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Welsh Government

Operational guidance for schools and settings from the autumn term

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

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Introduction

Since 29 June, schools in Wales have been offering their learners the opportunity to attend sessions to 'check in, catch up and prepare'. This has been on a reduced basis taking into account the scientific advice available at the time and the measures that needed to be put in place to help reduce the risk of transmission. Things have since moved on and we now have more evidence and information available to us to inform our decisions for the operation of schools in the next academic year.

The Minister for Education announced on 9 July that all learners would return to school in the autumn term. The Welsh Technical Advisory Group (TAG), which provides scientific and technical advice to the Welsh Government during emergencies, recommends that schools "plan to open in September with 100% of pupils physically present on school sites, subject to a continuing, steady decline in the presence of COVID-19 in the community."[1]

In addition, our NHS Test, Trace, Protect system is up and running, and we are clear about the measures that need to be in place to create safer environments within schools.

We also know that the risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from COVID-19 is very low. Current evidence points to "Infection with SARS-CoV-2 appears to take a milder course in children than in adults: most infected children present with mild symptoms or are asymptomatic, and very few develop severe or life threatening disease. There remains some on-going uncertainty in transmissibility of the disease by children, but real world observation of schools opening in England and other countries has shown little transmission by children".

These risks have to be carefully balanced with the negative health impacts of being out of school. School is also an important point of contact for public health and safeguarding services that are critical to the well-being of children and families.

Although it is not possible to ensure a totally risk-free environment, the Office of National Statistics' analysis on COVID-19 related deaths linked to occupations suggests that staff in educational settings tend not to be at any greater risk from the disease than many other occupations. There is no evidence that children transmit the disease any more than adults. There is currently a very low prevalence of positive tests among education workers at 3.8% cumulative, among the lowest rates of critical workers.

Taking into account the improved situation we now find ourselves in, the balance of risk is now overwhelmingly in favour of children returning to school. Being out of school is detrimental for children's cognitive and academic development and their health and well-being, particularly for disadvantaged children; and, can have an impact both in the short and longer term. We know that lower academic achievement also translates into long-term economic costs. We also know that school closures have affected some families' ability to work. By getting our learners back into school

[1] gov.wales/technical-advisory-group-advice-return-school

as quickly and as safely as possible will bring positive benefits on a number of fronts not least their mental and emotional well-being.

This guidance document provides a framework for school leaders to put in place proportionate protective measures for children and staff but also enables learners to receive an education that offers a broad and balanced curriculum allowing them to thrive and progress. It also recognises that a school's context will determine how the combination of these measures are used to best effect to help minimise the risk of transmission in each individual setting.

School leaders will need to make judgments at a school level about how to balance and minimise any risks from COVID-19 with providing a full educational experience for children and young people. In doing so schools will be asked to minimise the number of contacts that every learner has during the school day as part of implementing the system of controls outlined in this guidance to reduce the risk of transmission.

The autumn term will start on 1 September and schools that can accommodate all learners from the start of the term should do so. There will be a period of flexibility in recognition that schools may want to focus on priority year groups such as Years 7, 12, 13 and Special Units for secondary and early years and Year 6 in the primary sector such as those new to secondary schools, those sitting exams next summer or those in Reception classes. This will also allow time, up to a fortnight, for any planning and reorganisation. It is expected that planning and preparation days will take place at the start of term to enable schools and settings to work with their staff on reviewing their risk assessments, processes and associated systems.

From the second week of term it is expected that schools and settings will need to maximise the number of learners in attendance leading to a full return on the 14 September when school attendance will be compulsory for all learners.

There cannot be a one size fits all approach, it is recognised that each school and setting will have local challenges to address. This guidance is designed to enable local authorities working with their schools and settings to plan for the autumn term, recognising that the guidance will evolve over the coming weeks to reflect the latest Welsh Government policies.

Local authorities will be able to support schools and settings in relation to catering, cleaning, facilities management, and HR. It will be important for schools and settings to work closely with their local authorities in taking forward this guidance.

Local authorities will not be expected to continue to provide emergency childcare provision in the autumn term.

The intention is for independent schools to follow the measures set out in this document in the same way. Supplementary guidance will be published shortly for schools and settings on supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. As such, this document does not include specific guidance on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups to any significant extent. It is the case, however, that much of the operational

guidance included in this document applies equally to the support for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups; therefore, the two documents should be read side by side.

This guidance sets out the public health advice schools and settings must follow to minimise the risks of COVID-19 transmission. It also includes the process that should be followed if anyone develops COVID-19 symptoms while at school. The guidance provides a set of principles to help schools and settings do this, and in turn minimise risks.

A recent report[2] by the Public Health Agency of Sweden found that "Children are not a major risk group of the COVID-19 disease and seem to play a less important role from the transmission point of view…The negative effects of closing schools must be weighed against the possible positive indirect effects it might have on the mitigation of the COVID-19 pandemic".

We will continue to monitor the situation carefully and every school will also need to plan for the possibility of a local lockdown and how they will ensure continuity of education within a broader framework of local restrictions.

This guidance will be kept under constant review and will always follow the latest scientific advice.

[2] www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/publicerat-material/publikationsarkiv/c/covid-19-in-schoolchildren/

Welsh Government and Public Health Wales advice to minimise COVID-19 risks

Employers, schools and settings must comply with health and safety law, which requires them to assess risks and put in place proportionate control measures.

Schools with their employers should thoroughly review their health and safety risk assessments in collaboration with the local authority and trade unions, and draw up plans for the autumn term that address the risks identified using the system of controls set out below. Essential measures include:

- a requirement that people who are unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 stay at home[3]
- robust hand and respiratory hygiene including ventilation
- continue increased cleaning arrangements
- active engagement with Test, Trace, Protect strategy
- formal consideration of how to reduce contacts and maximise social and physical distancing[4] between those in school wherever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable.

How contact between learners, learners and staff, and between staff are reduced will depend on the school's circumstances and should include:

- grouping learners together
- avoiding contact between separate groups as much as possible
- arranging classrooms with forward facing desks, recognising this may not be possible or appropriate in all schools/settings
- staff maintaining distance from learners and other staff as much as possible.

[3] gov.wales/self-isolation-stay-home-guidance-households-possible-coronavirus
[4] gov.wales/coronavirus-social-distancing-guidance

Risk assessment

Local authorities (as the employers) and schools, must protect people from harm. This includes taking all necessary steps to protect staff, learners and others from COVID-19 within schools and settings.

As part of planning for full return in the autumn term, it is a legal requirement that schools should revisit and update their risk assessments by building on the learning to date and the practices they have already developed. This will enable them, to consider the additional risks and control measures to put in place for a return to full capacity in the autumn term. Schools and settings, working with their local authority health and safety adviser and trade unions, should also review and update their wider risk assessments and consider the need for relevant revised controls considering the implications of COVID-19. A local authority working with their schools and settings should ensure that they implement sensible and proportionate control measures which follow the health and safety hierarchy of controls at **Annex A**, to reduce the risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level, but do not negatively impact the well-being of learners and staff.

