and to succeed. As practitioners, both individually and collectively, you are invaluable to our efforts as a nation in the defence of our health.

On 3 June, the Minister for Education announced that schools would increase operations from the 29 June until the 24 July, so all learners have the opportunity to ‘check in, catch up and prepare for summer and September’. It is expected that all learners who are able to, have the opportunity to attend their school or setting for face to face time over the remainder of the summer term. In practice, this means schools accommodating reduced number of learners each day according to their capacity while ensuring appropriate social distancing is 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. We describe this as a blended learning approach – a combination of face to face learning with remote learning. Schools and settings will continue to develop new learning and approaches to meet the needs of their learners in response to the pandemic. In so doing, practitioners can consider the purposes of learning and weigh up their priorities; flexibly drawing on a wide range of curriculum 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 support young people to cope with the challenges posed by the pandemic.

The **decision framework for the next phase of education and childcare** was published on 15 May as a working document to advise on approaches to changing the operation of schools and other providers over time in response to COVID-19. This reiterated the Minister for Education's 5 key principles for the next phase.

- The safety and mental, emotional and physical well-being of learners and staff.
- Continuing our contribution to the national effort and strategy to fight the spread of COVID-19.
- The confidence of parents and carers, staff and learners – based on evidence and information – so that they can plan ahead.
- The ability to prioritise learners at key points, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Consistency with the Welsh Government's framework for decision-making, to have guidance in place to support measures such as distancing, managing attendance and wider protective actions.

These principles are critical not only in any decision to increase the operations of schools during this time, but indicate the priorities for the system in the coming months ahead.

Purpose of this guidance

This guidance provides practical guidance on preparing for and increasing operations during a phased return up to the end of the summer term. It includes key messages on infection prevention and control. It will be of use to all education settings, but its prime purpose is to support schools.

This guidance supports schools and settings to safely increase their on-site operations for staff and learners. It covers measures schools and settings can undertake to:

- plan and organise provision: including determining capacity and checklists for taking the next steps
- support the health and well-being of staff and learners; helping to keep people safe
- manage their facilities and logistical arrangements: including buildings, resources, cleaning and transport.

This guidance also provides links to further information and related guidance. This guidance will evolve in line with the latest health advice and it will be updated later in the summer term. It should be read in conjunction with **Keep Education Safe: Guidance on learning for the summer term**. We have developed an **FAQ area** to respond to common queries.

This guidance helps schools and settings have regard to guidance around hygiene, social distancing, self-isolation and testing if a person shows symptoms. These measures are critical in the defence against COVID-19 and are the most effective ways of reducing the risk of transmission. While staff, parents, carers and learners may feel apprehensive about the risks, it is important to remember that with adherence to guidelines, any risk is minimised and provision is safer.

We have worked closely with local authorities, staff and unions to compile this guidance and we will continue this conversation as the situation evolves. We are committed to working together in partnership with the education sector to move on from the current situation in a safe and purposeful way.

It provides local authorities, schools and settings broad guidelines in which to operate. The detail of operations will of course depend on the individual context and capacity of each school and setting.

Preparing for an increase in operations

Attendance

It is expected that all learners should have the opportunity to attend their school for educational purposes over the remainder of the summer term for a short period.

Schools will need to work with local authorities to determine how many learners and staff they can accommodate at any one time, and therefore how long learners can. Further guidance on this is detailed below under 'Determining and managing capacity'.

Schools should work with parents and carers to ensure that they fully understand how the risks of transmission are being mitigated.

Schools and settings should keep a record of attendance and families should notify their school if their child is unable to attend. This will help schools, settings and local authorities plan for and understand any barriers to learners returning to school and identify any further support needed.

It will not be safe for some learners and staff to attend. These categories are set out below. More detail on who falls into the extremely vulnerable and vulnerable categories can be found in our guidance '**Coronavirus (COVID-19) social distancing guidance for everyone in Wales**'.

Those showing symptoms

Under no circumstances should learners or staff attend schools/setting if they:

- feel unwell, have any of the three identified COVID-19 symptoms (a new continuous cough, a high temperature or loss of taste or smell) or they have tested positive to COVID-19 in the past 14 days
- live in a household with someone who has symptoms of COVID-19 or has tested positive to COVID-19 in the past 14 days.

'Extremely vulnerable' or shielding staff or learners

"Shielding" means protecting those people who are extremely vulnerable to the serious complications of coronavirus because they have a particular existing health condition. This includes children, who are extremely vulnerable and at high risk of developing serious illness if they are exposed to coronavirus (COVID-19) because they have a particular serious underlying health condition. These individuals will have received a **shielding letter** from the Chief Medical Officer. Staff and learners in this category must not be asked to attend schools or settings but should be supported to work or learn from home.

