

CABINET STATEMENT

Written Statement: Publication of guidance to support educational settings increase capacity

Kirsty Williams MS, Minister for Education

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It has now been 84 days since we took the decision to close our schools to the majority of learners, in response to the Covid-19 crisis.

We all know that such a long period away from school, friends, and the classroom will have a detrimental impact on a large number of our young people, whether that be their wellbeing or their learning. We also know that, despite the excellent and hard work of staff, over this period the vast majority of pupils described as 'vulnerable' have not been attending. That is why we have taken the decision that, from 29 June, the majority of learners will be able to check in, catch up, and prepare for the summer and September.

Likewise, I also announced a phased return for learners in Further Education (FE) when a limited number of FE and Work Based Learning (WBL) students restart face-to-face learning for priority groups from 15 June.

As we move to this next phase, the role of schools, settings and practitioners at this time will be critical: nurturing our children and supporting them to continue to learn and to succeed.

Today I am publishing initial guidance for FE and WBL, as well as schools, to support our educational settings increase operations safely over the coming weeks. The guidance includes information on learning, managing their facilities, resources, PPE, cleaning and transport.

It is important to emphasise that these are working documents. As we continue to Keep Wales Safe, we will continue to evolve the guidance over the summer term into what will be the 'new normal' in September and at the same time ensuring it reflects the latest medical and scientific advice.

Striking a balance between providing national guidance - Public Health Wales guidelines, shielding, use of PPE, hygiene and social distancing for example - and enabling local flexibility to reflect local context is important and has been critical in the development of this guidance.

More detail and support will be developed as detailed plans are worked up by schools and local authorities. I am grateful to all our stakeholders who have worked closely with us on the development of the guidance, and for parents and schools who have sent in useful recommendations that we continue to examine.

I also welcome today the publication of [Keep Childcare Safe: Protective Measures in Childcare Settings](#) guidance for childcare by the Deputy Minister for Health and Social care, which will support the childcare sector to open up more widely and, in doing so, ensure it can operate safely.

I know that some people will feel apprehensive. The health and wellbeing of learners and staff is – as always – our primary concern. Schools, colleges and other settings are working hard to plan for the return of their learners and to put the appropriate safeguards in place. The guidance published today will help them in doing so.

Working together we will secure equity and excellence for learners as they check in, catch up, and prepare for Summer and September.

Operational guidance:

[Operational guidance for schools and settings: Keep Education Safe \(COVID-19\)](#)

Learners guidance:

[Guidance on learning over the summer term: Keep Education Safe \(COVID-19\)](#)

FE guidance:

[Guidance on face-to-face further education and work-based learning: coronavirus](#)

Childcare guidance:

[Protecting staff and children from coronavirus in childcare](#)

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