Local authorities should communicate the control measures to schools and settings. Schools and settings should work with staff, parents/carers and learners so that there is clarity on what and how the revised arrangements will work in practice, and have active arrangements in place to monitor that the controls are:

- effective
- working as planned
- updated appropriately considering any issues identified and changes in public health advice.

Local authorities, working with their schools and settings should continue to ensure they are complying with their security plans, and ensuring that any changes as a result of COVID-19 compliance do not impact negatively on their security plans. In responding to COVID-19 this should not be contrary to the individual school's security plan, and cognisance should be taken of the Welsh Government and WECTU booklet entitled 'Protecting Schools, an integrated security approach – Head Teachers toolbox'.

For more information on what is required of local authorities and school employers in relation to health and safety risk assessments, see **Annex B**.

Protective measures

Having assessed their risks, schools and settings as far as reasonably possible must work through the following measures, adopting them in a way that addresses the risk identified in their assessment, works for their school/setting, and allows them to deliver for all learners. If schools and settings follow the guidance set out here, they will effectively reduce risks in their school and create an inherently safer environment.

Measures

This is the set of actions schools and settings must take, wherever possible.

Prevention

- Minimise contact between all individuals wherever possible. For younger learners the emphasis will be on forming groups of learners and ensuring separation of those groups, and for older learners it will be on social/physical distancing.
- Staff responsible for younger learners should remain with set groups rather than interchange between different/a number of groups. All staff should adhere to the social/physical distancing measures as far as possible with younger learners, but should adhere to those measures in their interactions with older learners, other staff members and visitors to the school.
- Ensuring staff, learners and parents/carers fully understand that any staff member or learner who has possible symptoms of COVID-19 must not attend the school setting but must remain home and self-isolate, arrange a COVID-19 test and notify the school of this.
- Additionally, any family/household member of any member of staff member or learner who displays possible symptoms of COVID-19 then the staff member or learner must not attend the school setting but must remain at home and commence a period of household isolation. Again the school should be notified of this.
- Where a staff member or learner becomes unwell at the school setting with possible symptoms of COVID-19 they should be sent home immediately where they should self-isolate and arrange a COVID-19 test. Until they leave the school setting (in the case of a learner waiting to be collected by a parent/carer) their contact with all other individuals at the setting should be minimised. If possible ensure they remain in a separate room until they are able to leave the setting.
- Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual.
- Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach.
- Ensure enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and disinfectants.
- Where necessary, in specific circumstances (set out later in the guidance), wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Where possible ensure appropriate ventilation.

Response to any infection

- Engage with the Test, Trace, Protect strategy.
- Manage confirmed cases of COVID-19 among the school community and contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice.

Prevention

1. **Ensure that any staff member or learner who has symptoms or who is tested positive for COVID-19, or who has someone in their household who has symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19, does not attend the school setting.**

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

- feel unwell with any of the identified COVID-19 symptoms. They should remain at home and self-isolate and arrange a COVID-19 test
- have tested positive for COVID-19
- live in a household with someone who has symptoms of, or has tested positive for COVID-19All schools and settings must follow this process and ensure all staff are aware of it.

Schools and settings should have a clear escalation policy and procedures in place if learners or staff begin to show symptoms of COVID-19 while at the school/setting. These need to be fully understood by staff, learners (where able) 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 where possible, but recognising this may not be possible with younger learners. 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 and thoroughly cleaned. Further cleaning guidance is provided at point 4 below.

Anyone displaying symptoms of COVID-19 should stay at home and begin to self-isolate for the timeframe set out in the guidance while making arrangements to be tested. Anyone who lives with someone displaying COVID-19 symptoms, or is in an extended household arrangement with someone displaying symptoms must also self-isolate at home for the appropriate time periods set out in the self-isolation guidance.

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, as well as cause worry or concern for learners. We will keep this under review. Staff should of course be vigilant for changes to learners' temperatures and signs of fever.

2. Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual.

COVID-19 is an easy virus to kill when it is on skin. This can be done with soap and running water or using a hand sanitiser. Schools supported by their local authorities must ensure that learners clean their hands regularly, including when they arrive at school, when they return from breaks, when they change rooms and before and after eating and after using the toilet. Regular and thorough hand cleaning is going to be needed for the foreseeable future. Points to consider and implement include:

- whether the school/setting has enough hand washing or hand sanitiser 'stations' available so that all learners and staff can clean their hands regularly
- supervision of the use of hand sanitiser given the risks around ingestion. Young learners and those with complex needs should continue to be helped to clean their hands properly
- building these routines into the school's culture, supported by behaviour expectations and helping ensure younger learners and those with complex needs understand the need to follow them
- automated soap dispensers should be used where possible and hands should be thoroughly dried, preferably using paper towels. Hand dryers should be avoided where possible. Paper towels should be disposed of in a lidded bin and not allowed to overflow. Bins should be emptied daily.

3. Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach.

The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach continues to be very important, so schools and settings must ensure that they have enough tissues and bins available in the school to support learners and staff to follow this routine. As with hand cleaning, schools and settings must ensure younger learners and those with complex needs are helped to get this right, and all learners understand that this is now part of how school and settings operates. Some learners with complex needs may find it difficult to maintain good respiratory hygiene as effectively as their peers. This should be considered in risk assessments in order to support these learners and the staff working with them, and is not a reason to deny these learners face-to-face education.

4. Increased cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often using standard products, such as detergents and disinfectant.

Schools and settings should follow the latest advice on cleaning in non-healthcare settings. Points to consider and implement include:

- putting in place a cleaning schedule that ensures cleaning is generally enhanced and includes:
  - more frequent cleaning of rooms/shared areas after they have been used by different groups
  - frequently touched surfaces being cleaned more often than normal
- where possible, providing separate toilets for different contact groups. Where this is not possible, using hand sanitiser before entering the toilet and ensuring

toilets are cleaned regularly will help. Learners must be encouraged to clean their hands thoroughly after using the toilet.

5. Minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible.

The latest published evidence in relation to the transmissibility in learners under the age of 12 seems to be particularly low. Children under the age of 18 make up 22 to 25 per cent of the population, but consistently make up <2% of the total COVID-19 caseload in every country. Minimising contacts and mixing between people reduces transmission of COVID-19.This is important in all contexts, and schools and settings must consider how to implement this. Schools and settings must do everything possible to minimise contacts and mixing.

Minimising contacts and social distancing

We know that minimising contacts and mixing between people reduces transmission of COVID-19. Schools must consider how to best implement this and do everything possible within their own context to minimise contacts and mixing while delivering a broad and balanced curriculum. It is acknowledged, however, that schools will have constraints relating to buildings and staffing resources and an element of flexibility may be needed.

The overarching principle to apply is to reduce the number of contacts between learners and staff. This can be achieved through keeping groups separate and through maintaining distance between individuals. Both measures will help, but the balance between them will change depending on the:

- learners' ability to distance to minimise their contacts
- layout of the school
- feasibility of keeping distinct groups separate while offering a broad curriculum (especially at secondary schools).