'Clinically vulnerable' staff or learners

In the context of COVID-19, clinically vulnerable individuals are at greater than average risk from COVID-19. This category includes people aged over 70, those who are pregnant and those who have a range of chronic health conditions. Pregnant women are specifically advised to work from home after 28 weeks' gestation.

People in this category can go out to work but they should work from home if possible. If staff or learners do attend, extra care must be taken to ensure vulnerable individuals, and those around them adhere to strict social distancing guidelines. In the case of learners, we would only expect these to attend where parents/carers consent to this.

If in doubt about whether their health condition means they should be shielding, staff, parents and carers should take advice from their GP or hospital doctor. Schools should work with local authorities in clarifying queries relating to staff attendance.

All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool - BAME

The All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool has been designed for use for all health and social care staff thought to be vulnerable or at risk, regardless of ethnicity. The tool addresses individual risk factors.

Work is underway to adapt this tool to support the education workplace. Ahead of that work the tool can also be used to support members of staff to consider their own health and well-being status, and helps employees and employers identify, assess and discuss the risks and the actions they can take to mitigate them:

- **COVID-19 workforce risk assessment tool**

Living with a shielding or vulnerable person

If a learner or staff member lives in a household with someone who is vulnerable or extremely vulnerable, they should only attend a school or setting where they can adhere to social distancing and the learner is able to understand and follow those instructions. This may not be possible for very young children and older children without the capacity to adhere to the instructions on social distancing. In those instances, we do not expect those children to attend and they should be supported to learn at home. Likewise, we would not expect any staff who are vulnerable and attending to be placed with children who cannot reasonably adhere to social distancing.

Learners and staff staying at home

Where children are not attending, provision should be made to ensure that they can continue to learn remotely. This is supported through **Stay Safe, Stay Learning**. Where staff are unable to attend, it is expected that they would support planning and remote learning. If a staff member is able to work from home, there should be a discussion between the employer and the employee about what the shielding adult can reasonably do and what support the employee requires.

Determining and managing capacity

Schools and settings will need to assess how many learners they can accommodate on site while allowing social distancing to be maintained. This guidance will be updated to support schools and settings in preparing for the autumn.

It is critical that schools and settings work with their local authority to understand capacity: how many learners that can be accommodated at any one time, while allowing for appropriate distancing.

The number of learners any one school can accommodate will differ depending on the context of the school and setting. Capacity will depend on a number of factors including: layout of rooms, number and size of larger shared rooms (such as halls and canteens) and available outdoor space.

In practice, it is expected that a school or setting's capacity will mean that overall, at most, a third of learners present at any one time.

It is our expectation 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.

However, schools and settings may need time to reach the maximum capacity they identify and if needed, should look to build towards this. Schools/settings will need to consider how this is managed, for example, a third of learners attending for a total of one week over a three-week cycle.

We will clarify expectations for the autumn term and provide further support on how schools and settings should look to manage capacity later this term.

Schools and settings should also work with their local authority (and in the case of voluntary aided schools, the diocesan authority) to identify how capacity could be expanded in the longer term, such as use of temporary buildings or additional spaces beyond the school site such as publicly owned facilities or other education settings. This is particularly important for schools and settings in buildings where capacity may be especially limited.

Capacity will also need to consider the number of staff available, accounting for those who cannot attend for health reasons (see above). Schools and settings should work closely with local authorities (and as appropriate the diocesan authority) to resolve any issues around staffing capacity including contingencies for those who are self-isolating due to symptoms or a positive test.

We will provide further guidance and support on managing capacity for the autumn term.

Using the transition period

Schools and settings should use the three weeks' notice period as a transition, in preparing for the increase of operations on the 29 June. It is expected that during this time, available staff would attend the site for at least some of this time, allowing them to familiarise themselves with the adjustments to operations and layout, practice social distancing and to plan for learning and teaching.

Existing hubs provision

As operations increase over the summer term, we would expect children attending hubs provision to move back to their own school or setting. For learners who are currently using of hubs provision, the expectation is 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.

Schools should work closely with parents/carers and local authorities to understand whether this is needed. Children of teaching staff may need to be accommodated at their own school or setting in order to allow staff to attend.

Local authorities will need to work closely with the schools and settings operating as hubs to manage this transition.

