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Amendment to the number of school sessions for the 2020 to 2021 school year [HTML]

GUIDANCE

Amendment to the number of school sessions for the 2020 to 2021 school year

Advice for schools and local authorities on required sessions in 2020 to 2021.

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Schools are required to deliver a minimum number of school sessions in any given school year.

The Education (School Day and School Year) (Wales) Regulations 2003 provides that every day on which a school meets is to be divided into two sessions which are to be separated by a break in the middle of the day unless exceptional circumstances make this undesirable. At least 380 school sessions are required during any school year. This excludes nursery schools.

The Regulations allow for sessions where a school is prevented from meeting to be treated as if it had met as intended. They also provide for the number of additional school training days permitted and this is periodically amended to account for changes to the education system such as training for the new curriculum.

Schools in three local authorities – Conwy, Pembrokeshire and Powys – opened for an additional week at the end of summer term 2019 to 2020. In lieu of this extra week these schools will close for an additional week at the autumn half term break.

On 9 July 2020, the Minister for Education announced ‘back to school’ plans. Schools are expected to reopen on 1 September and welcome all learners back to the classroom by 14 September. Many schools are holding planning and preparation days during the first week of the new autumn term. These are in addition to planned INSET training days.

Therefore, we have made The Education (School Day and School Year) (Wales) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 to amend the 2003 Regulations in two ways:

- to allow schools which opened for an additional week at the end of the summer term of the 2019 to 2020 school year to hold at least 370 session during the 2020 to 2021 school year instead of at least 380 sessions
- to allow for up to 4 sessions to count as sessions on which the school met if they were devoted to the preparation of schools and planning required to enable schools to open to all learners following a reduction in operations as a result of the incidence and transmission of Coronavirus. These sessions would be held during the first two weeks of the 2020 to 2021 school year

The remaining requirements as set out in the 2003 Regulations are unaffected.

Actions for schools and local authorities

Local authorities whose schools opened for the additional week at the end of summer term should have already published their revised term dates to account for the extended autumn half term break on their websites.

Schools and local authorities should make their ‘back to school’ plans ensuring that any further interruption to children and young people’s education is kept to an absolute minimum. Consideration of the impact of closing schools for planning and preparation days on learners and their parents should be a priority for all schools and local authorities.

The amended required number of sessions must be adhered to, as per the Regulations.

We have also provided advice for schools and local authorities on the temporary disapplication of the regulations governing [changing school session times](#).

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