It is likely that for younger learners the emphasis will be on separating groups, and for older learners it will be on social distancing. For learners old enough, they should be supported to maintain distance and not touch staff where possible.

How to group learners

Consistent groups help reduce the risk of transmission by limiting the number of learners and staff in contact with each other to only those within the group. It is accepted that learners and especially the youngest learners, may not be able to socially distance from staff or from each other and consistent groups provide an additional protective measure. Maintaining distinct contact groups that do not mix makes it quicker and easier, in the event of a positive case, to identify those who may need to self-isolate and to keep that number as low as possible.

The use of small contact groups brings a number of educational and operational challenges which restricts the normal operation of schools. This is the case in both primary and secondary schools, but is particularly difficult in secondary schools.

However, given the decrease in the prevalence of COVID-19 and the plan for the autumn term for the resumption of the full range of curriculum subjects, schools may need to change the emphasis on contact groups, increasing the size of the groups, but staying within their system of controls and building into their risk-assessments.

In secondary schools, particularly in the older age groups at Key Stages 4 and 5, the contact groups are likely to need to be the size of a year group to enable schools to deliver the full range of curriculum subjects and for learners to receive specialist teaching. If this can be achieved with small groups, they are recommended. At primary school, and in the younger years at secondary (Key Stage 3), schools may be able to implement smaller groups the size of a full class. If that can be achieved, it is recommended, as this will help to reduce the number of people who could be asked to isolate should someone in a group become ill with symptoms of, or test positive for COVID-19.

Schools should assess their circumstances and if class-sized groups are not compatible with offering a full range of subjects or managing the practical logistics within and around school, they can look to implement a year group (or half year group) sized contact groups. Whatever the size of the group, they should be kept apart from other groups where possible and those age 11+ should be encouraged to keep their distance within groups. Schools with the capability to do it should take steps to limit interaction, sharing of rooms and social spaces between groups as much as possible. When using larger groups the other measures from the system of controls become even more important; to minimise transmission risks and to minimise the numbers of learners and staff who may need to self-isolate. We recognise that younger learners will not be able to maintain social distancing, and it is acceptable for them not to distance within their group.

Both the approaches of separating groups and maintaining distance are not ‘all-or-nothing’ options, and will still bring benefits even if implemented partially. Some schools may keep learners in their class groups for the majority of the classroom time, but also allow mixing into wider groups for specialist teaching, wraparound care and transport. Siblings may also be in different groups. Making efforts to keep these groups at least partially separate and minimising contacts between learners will still offer public health benefits as it reduces the network of possible direct transmission.

All teachers and staff can operate across different classes and year groups in order to facilitate the delivery of the school timetable. This will be particularly important for secondary schools. Where staff need to move between classes and year groups, they should try and keep their distance from learners and other staff as much as they can, ideally 2 metres from other adults. Again, we recognise this is not likely to be possible with younger learners and teachers in primary schools can still work across groups if that is needed to enable a full educational offer.

Where mixing between groups cannot be avoided, schools and practitioners should run the **approach to risk estimation and management** process to reduce the risk of transmission between contact groups.

It is important that schools and settings have the flexibility to manage and respond to risks in an appropriate way. As schools and settings seek to minimise the risks of transmission, they should consider the process detailed at **Annex A**.

Measures within the classroom

Maintaining a distance between people while inside school premises and reducing the amount of time they are in face-to-face to contact lowers the risk of transmission. It is strong public health advice that staff in secondary schools maintain distance from their learners, staying at the front of the class, and away from their colleagues where possible. Ideally, adults should maintain a 2 metre distance from each other, and from learners. We know that this is not always possible, particularly when working with younger learners, but if adults can do this when circumstances allow that will help. In particular, they should avoid close face-to-face contact and minimise time spent within 1 metre of anyone. Similarly, it will not be possible when working with many learners who have complex needs or who need close contact care. These learners' educational and care support should be provided as normal.

Learners should also be supported to maintain distance and not touch staff and their peers where possible. This will not be possible for the youngest learners and some learners with complex needs and it is not feasible in some schools where space does not allow. Schools doing this where they can, and even doing this some of the time, will help.

When staff or learners cannot maintain distancing, particularly with younger learners in primary schools, the risk can also be reduced by keeping learners in the smaller, class-sized groups described above.

Schools should make small adaptations to the classroom to support distancing where possible. That should include seating learners side by side and facing forwards, rather than face-to-face or side on, and might include moving unnecessary furniture out of classrooms to make more space.

Measures elsewhere

Contact groups should be kept apart where possible, meaning that schools should avoid large gatherings such as assemblies or collective worship with more than one group.

When timetabling, groups should be kept apart and movement around the school site kept to a minimum. While passing briefly in the corridor or playground is low risk, schools should avoid creating busy corridors, entrances and exits. Schools should also consider staggered break times and lunch times (and time for cleaning surfaces in the dining hall between groups).

Schools and settings should also plan how shared staff spaces are set up and used to help staff to distance from each other. Use of staff rooms should be minimised, although staff must still have a break of a reasonable length during the day.

Measures for arriving at and leaving school

Where possible, schools should consider staggered starts or adjusting start and finish times to keep groups apart as they arrive and leave school. Staggered start and finish times should not reduce the amount of overall teaching time. A staggered start may, for example, include condensing/staggering free periods or break time but retaining the same amount of teaching time, or keeping the length of the day the same but starting and finishing later to avoid rush hour. Schools should consider how to communicate this to parents/carers and remind them about the process that has been agreed for drop off and collection, including that gathering at the school gates and otherwise coming onto the site without an appointment is not allowed.

Schools should also have a process for removing face coverings when learners and staff who choose to use them arrive at school, and this should be clearly communicated to them. Learners must be instructed not to touch the front of their face covering during use or when removing them. They must wash their hands immediately on arrival (as is the case for all learners), dispose of temporary face coverings in a covered bin or place reusable face coverings in a plastic bag they can take home with them, and then wash their hands again before heading to their classroom.

Other considerations

Some learners with special educational needs (SEN) will need specific help and preparation for the changes to routine that this will involve, so teachers and special educational needs coordinators should plan to meet these needs, for example by using social stories.

Supply teachers, peripatetic teachers and/or other temporary staff can move between schools. They should ensure they minimise contact and maintain as much distance as possible from other staff and learners. Specialists, therapists, clinicians and other support staff for learners with SEN should provide interventions as usual. Schools should consider how to manage other visitors to the site, such as contractors, and ensure site guidance on social/physical distancing and hygiene is explained to visitors on or before arrival and signage on the premises is used and prominently displayed. Where visits can happen outside of school hours, they should. A record should be kept of all visitors as this may be needed at a future point to assist the Welsh Government's Test, Trace, Protect strategy.