We will clarify the expectations beyond the summer term in due course. There is no expectation that schools continue hubs provision during the summer holidays. Local authorities may make alternative provision but it is not expected that this will be managed by school staff.

Schools and settings should also keep in mind that provision for critical workers and vulnerable children may be required in the event of a second peak in transmission and lockdown. Further guidance on this will be provided.

Keeping people safe and well

Staff in schools and settings will be very much aware of the needs of their colleagues, their learners and families who may be under additional emotional, financial and psychological pressure at this time. This cannot be overstated. Learners are more likely to be anxious and their health and well-being more likely to be impacted by changes of routine and the implications of lockdown. Over time, learners and staff are also more likely to encounter instances of serious illness and bereavement.

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.

For the safety and well-being of all those involved, it is also crucial that services are delivered in a way that is consistent with the expert scientific advice provided.

While staff, learners and parents/carers may feel apprehensive about the risks, it is important to remember that provision will be made far safer through adherence to guidelines. Social distancing, hygiene and self-isolation of those showing symptoms, or living with someone showing symptoms, will minimise the risk of transmission of infection. The Test, Trace, Protect strategy is critical to supporting this.

Hygiene

Schools and settings should ensure that all staff and learners regularly wash their hands and that these facilities are in place. Hands should be washed with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds. Staff should also ensure learners are reminded of effective handwashing techniques. Regular handwashing should be undertaken including:

- on arrival at and when leaving the school or setting
- before and after handling food
- before and after handling objects and equipment that may have been used by others
- where there has been any physical contact
- after people blow their nose, sneeze or cough.

Handwashing should be prioritised over the use of hand sanitisers and hand sanitisers should not replace hand washing. Hand sanitisers with at least 60 per cent alcohol may need to be installed if handwashing is not practicable. This could be, for instance, at entrances to the school or setting. When positioning sanitisers, this should consider learner safety.

Learners and staff should cough or sneeze into their elbow. Insofar as it is possible, they should be encouraged not to touch their face, especially when using a tissue or elbow to cough or sneeze.

Schools and settings should ensure help is available for learners who have trouble cleaning their hands independently. Practitioners should consider how to encourage young learners to learn and practise these habits through games, songs and repetition.

Local authorities need to work closely with their schools to ensure the effective supply of hygiene and cleaning products. This will need to account for availability and the prioritisation of equipment.

The handling of objects between individuals, including staff, parents/carers and learners, should be minimised.

Staff should also be mindful of the physical environment and how this can be managed to support the health and well-being of learners and staff, for instance keeping windows open to let in fresh air and ensuring there is natural sunlight. The airflow and ventilation should be increased where possible.

Learners or staff showing symptoms on site

Schools and settings should have clear procedures if learners or staff begin to show symptoms on site. These need to be fully understood by both staff and parents/carers. Those showing symptoms should be kept separate until they can be collected and taken home. Ideally, this should be in a separate room, supervised at a distance of two metres. If they need clinical advice, they (or a member of staff or their parent/carer) should go online to **111 Wales** (or call 111 if they don't have internet access).

Surfaces that learners or staff with symptoms have come into contact with should be carefully cleaned.

Anyone displaying symptoms should stay at home for 7 days and should arrange to be tested. Anyone who lives with someone displaying symptoms but remains well should stay at home for 14 days from the day the first person became ill.

The present advice is that it is not necessary to screen temperatures. Learners' parents/carers can check for signs of a high temperature. In any case, screening will not identify all cases of COVID-19 and the means of checking temperature may put staff at greater risk of transmission. We will keep this under review. Staff should of course be vigilant for changes to children's temperatures and signs of fever.

Social distancing

All schools and settings need to ensure **social distancing** and hygiene arrangements are in place and supported. Staff must have regard to the guidance in this section on social distancing which gives guidance for schools and settings on their duty to ensure social distancing under the Coronavirus Regulations.

This guidance has been developed not only to help schools and settings keep learners and staff safe and well, but also their families. Safety measures help ensure that the chain of infection is broken. It is important for staff to remember that social distancing applies to their interactions with other staff as well as learners: it is easy to forget this.

To reduce the risk of transmission, where possible the same staff should interact with the same group of learners over time. This helps minimise the risk of transmission between groups and limits the impact of any self-isolation required due to a staff member or a learner testing positive under **Test, Trace, Protect** (see below).

In primary schools, we recognise that it is not practicable to expect learners to maintain consistent social distancing of two metres. Staff should however seek to ensure some distancing between learners. This is based on medical advice and evidence which suggests that the risk of infection and transmission for children is likely to be lower. Practitioners should recognise that younger learners will not be able to maintain social distancing at all times.