It is expected that all leaners in education other than at school (EOTAS) return to education provision full-time from the start of the autumn term. Local authorities as EOTAS commissioners will need to be assured that EOTAS providers have complied with health and safety law requiring them to assess risks and put in place proportionate control measures. Where a learner routinely attends more than one setting on a part-time basis, for example because they are dual registered at a mainstream school and a pupil referral unit (PRU), or other education otherwise that at school (EOTAS), setting or special school, the settings should work through the system of controls collaboratively, enabling them to address any risks identified and allowing them to jointly deliver a broad and balanced curriculum for the learner.

Schools and settings should ensure outdoor playground equipment should be more frequently cleaned. This would also apply to resources used inside and outside by wraparound care providers. It is still recommended that learners limit the amount of equipment they bring into school each day, to essentials such as lunch boxes, bags, hats, coats, books, stationery and mobile phones. Learners and staff can take books and other shared resources home, although unnecessary sharing should be avoided, especially where this does not contribute to learners' education and development. Similar rules on hand washing, cleaning of the resources and rotation should apply to these resources.

For individual and very frequently used equipment, such as pencils and pens, it is recommended that staff and learners have their own items that are not shared. Classroom-based resources, such as books and games, can be used and shared within the contact group; these should be cleaned regularly, along with all frequently touched surfaces. Resources that are shared between contact groups, such as sports, art and science equipment should be cleaned frequently and meticulously and always between contact groups, or rotated to allow them to be left unused and out of reach for a period of 48 hours (72 hours for plastics) between use by different contact groups.

If non-symptomatic children present behaviours which may increase the risk of droplet transmission (such as biting, licking, kissing or spitting) or require care that cannot be provided without close contact, they should continue to receive care in the same way, including any existing routine use of PPE.

In these circumstances, to reduce the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission, no additional PPE is necessary as these are non-symptomatic children in a non-healthcare setting and so the risk of viral transmission is very low. However, additional space and frequent cleaning of surfaces, objects and toys will be required. Cleaning arrangements should be increased in all settings, with a specific focus on surfaces which are frequently touched.

6. Where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)

It is important to remember that social/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.

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 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 continue to 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 masks 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 gowns, FFP3 masks 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 by the employer. Further information has been provided by the Health and Safety Executive.

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.

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, and to discuss any relevant training requirements.

Use of face coverings for health purposes

The Chief Medical Officer has been clear that there is minimal 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 and settings should ensure, where possible 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 learners wear face coverings. No one who may not be able to handle face coverings as directed (e.g. young learners, or those with special educational needs or disabilities) should wear them as it may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission.

Face coverings and implications for deaf learners or learners with any level of hearing loss

The impact of wearing a face coverings for a deaf learner or learners with any level of hearing loss 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.

Advice on face coverings will be kept under constant review and will always follow the latest scientific advice.

Response to any infection

7. Engage with the Test Trace Protect (TTP) Strategy

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

This strategy set 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 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 operates can be found on the Welsh Government website

- ensuring that if the symptoms are not due to coronavirus, individuals and their contacts can cease their period of self-isolation and get back to their normal routines as soon as possible

- providing advice and guidance, particularly if the person who has symptoms or their contacts were previously in the 'shielding group' or are in the increased risk group.

By reducing transmission in our communities, and quickly identifying and isolating those at risk of developing COVID-19 following their close contact with a positive individual (e.g. a known 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 any of the COVID-19 symptoms to self-isolate immediately and book a test. Those living with someone showing symptoms or who has tested positive for COVID-19 should also self-isolate. Where possible it would be helpful for schools and settings to keep a record of anyone who comes in to a contact group (e.g. intervention teams). This can be a simple book in every classroom recording anyone coming in from 'outside'.

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. The NHS TTP team will be notified automatically of a positive test result via their CRM system. There is no requirement for the school/setting to notify the TTP unless specifically asked to following a cluster managed by an Incident Management Team. If such an instance occurs then the school/setting will be provided with a dedicated TTP contact person managing the cluster to whom they can report new cases or raise any other concerns such as increasing numbers of possible cases.

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
- having travelled in a vehicle with the person who has tested positive.

Where staff have maintained social/physical 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 be regarded as part of a contact tracing exercise 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. The latest information can be found on the Welsh Government website.

8. Manage confirmed cases of COVID-19 among the school community

Building upon the Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales (2020) Public Health Wales has provided specific advice regarding the investigation and management of clusters and incidents of COVID-19 in educational settings.

The advice outlines what steps should be taken to protect individuals and communities where clusters and incidents are occurring, as well as reducing spread to other communities.

1. Identification of cases in possible cluster.
2. Gathering of minimum information.
3. Initial cluster management and risk assessment.
4. Identification of incident.
5. Incident management.
6. Escalation.

Identifying clusters and incidents of COIVD-19

A potential **cluster** is defined as two or more cases of COVID-19 among learners or staff in an educational setting within 14 days or an increased rate of absence due to suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19.

A potential **incident, needing further investigation,** is defined as two or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 among learners or staff who are direct close contacts, proximity contacts or in the same "contact group* in the school/setting, within 14 days" (*this may be a class, year group or other defined group). The TTP contact tracer will assess a number of factors to determine the potential for a cluster including whether the individual who tested positive attended the school/setting during their infectious period, whether it is likely that this setting was the source of infection for this confirmed case and whether further tracing of contacts in the setting is needed.

The contact tracer will also assess whether there are any further possible or confirmed cases associated with the setting and will escalate the case where appropriate.

It is important to highlight that if only one person has been identified with a case of COIVD-19 in a school or setting the regular Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) contact tracing process should be followed.

Cases in schools and settings will be identified by:

- notification ('flagging') of individual confirmed cases who attend a school or setting through the national CRM contact tracing system
- direct notifications from other sources, such as schools and settings themselves, clinicians such as school nurses, local authorities, laboratories and the PHW Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre (CDSC) Team.

After notification of a confirmed case who attends a school or setting the TTP team will contact the school/setting to assess whether the positive case attended during their infectious period and/or if it is likely the setting was the source of the infection for this case.

Gathering of minimum information and managing a cluster

Regional TTP teams will appoint a clear lead for the investigation of a cluster who work with the local authority and head of the school or setting (or nominated deputy) to gather a range of information related to the unique nature of the school/setting, the context and situation in which the cases have occurred and to establish if the Welsh Government advice for schools and settings is being implemented correctly alongside guidance on infection control measures/social distancing measures for staff and students (including the use of PPE if learners require personal care). A further risk assessment will be undertaken and if an incident is not declared the regional TTP team will continue to work with the local authority, school/setting to manage and review the cluster.

Identification of an incident

If an incident is suspected in a school/setting, the PHW Consultant in Communicable Disease Control/Consultant in Health Protection (CCDC/CHP) will make urgent contact with designated senior colleagues in the relevant local authority, PHW and Health Board (HB), in line with existing health protection arrangements. An urgent incident meeting (Incident Management Team (IMT)) is likely to be convened to which key individuals who are needed to investigate and manage the situation will be invited. Any immediate control measures needed will be implemented prior to this meeting. Urgent actions to control the situation (such as class closures or whether widespread swabbing is required) will be agreed at this meeting.

The IMT will investigate the control measures in place and consider implementing increased measures where appropriate **and** also consider whether, in rare circumstances, a formal outbreak needs to be declared.

When an outbreak is declared

Most clusters and incidents will be comprehensively dealt with using the steps outlined in this document. However, in rare circumstances a school/setting incident will be so complex it will require management under the formal structures of an Outbreak Control Team and managed as per the Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales 2020.

a. Adjustments as to how the school/setting is operating to facilitate infection prevention and control measures and social distancing.

b. If further groups need to be asked to self-isolate (e.g. class groups, other functional groups or year groups).

c. Whether to undertake an enhanced investigation including testing of a wider group.

Management of a COVID-19 incident in a school or setting

The management of an incident will be taken forward by the Incident Management Team (IMT) based on the individual circumstances of the incident and the school/setting. The IMT will consider:

a. whether to undertake an enhanced investigation including testing of a wider group
b. adjustments to how the school/setting is operating to facilitate infection prevention and control measures and social distancing
c. if further groups need to be asked to self-isolate (e.g. class groups, other functional groups or year groups)
d. more detailed follow up of households of positive cases and/or further testing
e. targeted communications strategy including messages for vulnerable contacts.

An incident will be declared over when there has been 28 days since the onset of the last confirmed case in the school/setting and the results of any possible cases in learners or staff in that time have tested negative.

Rapid deployment of PCR antigen testing

The rapid deployment of swabbing/testing will be made available to support outbreaks in schools/settings by the NHS Wales TTP Programme. Local health boards will facilitate PCR antigen testing for everybody in the school/setting contact group that are affected by the outbreak and everyone in the school/setting if it has been established that the setting has not followed Welsh Government guidelines for schools and/or infection prevention and control measures.

The method for delivery and sampling of rapid antigen tests can be executed in a range of ways such as the deployment of Mobile Testing Units (MTUs), temporary testing satellites and drop off and collection routes. The most appropriate testing channel will be discussed and agreed between all stakeholders.

Testing kits

We intend to provide each school and setting in Wales with a supply of home testing kits to ensure there is flexibility in the testing available, further information will follow.

Welsh Government officials have developed an information leaflet specifically for education settings which provides detail regarding the wider TTP programme.

School operations

Our ambition is that all learners should participate in education in September. We recognise some arrangements for our early years learners can present unique challenges for local authorities and providers. Additional thought and planning is required, especially where these arrangements support parents and need to blend seamlessly with childcare provision.

Early years learners are at a critical stage of cognitive development and it is essential their start in education is a positive one and provides a strong foundation for their future development. There is a need to ensure schools and funded non-maintained settings are provided with the right framework so that our youngest children get the very best start to their educational life, and one that they can build on for the future.

Nursery education

Early years learners are at a critical stage of cognitive development and it is essential their start in education is a positive one and provides a strong foundation for their future development. There is a need to ensure schools and funded non-maintained settings are provided with the right framework so that our youngest children get the very best start to their educational life, and one that they can build on for the future.

Transition

This September schools and funded non-maintained settings will have the added responsibility of transition for more new learners than usual, with summer term children that have not yet started. In addition, existing learners will need to re-transition due to the length of time they have been away and some learners will also transition from settings to schools.

The structure of delivery across local authorities in Wales is different in terms of number of hours delivered; patterns of attendance and the mix of provision in schools and non-maintained settings.

Schools and settings should follow their normal transition processes, where possible, to ensure a positive, and safe, experience for our youngest learners within the overall aim of all children accessing education as soon as is practical.

If the child is accessing both education and childcare, and this is taking place across two sites, it will be important to ensure schools and settings all understand the transition arrangements and are clear on when the child will be in each setting and what collection and transport arrangements are in place. Attendance at more than one setting is highly likely in this age group, and is not an issue where appropriate risk management measures are taken.

Parental involvement

Within nursery provision there is often a greater level of parental involvement than at any time in a child's educational journey. In addition to drop-off and collection of children, parents sometimes help their children to settle in and staff may well undertake home visits before children start. Schools and settings will need to balance this engagement with the need to minimise overall levels of contacts. Consideration should be given to how this is done when undertaking risk assessments. If a home visit is required it should be undertaken outside, for example in the garden of the premises where the child resides, to ensure 2 metre physical/social distancing can be maintained from the school staff member and the child and their family.

Resources

In addition to the guidance earlier in this document about stringent cleaning, having different sets of equipment and resources for different groups of children in nursery, **if possible**, will also help minimise transmission, particularly where more than one group of learners needs to access the same space during a single day – for example, in schools with morning and afternoon nursery provision. This would reduce the amount of cleaning needed to be undertaken during the change-over period with the focus then being on fixed furniture, larger equipment and high touch points.

The time learners spend outdoors should be maximised. This has important physical, mental and educational benefits and helps combat transmission of COVID-19.

Social distancing

In addition to the guidance earlier in this document about minimising contact, the level of social (physical) distancing within indoor childcare settings with young children will be harder to maintain than in other settings. Settings should therefore implement the social distancing and mixing in childcare settings measures set out in the revised **Protective measures in childcare settings: Keep Childcare Safe** guidance to minimise the number of contacts that children and adults have when inside, while ensuring children are kept safe and well cared for.

Further information about self-isolation and booking tests for those showing symptoms and the process for contact tracing are outlined earlier in this guidance: **protective measures**.

Foundation Phase Practice

The evidence shows our youngest learners are in the least at risk group. We also know our early years' educational practitioners are experienced in caring for the needs of young children and will apply professional judgement doing the right thing for children, parents and staff. Continuing with a child centred approach means we

will have a high-quality delivery of the Foundation Phase with personal and social development and well-being at the centre of our Foundation Phase philosophy for our youngest learners.

We recognise that provision and learning experiences may not be exactly the same as it was in March. However, you can still achieve the same learning outcomes with safe modification and adaptation of learning spaces and resources.

Transport

(This section relates to schools and settings up to the age of 19)

Local authorities are responsible for the implementation of this section of the guidance, working with the operators with whom they contract to ensure necessary measures are put in place in line with risk assessments (which should involve appropriate consultation with trade unions and staff). Parents/carers and school staff should all play a role in educating children and young people on acceptable behaviour on school and public transport.

This guidance has been informed by the scientific advice of the Technical Advisory Cell Children and Education Sub Group, and with advice from Public Health Wales (PHW).

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 learners
- the nature of the route that learners could reasonably be expected to take between home and the places where they receive education or training
- the likely distance the learner is to travel between home and the place where they receive education and 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.

This section provides guidance on putting in place proportionate safeguards to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 on dedicated home to school transport to ensure learners can attend school/settings.

This guidance applies to all **dedicated home to school transport**. By this, we mean services which exclusively carry learners travelling to and from school and/or settings. This includes:

- services commissioned or provided by local authorities, whether or not the service is provided free of charge
- services commissioned or provided by schools and settings
- services provided by transport operators (commercial travel routes) which cannot be boarded by members of the public at the same time as they are carrying learners to school or settings.