For primary school aged children, schools and settings may wish to consider allowing small, consistent groups (no more than 8) to mix.

These groups should remain consistent as changing the membership will increase the risk of transmission.

For secondary school aged children, wherever possible, schools and settings should seek to ensure social distancing of two metres. This is more important for older learners.

Ideally, when indoors, learners should remain in the same room and avoid moving from room to room as they normally would. Learners should be given as much opportunity as possible to learn and have breaks outdoors. Staff movement between rooms should be kept to a minimum.

Where possible schools should consider:

- avoiding multiple groups of learners sharing the same space without cleaning
- avoiding multiple groups of learners from interacting or having the opportunity to mix
- to avoid increasing the risk of transmission between groups, it may be preferable to bring a group of learners in for longer blocks of time with at least a week's interval in between rather than multiple, shorter slots over the course of the four weeks.

Timing considerations

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.

This is relevant for learners and staff, and for families. Schools and settings must also consider safety and social distancing during arrival and collection. Schools and settings should work to ensure parents/carers understand and observe social distancing when dropping off and collecting their children.

Rotating learners and staff

Due to capacity constraints, learners will need to attend school in blocks or cohorts, such as a different group of learners each week. This does not necessarily need to be decided by year groups to allow children of the same household to attend at the same time. This should also be considered for children of critical workers and vulnerable children.

Schools should consider how this might operate in the autumn. More guidance will be provided on this in due course.

Test, Trace, Protect

The new **Test, Trace, Protect strategy** published on 13 May was implemented across Wales from 1 June.

This strategy sets out the next phase of our approach to tackling coronavirus; testing people with symptoms in the community, tracing those who have come into close contact with people who have tested positive for coronavirus, and protecting family, friends and our community by self-isolating.

Test, Trace, Protect works by:

- testing those people who have coronavirus symptoms, asking them to isolate from family, friends and their community while taking a test and waiting for a result. People can apply for a test for themselves or someone in their household with symptoms. This includes adults and children including the under 5s. Information and **guidance** for staff and how to apply for a test can be found **on the Welsh Government website**
- tracing those people who have been in close contact with people that have tested positive for the virus, requiring them to take precautions through self-isolation. Further information on contact tracing and how it will work can be found **on the Welsh Government website**
- ensuring that if the symptoms are not due to coronavirus, individuals and their contacts can get back to their normal routines as soon as possible
- providing advice and **guidance**, particularly if the person who has symptoms or their contacts are in the shielding group or the at risk group, vulnerable or at greater risk.

By reducing transmission in our communities, and quickly identifying and isolating those at risk of catching COVID-19 from a close contact or family member we will support the wider opening of schools, colleges and early years settings.

Schools and settings should reinforce these messages and in particular, remind all those who show symptoms to self-isolate and book a test. Those living with someone showing symptoms should also self-isolate.

In the event of a positive test, a contact tracer will contact the person tested to help identify potential contacts. A second contact tracer will then get in touch with those contacts and advise them to self-isolate for 14 days from their last contact with the person who tested positive. These people will only be required to take a test if they develop symptoms.

People are considered as potential contacts if they were in contact with the person who has tested positive during a period beginning up to two days before symptom onset and ending when the case entered home isolation. This is based on current understanding of the main period of infectivity.

A contact is defined as someone who has had close contact during this period, specifically:

- within one metre of the person who has tested positive and has been coughed on, had a face-to-face conversation, had skin-to-skin physical contact, or been in other forms of contact within one metre for one minute or longer
- within two metres of the person testing positive for more than 15 minutes
- have travelled in a vehicle with the person who has tested positive.

Where staff have maintained social distancing rules and adhered to hygiene measures during work and where required have used personal protective equipment (PPE) or worked behind an appropriate screen or partition, they would not regarded as part of a contact for these purposes.

A positive test on site therefore does not require closure of that site. The process of testing and contact tracing is part of the ‘new normal’ and where schools and settings follow these guidelines carefully, there is no cause for alarm.

What happens if there is an outbreak in a school?

If there are multiple cases of COVID-19 in a school then experts from across the NHS and local government will work together to prevent ongoing transmission within the school. This will involve identifying those exposed, any child or staff member who is at increased risk and provide tailored infection

control advice. Advice based on the assessment of each individual situation will be provided to support the school in preventing further spread.

The process should be handled sensitively and in confidence, for instance schools should not reveal anyone's identity.

Further information and questions and answers about Test, Trace, Protect can be found **on the Welsh Government website**.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

It is important to remember that physical distancing, hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene (catching a cough or sneeze in a tissue or covering the mouth and nose with an elbow or sleeve) remain strongly evidenced to be the most effective ways to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

Hand hygiene is critical before and after all direct contact with a child or young person, and after cleaning equipment and the environment.

There is therefore no need to use personal protective equipment (PPE) when undertaking routine educational activities in classroom/school settings.

The list below covers when PPE may be required.

Routine activities

- No PPE is required when undertaking routine educational activities in classroom or school settings.

Suspected coronavirus (COVID-19)

- Gloves, aprons and a fluid-resistant surgical mask should be worn if a child or young person becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 and needs direct personal care.
- Eye protection should also be worn if a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of splashing to the eyes such as from coughing, spitting, or vomiting.
- Gloves and aprons should be used when cleaning the areas where a person suspected of having COVID-19 has been.

Intimate care

- Gloves and aprons should be used when providing intimate care to a child or young person. This can include personal, hands-on care such as washing, toileting, or first aid and certain clinical procedures such as assisted feeding.
- Fluid-resistant surgical mask and eye protection should also be worn if a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of splashing to the eyes such as from coughing, spitting, or vomiting.
- Gloves, fluid repellent gown, FFP3 mask and eye protection are indicated when undertaking aerosol generating procedures such as suction.
- Gloves and aprons should be used when cleaning equipment or surfaces that might be contaminated with body fluids such as saliva or respiratory secretions.

Guidance also sets out that gloves and an apron should be used when cleaning areas where a person suspected of having COVID-19 has been.

The use of PPE by staff within education settings should be based on a clear assessment of risk, taking into account each individual setting and the needs of the individual learner. Schools, settings and local authorities already have risk assessments processes in place which should be used to identify the need for the use of PPE. Following any risk assessment, where the need for PPE has been identified, it should be readily available and provided. Further information has been provided by the **Health and Safety Executive**:

- **Using PPE at work during the coronavirus outbreak**

All staff should understand how to put on or remove PPE in the right order, safely dispose of the waste and use correct hand hygiene steps to reduce the risk of onward transmission of infection. Further guidance is available in Appendix 6 of the **Infection Prevention and Control for Childcare Settings Guidance**.

In any case, hand washing should always be practiced before putting on and after removing PPE. Schools and settings should contact their local authority to obtain PPE to cover the above.

Use of face coverings for health purposes

The Chief Medical Officer has been clear that there is no evidence to support the widespread wearing of non-medical face coverings in the community. Non-medical face coverings are recommended where social distancing cannot be maintained.

They are not a replacement for far more effective measures such as social distancing and hand hygiene.

Schools should ensure that they organise the environment and they operate to ensure that social distancing can be maintained throughout a routine day.

Considering the well-being of learners is critical to any considerations around whether staff or older children wear face coverings. No one who may not be able to handle face coverings as directed (e.g. young children, or those with special educational needs or disabilities) should wear them as it may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission.

The Minister for Health and Social care made a **Statement on 9 June 2020** setting out the latest advice.

Face masks and implications for deaf children

The impact of wearing a face mask for a deaf child should be carefully considered, as communication for many deaf people relies in part on being able to see someone's face clearly. The National Deaf Children's Society has provided the following communication tips, which staff may find useful in this regard:

- **Face masks: tips for communicating with deaf children and young people** (Facebook)
- **The impact of face masks on deaf children** (National Deaf Children's Society)

Supporting the well-being of learners and staff

As in-school or setting operations increase learner and staff well-being should be the primary concern. Advice on learning and well-being can be found in the learning guidance.

Learners' well-being

The operation of a school or setting will have an important impact on learners' physical, mental and emotional and social well-being. When planning to increase operations, schools and staff should consider how this has an impact on well-being.

For example, staff should positively reinforce behaviours around social distancing and hygiene as opposed to stigmatising mistakes. Likewise, the timetable and layout should ensure that there are appropriate opportunities for breaks and time outdoors.

Schools and settings will be alert to identify and support learners who exhibit signs of distress. Pastoral care and bereavement support should be planned for and put in place.

More detailed guidance on supporting well-being through learning is found in the learning guidance.