Vehicles that provide transport to members of the public at other times are considered dedicated home to school transport when they are exclusively carrying children and young people travelling to and from school and settings; this includes taxis and minibuses.

As far as it is safe to do so, the use of active travel routes by parents/carers, staff and learners should be encouraged. Walking and cycling, scooting, wheeling, etc., should be strongly encouraged. In view of the potential for capacity constraints on public transport to impact learner's ability to attend school, all sustainable and active travel modes should be considered.

Learners accessing public transport as part of their home to school journey must follow the guidance set out by Welsh Government. Where something is essential for public health reasons we have said 'must'.

Key messages

- Local authorities remain under a statutory duty to provide free home to school transport for all eligible learners of compulsory school age over certain distances from their education centres (2 miles primary/3 miles secondary) as specified in the learner travel Wales measure) and to publish a transport statement detailing what travel assistance they will provide for young people over 16 which is discretionary.

- Local authorities, working with schools, settings and transport operators as necessary, should undertake a risk assessment for dedicated school transport journeys in their local area that takes account of the routes travelled and the users of the services; the nature of the transport used and the opportunity for adaption and local transport capacity, i.e. the opportunity to scale up provision. The risk assessment must be signed off by the appropriate health and safety officer in the local authority. They must then work through the **system of controls** set out in this section and adopt measures in a way that addresses the identified risk, works in the local circumstances, and allows learners to attend their school/setting.

- There is no requirement to wear a face covering on dedicated home to school transport (Regulation 12A of Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 2) (Wales) Regulations 2020). However, a child over the age of 11 who is travelling

on ordinary public transport will need to wear a face covering in line with these Regulations. We believe this is appropriate because:

  - the overall risk to learners from COVID-19 is very low
  - they do not mix with the general public on those journeys
  - dedicated home to school transport often carries the same group of learners on a regular basis
  - the predictability, which public transport does not offer in the same way, will allow for planning so that protective measures can be put in place
  - the absence of evidence of any substantial benefit from the use of face coverings compared to the potential risks of incorrect use and disposal.

- Wherever capacity allows social distancing should be implemented between learners, or groups of learners, and between drivers/passenger assistants. Where it is not possible, other measures from the system of controls set out below, should be put in place.

- There is no requirement to maintain contact groups on school transport providing a consistent group of learners travel on the same bus each day they attend. The use of dedicated school transport to serve several schools should be avoided where possible, particularly between school clusters.

- If face coverings are adopted local authorities should ensure that attention is made to their safe use, e.g. hand washing before and after putting on and removing face coverings, safe disposal or storage and that these are not a substitute for other control measures advocated in this guidance.

The system of controls: protective measures

Reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 involves a few simple principles. We recognise that the way in which these controls are implemented will need to vary according to local circumstances.

Local authorities should take account of the particular needs of children and young people with special, educational needs and disabilities and, where necessary, be informed by the views of the parents/carers and school/settings.

1. Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell

No-one should board dedicated school transport if they or a member of their household has any of the four identified COVID-19 symptoms (a new continuous cough, a high temperature or loss of taste or smell). Parents/carers must be advised that if they have any concerns their child is unwell, they should not attend school. Anyone with symptoms must follow the guidance.

Anyone in a household that is required to self-isolate as contacts of a case under Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) or in quarantine if returned from a country specified by the Foreign Commonwealth Office should not board dedicated school transport.

If a learner develops symptoms whilst at school/setting, they should be sent home. However, they must not travel home on dedicated school transport. The school or setting should contact the parent/carer who should make arrangements for the learner's journey home.

Drivers and passenger assistants who become unwell during the working day should be sent home.

Learners, drivers and passenger assistants who have been in contact with someone that has developed symptoms of COVID-19 while at school/setting or on dedicated school transport do not need to go home to self-isolate unless they develop symptoms themselves (in which case, they should arrange a COVID-19 test).

Routine monitoring of temperature prior to boarding dedicated school transport should not be implemented, this is not a reliable method for identifying COVID-19.

Local authorities, in discussion with school transport providers should consider the provision of hand sanitiser on school transport for use by the driver, passenger assistants and learners when boarding the vehicle.

2. Clean hands thoroughly and more often than usual

COVID-19 is an easy virus to remove when it is on skin. Where soap and water is not available an appropriate hand sanitiser can be used.

Learners, drivers and passenger assistants should clean their hands, before boarding home to school transport and when arriving at school or home. Local authorities working with their schools and school transport operators should ensure this message is communicated to all those using dedicated school transport and that appropriate arrangements to enable this are put in place by schools and transport operators.

Drivers and passenger assistants may wish to use hand sanitiser at intervals throughout the journey, and should always do so after performing tasks such as helping a learner into the vehicle or handling a learner's belongings.

It should not normally be necessary for learners to clean their hands during the journey.

Local authorities in discussion with school transport operators and as part of any risk assessment should consider the availability of hand sanitiser for circumstances during the journey where it may be necessary to clean hands.

3. Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach

The ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach is very important. Schools/settings should reinforce this message with learners. Local authorities may also wish to consider reinforcing it in their communication with families and on messages clearly displayed on the transport.

Learners should be encouraged to carry tissues on home to school transport. Transport operators may wish to consider keeping a supply of tissues and hand rub or sanitiser on vehicles. Consideration will also need to be given to the safe disposal of tissues used on school transport.

Most learners with complex needs/learning difficulties will find it difficult to maintain as good respiratory hygiene as their peers without appropriate support, for example those who spit or use saliva as a sensory stimulant. This should be considered when deciding what safeguards should be put in place in order to support these learners and the staff working with them. Alternative dedicated provision may be appropriate for these individuals.

Vehicles should be well ventilated, opening windows where possible and it is safe to do so.

4. Introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often using standard products, such as detergents and bleach

COVID-19 is easy to kill on surfaces. Normal cleaning products will do this. Specialist cleaning products are not needed. See the COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance and the ‘Keeping public and private areas and modes of transport clean’ section of the transport operator guidance for information on carrying out cleaning procedures and adjusting ventilation.

Local authorities should work with transport operators to agree the arrangements for cleaning vehicles for dedicated school transport. **PHW recommend that frequently touched surfaces are cleaned using a specified process after each journey** — and that enhanced cleaning takes place at the end of each day.

5. Minimising contact and mixing

In this guidance it is recommended that schools/settings should minimise contact and mixing of learners. It is for schools/settings to determine how they will do this but, in secondary schools, particularly in Key Stages 4 and 5, groups may be the size of a year group. At primary school, and in Key Stage 3, schools may be able to implement smaller groups such as the size of a class.

Similarly, the guidance for further education and skills providers recommends that they reduce contact between individuals through forming groups or cohorts of learners that remain separate from each other during the course of the day.

The guidance for schools and settings acknowledges that **implementing contact groups will still bring benefits even if implemented partially**, and that **schools may need to allow mixing into wider groups in certain circumstances including on transport**. Siblings may also be in different groups.