Intensive/specialist support

For those learners requiring more intensive and/or specialist support this should be available in an appropriate and timely fashion. Local authorities and services across the NHS and social care should work with schools and settings to identify and support learners' needs. In this respect there is already much good practice to draw on including:

- funding provided to local authorities this year to support the expansion of school and community-based counselling; training teachers in learners' wellbeing and to introduce universal and targeted interventions in schools
- the work of the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Hub to train teachers in trauma informed practice and the development of an all-Wales Traumatic Stress Service. This acts as an improvement initiative which offers resources, training and advice to upskill professionals in all sectors to work with people using evidence based treatment for trauma
- school nursing, which has developed close working arrangements with psychology services in recent years and provide drop in services in schools which are increasingly providing more mental health support
- development of Matrics Cymru which has been designed to assist in the development, planning and delivery of a Wales wide approach to providing psychological services to children and their families
- additional resources which will be made available to support young people, teachers and leaders, and others. This includes focus on learners' mental and emotional health and well-being and providing well-being support in the new environment. The first of these resources was launched on 1 June and is a **Young person's mental health toolkit**, comprising a variety of online resources which can help them through lockdown and beyond. It contains information on websites, apps, helplines, and more which support mental health and well-being.

Many learners will follow the rules but a minority may not understand. Young learners, for example, will be prone to share equipment and objects, hugging and touching without due thought. This can be particularly so for learners with additional learning needs (ALN) in special schools, especially those with physical needs receiving a lot of tactile support. Special school staff should consult parents and carers about specific support needs, and use their discretion flexibly in agreeing the way forward for specific learners. This should be based on a clear risk assessment, recognising it may be more appropriate for some learners to continue learning remotely.

Staff well-being

Schools and settings will need to consider the potential impacts on the health and well-being of staff and leaders, including work–life balance. There should be clear routes by which concerns can be raised with management and leadership. Clear support mechanisms should be put in place, for example access to employee assistance programmes and to **Education Support Partnership**.

Timetabling and rotas should support staff's well-being and they should be given regular welfare breaks. It is also important to recognise that staff are not all necessarily required on site, not only for those who are unable to attend for health reasons, but also those staff working on remote learning on any given day. Minimising the number of staff on site can help lower transmission risks.

Local authorities and governing bodies should be conscious of the well-being of all staff, including senior leaders. It is natural that some staff may require more support than others during this period. Senior leaders will need to consider how to support:

- those who have found the long period at home hard to manage and who have concerns over having to deal with children's well-being issues in the classroom with a lack of support.
- those who have developed anxieties related to the virus and their own health and wellbeing (i.e. fears of contracting the virus in the classroom)
- those who have pre-existing issues that may have increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic
- those who have experienced bereavement.

COVID-19 makes it more important than ever that we acknowledge the need to provide a reflective space for staff to deal with and process the often stressful, uncomfortable and sometimes painful experiences of working with children, young people, their families and the systems around them.

When it is not possible to employ a counsellor for this specific purpose, leaders in good schools provide opportunities for staff to discuss issues with them or their colleagues. Sharing experiences and discussing their feelings and emotions can identify areas where additional support is needed, and is a valuable exercise in itself for helping people support their own well-being.

Local authorities should work with schools and settings to provide support to staff. All parts of the system should work together to ensure that staff's well-being is supported both directly and indirectly (such as managing messaging, avoiding duplication of work and avoiding unnecessary demands on staff).

Staff should be aware of the Education Workforce Council's **Code of Professional Conduct and Practice** and may wish to draw on their good practice guides.

Safeguarding

Learners will have encountered different experiences and home environments during lockdown and all staff should be reminded of their safeguarding duties within the statutory safeguarding guidance for education settings **Keeping learners safe** and with the **Wales Safeguarding Procedures.**

The role of the designated safeguarding person (DSP) will be vital and all staff and learners should be informed of who the DSP is and how to contact them. Accessing a trusted adult, or the DSP, may be more difficult with social distancing so schools and settings should consider how learners can talk privately.

At the early stages schools, settings and children's services should continue to work closely together to ensure every child and family has the support needed. Local authorities will already have a range of working practices in place to ensure that safeguarding partners can work together to keep children safe. There is an opportunity now for these working practices to be further consolidated.

Facilities and logistics: managing the setting

Cleaning and disinfection

General hygiene and preventative controls

Buildings must be cleaned regularly. Hard surfaces should be cleaned with warm soapy water or the normal cleaning products used. Particular attention should be given to clean 'high-touch' areas and surfaces. These areas should be cleaned at least once a day and more frequently in high use areas based on local assessment, including bathrooms, railings, tables, toys, equipment door handles, push pads, taps and hand sanitiser dispensers.

Rooms should be cleaned when different groups use a room.

Cleaning staff should maintain social distancing from each other and from staff and learners at all times.