Local authorities should work with schools, settings and transport operators to consider how mixing might be minimised on school transport. However, we know that vehicle capacity and the complexity of some home to school transport arrangements, mean this may not always be feasible. As a priority mixing between schools and particularly school clusters should be avoided. The use of staggered start and finish times may help facilitate this.

For certain learners such as those with complex medical, social or behavioural difficulties. In these cases, alternative dedicated transport may be considered more appropriate.

These contact groups would need to be identified as potential contacts if any member tests positive. It is, therefore, important to ensure that records are kept of who routinely travels on what vehicle and that passes or lists of passengers travelling are checked as learners board school transport.

Local authorities should work with schools/settings and transport operators to draw up seating arrangements so that learners understand where they need to sit on home to school transport. This could be allocating specific seats or having rules such as sitting in ascending year groups: front to back, youngest to oldest or always filling the vehicle from back to front and then alighting from front to back. Ensuring the same learners always sit together will help to minimise the number of contacts each one has. Such arrangements will require clear communication between schools and families/children. Drivers are unable to ‘police’ seating arrangements.

Avoid the use of face-to-face seating on home to school transport.

Provide clear information for parents/carers and learners about the arrangements needed for picking them up and dropping them off at their home destination. Ensure schools have arrangements in place to manage queuing when waiting to board the bus.

If face coverings are adopted local authorities should ensure that attention is made to their safe use, e.g. hand washing before and after putting on and removing face coverings, safe disposal or storage and that these are not a substitute for other control measures advocated in this guidance.

Face coverings should not be worn by those who may not be able to handle them as directed (for example, young children, or those with special educational needs or disabilities) as it may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission (under 11 years are exempt from requirements to use face coverings on public transport). The following points should also be considered.

- Some children and young people may need to be able to lip-read, or see people's faces, in order to communicate.
- Some children and young people with special educational needs may be distressed if the people around them wear face coverings.
- Face coverings are not a substitute for other protective measures such as good hand and respiratory hygiene and social distancing where possible.

Specific considerations

A range of specific considerations and control measures may be adopted for specific groups or in response to particular circumstances. These will be for local consideration and adoption following a risk assessment.

Taxis and private hire vehicles

Some learners, including those with additional support needs, rely on taxi or private hire vehicle transfers to get to and from school/setting. Where taxis are used solely for the purpose of transporting children and young people to and from school, as with dedicated school bus and coach services, physical distancing requirements are not necessary. It is recommended that in taxis and private hire vehicles learners' travel in the back seat only.

There should be careful consideration of how learners with additional needs can be provided with safe, bespoke transport arrangements. This could include the introduction of cleaning protocols, driving with the windows open (when possible) or finding larger vehicles for transportation. Local authorities and schools should liaise with their local private hire providers on the measures they are putting in place to protect learners, including for the arrangements for carrying multiple learners.

When travel by taxi or private hire vehicle is necessary, learners should be advised to follow the advice of the driver. Appropriate cleaning and sanitising measures will also be necessary. Face to face seating where available should not be used.

Staggered starts

The guidance for schools and settings asks them to consider introducing staggered starts or adjusting start and finish times to keep groups of learners apart as they arrive at and leave school and to enable more journeys to take place outside of peak hours. We recognise that this option will be more feasible in some circumstances than others.

We recognise that it is likely that learners in different contact groups will need to travel together on home to school transport and that it will often not be possible for them to arrive at different times from one another. Local authorities, schools and settings, will need to work together to ensure the arrangements for home to school transport and staggered starts complement one another.

Staggered starts may be helpful where local authorities fulfil their duty to provide free transport for eligible learners by providing them with a pass for free travel on public transport, so that those learners are able to avoid using public transport at peak time.

Protecting staff working on dedicated school transport

Understandably staff working on dedicated school transport including drivers and passenger assistants may have concerns about their safety. As adults these staff will be at greater risk from transmission than learners. Employers should undertake an individual risk assessment for all staff employed on dedicated home to school transport, which includes an assessment of their clinical risk. Guidance on this can be found here.

Where social distancing cannot be maintained (less than 2 metres), drivers and passenger assistants should be provided with appropriate **personal protective equipment (PPE)**. This should include the provision of an appropriate face covering for each journey and facilities for the safe removal and disposal including the provision of a recommended hand sanitiser.

Staff working on dedicated school transport should be provided with training and advice on the safe use, removal and disposal of PPE. The responsibility for providing PPE is a matter for the employer. Local authorities and providers should discuss and agree how the additional costs of this provision should be met.

Where possible, taking account of the design of the vehicle, a screen should be erected between the driver and the passengers.

Local authorities have a key role in ensuring that:

- a risk assessment for dedicated home to school transport is undertaken or updated from those previously undertaken and submitted to the local authority
- plans are developed and implemented to address identified risks
- in addition to working with providers, wherever possible, local authorities should seek to gauge the views of parents/carers and learners, particularly when any reviews of the measures implemented are undertaken
- there is a clear plan for communication with families, schools, settings and transport operators
- consideration is given to building requirements related to this guidance into the contractual arrangements with transport operators
- consideration is given to updating the Travel Behaviour Code.

Communication with families, schools, settings and transport operators

Local authorities should consider how to communicate their arrangements for home to school transport clearly to learner's, parents/carers, schools/settings and transport operators.

They may wish to consider:

- reminding parents/carers that their child must not travel if they or anyone in their household has symptoms of COVID-19
- that learners and their parents/carers will need to understand any arrangements for queuing for and boarding home to school transport, and where they should sit in the vehicle
- that learners and their parents/carers will need to understand whether or not they will be expected to wear face coverings on home to school transport
- that drivers and passenger assistants will need to understand any rules that they, young people and learners need to follow on home to school transport
- that local authorities, schools, settings and transport operators will need a shared understanding of the arrangements for the arrival of learners at school and their collection from school
- that drivers should not be expected to police arrangements such as seating plans and queues. Their role is to focus on driving the vehicle safely
- that some parents/carers, learners, drivers and passenger assistants may feel concerned about the risk of infection on home to school transport and may want to be reassured about the safeguards that are in place
- that learners should be encouraged to adopt active travel opportunities where reasonable and practical and safe
- that the transport operative will need to have agreed robust cleaning protocols in place.

Attendance

All learners, including those that were previously shielding, will begin to return to their school or setting from 1 September. Those learners who have been advised that they no longer have the need to shield (from 17 August) should be supported in returning back to school. Support to transition back to school will be crucial for this cohort, as their level of anxiety may be greater due to the length of period many have had to shield.

The Welsh Government's view is that it would not be appropriate for a local authority/school to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) or commence proceedings for non-attendance at the school. The Welsh Government will monitor the situation over the first half term before reviewing its position.

If a learner is unable to attend the physical setting of the school for any reason it is vital the school continues to engage regularly with the learner remotely. Learning guidance is available to support schools and settings in doing so.