Tissues should be placed in a separate waste bin and disposed of safely. All rubbish should be removed daily.

Cleaning where someone has shown symptoms

If a member of staff or learner shows symptoms of COVID-19, all areas where this person has been should be identified and kept clear. Management of the area should be physical where possible i.e. barriers with suitable signage or behind locked doors. A clean down prior to reoccupation should take place, considering the cleaning in non-healthcare settings **guidance**. Particular attention should be given to any specific area with which the person has been in contact, i.e. allocated desk as well as all other 'high-touch' areas. Any soft toys should be removed if not already removed as a preventative control.

If any waste is suspected of being in contact with someone showing symptoms, suspected or confirmed of COVID-19, it should be placed in a waste bag, held in a secure place for 72 hours then disposed of with other waste.

Cleaning staff should fully understand the cleaning requirements. Local authorities should work with schools and settings to ensure that cleaning staff have appropriate training, products and equipment available to them in a timely manner.

Transport

Consideration should be given to the latest **transport guidance**. Where possible, parents and carers should travel with their children to and from school, ideally on foot, or by bike, scooter or any other means of active travel. Social distancing should be maintained on the journey to and from school. People of no more than two households should only travel together if social distancing is possible.

In any school transport, priority should be given to those who are unable to attend without it.

Local authorities are required to assess the travel needs of learners who are aged under 19 in their area. This includes those who they are legally required to provide transport for and those for whom they may wish to provide discretionary transport when assessing travel needs. An authority is also required to have regard to:

- the needs of disabled learners and learners with learning difficulties
- any particular needs of learners who are 'looked after' or formerly looked after by a local authority
- the age of a learner
- the nature of the route that the learner is expected to take between home and the places where they receive education or training. In assessing the travel needs of learners, local authorities must take into account the fact that travel arrangements they make in light of the assessment must not cause unreasonable levels of stress, take an unreasonable amount of time or be unsafe.

Local authorities should work with schools and settings to determine the demand for school transport and endeavour to meet these requirements. Schools will not be open to more than a third of learners at any time. Local authorities and schools will need to consider this alongside other considerations, as they plan which learners are required to attend at what time.

The Minister for Health and Social Care made a **statement on 9 June 2020** setting out the latest advice in relation to face coverings, which includes transport.

Layout and use of space

Rooms should be large enough to ensure social distancing in line with guidance. Numbers in each should reflect staff availability and be kept as small as possible.

Seating arrangements, games and activities should be remodelled to ensure appropriate distancing and to minimise physical contact. Wherever possible, using rooms for multiple groups of learners should be avoided.

Movement between rooms should be kept to a minimum: ideally, when indoors staff and learners should use the same room. This avoids risk of transmission from room to room and keeps the number of people each person comes into contact with to a minimum. If a different shared space is needed for mealtimes, these should be staggered to avoid overcrowding.

Where possible, spaces should be accessed directly from outside. Where spaces are accessed by corridors, schools and settings may wish to consider a one-way circulation system or markers to keep traffic of learners separate where they have to move.

Similarly, schools and settings should ensure the use of toilets is managed to allow social distancing, while ensuring learners are as free as possible to use toilets.

Use of outdoor spaces

To help social distancing, schools and settings should maximise the time learners spend outdoors. This has clear learning and well-being benefits but 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 does not survive long for long periods in sunlight
- social distancing is easier to observe and maintain outside, which practically, it may be easier for practitioners to manage larger groups of learners outdoors.

Learners will of course need to be monitored and breaks should be staggered to ease numbers.

In preparation for the autumn schools should consider how they continue to use outdoor spaces in less favourable weather. This will require learners to have weather-appropriate clothing available

Uniform and equipment

Learners can wear school uniform but the main thing is to wear something that is comfortable and easily washable. While the wearing of school uniform is the responsibility of the governing body, we would expect consideration is given to the appropriateness of the school uniform policy for the duration of this summer term.

There is no need for anything other than normal personal hygiene and washing of clothes following a day in a school or setting. Uniform that cannot be machine washed should be avoided. Ideally, parents/carers should be encouraged to provide clean clothes for learners every day but this may not be possible and should be handled sensitively.

The handling of items by multiple people should be minimised. Where learners or staff bring items from home with them, care should be taken to ensure that these are only handled by them, or if need be, appropriately cleaned.

High touch items and equipment that are likely to be handled by more than one person over time such as IT equipment should be cleaned regularly.

Catering

Depending on the timetable, schools and settings may judge that lunch does not need to be provided or that learners should bring their own lunches to minimise the risk of transmission. Schools or settings may need to provide lunch but this depends on the timetable. Movement between rooms should be kept to a minimum. If deemed practicable, meals may be best served in learners' classrooms. If dining rooms can accommodate the social distancing requirements then they may be used though use should be staggered. Areas should be cleaned according to guidelines after eating. Staff should ensure that social distancing is maintained at mealtimes. If learners are eating in their classroom, tables should be removed of clutter, disinfected, and visually clean before providing the meal/snack. If there are any concerns, schools and settings should seek the advice of their local Environmental Health team. Staff and learners should also wash their hands before and after serving and eating food.

Local authorities and headteachers should work with food providers and suppliers to ensure rigour in hygiene, including preparation, consumption and disposal. Food must not be shared. Any snacks should be separated clearly to avoid this. Lunch and break times could be staggered to support social distancing.

Schools should of course deliver meals based on the Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Wales) **Regulations 2013**. Those meals should be designed to reduce access to food and drink high in fat, sugar and salt, and increase the take-up of fruit and vegetables and oily fish. Other food and drink provided during the day should also be based on the food and drink requirements of those **Regulations**.

Risk assessments

Schools and settings should take a risk-benefit approach when making decisions about learners' social interaction and play in schools. The Health and Safety Executive advises a risk-benefit approach, which aims not to eliminate all risk but to strike a balance: maximising benefit while ensuring that learners are not exposed to unnecessary risk. Schools and settings should work with their local authorities in developing risk assessments around increasing operations.

Schools should undertake the following.

- Schools need to carry out an appropriate COVID-19 risk assessment, as they would for other health and safety related hazards. This is a risk led approach and is not about creating huge volumes of documentation, but rather about identifying sensible measures to control the risks. Records of the assessment should be simple and focused on controls. Outcomes should explain to others what they are required to do and help staff with planning and monitoring.
- Compliance in any school will depend upon the suitability and sufficiency of the risk assessment and the arrangements to implement and maintain sensible, proportionate and effective controls. The risk assessment should translate into the specific actions that will need to be taken and will be influenced by site specific factors.
- The risk assessment should be undertaken in collaboration with a relevant person with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to give sensible guidance about managing the health and safety risks at the school. Controls should be considered following the hierarchy of control approach.
- The assessment should consider what measures need to be implemented to protect the health and safety of all staff, learners, visitors and contractors.
- Employers have a duty to consult their workforce regarding on health and safety matters and should involve them in the assessment and development of relevant control measures. Employers must consult with the health and safety representative selected by a recognised trade union or, if there isn't one, a representative chosen by staff.

The employer must ensure that the risks are controlled so far as is reasonably practicable. This will include ensuring that a relevant risk assessment is undertaken, and control measures are implemented and monitored to ensure that they are effective

Risk assessments should already exist for learners with more complex needs, including those with emotional and behavioural needs. These risk assessments will require to be updated as a matter of priority in light of changes to provision such as environment and staffing, while also remaining mindful of the additional distress learners may be experiencing due to COVID-19. If risk assessments are not in place, then they must be undertaken in accordance with this guidance and local risk assessment guidance.

Special schools

Special schools should use their personalised knowledge and existing risk assessments to inform whether a child:

- can attend the setting safely
- needs to be separated from other learners
- needs more than one member of staff who will not be able to socially distance from the child or each other
- requires staff to wear PPE when working with them (and the level of PPE) either
  - generally
  - or whilst receiving personal care
  - or whilst being fed or given meds or receiving specialist care.

Communicating with parents/carers

As schools and settings increase operations clear and concise communication with parents/carers is paramount. Parents and carers should have clear ways for them to ask questions and raise concerns. This guidance sets out the requirements for learners attending schools and settings and will address logistical concerns. The separate 'Guidance on learning over the summer term' provides further information to parents/carers relating to supporting learning at this time.

Schools and settings should provide clear communications to ensure parents and carers understand expectations. This could include:

- advance notice from parents/carers on whether they will be sending their children
- advise parents/carers to declare that their children haven't shown symptoms of COVID-19
- reminding parents/carers of the importance of self-isolation where needed (based on the guidance above)
- clarity on transport arrangements to and from school site, this will also include drop off and pick up
- timing of school day– particularly if school is staggering start times

- school entrance and exit points – this may be different from “normal” arrangements
- eating arrangements
- procedures if child falls ill during time in school
- arrangements for groups of learners throughout the school day.

This guidance will continue to be updated as the medical and scientific advice evolves. Please continue to use the **FAQ area**, to respond to common queries.

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