Schools and settings should keep a record of attendance and families should notify their school if their child is unable to attend and explain the reason for this to enable the school to record attendance correctly. 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 be critical that all learners engage with the school and any concerns about engagement, or the welfare of a learner, are followed up immediately by the school. Concerns should only be escalated to the Education Welfare Service after the school has made every attempt to engage the family.

Following consultation, the Welsh Government has revoked the School Performance and Absence Targets (Wales) Regulations 2011 (in force from 7 August 2020). As a result schools are not required to set targets for the academic year 2020/21.

Schools should record attendance and absence in keeping with the codes below until further notice.

What code should be used?

Code	**Meaning**	**Statistical category**
/	Attending school in the am.	Present
\	Attending school in the pm.	Present
C	Unable to physically attend the school due to medical/health risks or caring responsibilities agreed with the school. Also for a staggered return in the first 14 days when some age groups return.	Authorised absence
#	Planned school closure for all pupils which may take place in the first 14 days, e.g. planning days.	Not required to attend
Y	Not expected to attend due to unexpected school closure (in the event of subsequent forced school closures).	Not required to attend
I	Illness, including COVID-19.	Authorised absence
All other codes apply as per the guidance on school attendance:	gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/guidance-on-school-attendance-codes.pdf	

/\: The code for learners who attend school
All children in the expected intake for that day or in a priority group (children of critical workers and vulnerable children) should be recorded as present / \ upon arrival at their school or education setting.

C: The code for learners who are unable to attend
This includes learners who are unable to physically attend school for reasons understood and agreed by the school. They should be recorded as **code C** (Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)).

This code would be used for learners who have medical or health reasons preventing them from physically attending or they may have exceptional circumstances such as caring responsibilities.

This code would be used for learners who are self-isolating as set out in the preventative section of this guidance.

This code will also be used during the first 14 days of term when some year groups will have staggered returns.

This code should not be used if the learner is unwell with COVID-19 symptoms where the I code should be used.

Schools must engage with parents/carers to understand why they are not attending and ensure there are not any concerns about their well-being or alternative support options that could be arranged to enable them to attend. Any concerns should be followed up by the school or education setting and where relevant the local authority.

The school should review the situation with the learner and parents or carers on a regular basis to avoid any prolonged absence.

#: The code for planned school closures for all learners
Code # should be used for planned days where learners are not required to attend such as planning days in the first weeks of term.

Y: The code for enforced school closure
Code Y should be used for enforced school closure in the event of further requirements due to COVID-19.

Using other authorised absence and attendance codes
Where other specific authorised absence and attendance codes are more appropriate schools should these as usual.

Welsh Government advice on staff and learner attendance

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

- feel unwell, have any of the identified COVID-19 symptoms or they have tested positive to COVID-19, or live in a household or are part of an extended

household with someone who has symptoms of, or has tested positive for COVID-19.

Extremely vulnerable or 'shielding staff' or learners

The Chief Medical Officer (CMO) for Wales took the decision to pause his advice for extremely vulnerable individuals to shield after 16 August, because the infection rate in Wales is very low. Staff and learners who were shielding will be able to return to work or school in the autumn term if the environments are risk assessed to be 'COVID-secure' (has taken reasonable measures to minimise risk to employees and learners) although adults are advised to continue to work from home if possible. Staff who have been shielding should talk to their employer as early as possible about how they would be kept safe. Staff who do return to the school setting should strictly follow the social distancing measures in addition to what other safety measures are put in place for their return by their employer. There is advice on the Welsh Government website.

The CMOs from across the UK recently accepted the guidance published by Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) in relation to children and shielding. According to the RCPCH guidance, the majority of children currently on the Shielding Patients List (SPL) no longer need to shield. Over the summer paediatricians and GPs will be reviewing the records of children who have been shielding to assess whether they need to remain on the SPL. Once a child is removed from the SPL because they do not need to shield, they can behave in the same way as any other child in the school/setting.

While shielding advice is paused, those children who remain on the SPL should follow the same advice as those children in the 'increased risk' group.

There are circumstances where children would be unable to attend school for health reasons irrespective of COVID-19 and they should be supported to learn from home if they are able to do so.

Staff or learners at 'increased risk'

In the context of COVID-19 individuals at 'increased risk' are at a greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19. This category includes people aged over 70, those who are pregnant and those who have a range of chronic health conditions. Staff in this group may be concerned and wish to know what the lifting of lockdown restrictions means to them. The advice to staff in this group is the same as it is to the wider population. As we continue to ease restrictions however, this group should continue to closely follow the guidance on social distancing and hand and respiratory hygiene.

Pregnant women after 28 weeks are specifically advised to work from home or in a non-public facing role in a COVID-secure workplace where 2 metre physical distancing can be maintained at all times. The Royal College of Obstetric Gynaecologists (RCOG) have updated their advice, RCOG "clinical advice for pregnant women on the risk and potential implications of being severely affected by

COVID-19, particularly affecting those who are at 28 weeks' gestation or above, still stands".

As the advice to shield is being paused adults in this category can return to work as long as the work place is COVID secure, but should continue to work from home if they can. Those that do choose to return to work should satisfy themselves with the COVID-secure measures their employer has put in place in the work place and when the return to the school setting they should strictly following social and physical distancing rules. Working with the local authority every school should continue to carry out risk assessments and are encouraged to use the All Wales COVID-19 workforce risk assessment tool and put in place controls to minimise those risks, such as the need for frequent and thorough hand washing, surface hygiene/cleaning and one-way systems we have seen work well at the end of the summer term. If anyone has concerns they should discuss these with their employer, occupational health and/their GP.

Parents/carers and learners who are anxious about returning to schools and settings

All learners should attend their school or setting. Schools and settings should bear in mind the potential concerns of learners, parents/carers and staff who may be reluctant or anxious about returning and put the right support in place to address this. This may include learners who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from COVID-19, including those from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds or who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

If parents/carers of learners with significant risk factors are concerned, we recommend schools/settings discuss their concerns with them and provide reassurance of the measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk in the school/setting. Schools and settings should be clear with parents/carers that learners of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies (e.g. the learner has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is absent for a necessary religious observance, etc.). Concerns should only be escalated to the Education Welfare Service after the school has made every attempt to engage the family.

Action for all schools and local authorities

Schools and settings should work with learners, parents and carers to secure regular school attendance from the start of term as this will be essential to help learners catch up on missed education, make progress and promote their well-being and wider development.

We are asking schools/settings and local authorities to:

- communicate clear and consistent expectations around attendance to parents and carers during the summer ahead of the new school year

- identify learners who are reluctant or anxious about returning or who are at risk of disengagement and develop plans for re-engaging them. This may include meeting to discuss the barriers to returning. This should include disadvantaged and vulnerable learners and young people, especially those who were persistently absent prior to the pandemic or who have not engaged with school regularly during the pandemic
- work closely with other professionals such as youth workers, mental health support as appropriate to support the return to school, including continuing to maintain regular contact with the child's social worker if they have one, informing of attendance patterns.

School workforce

The All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool

The All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool was developed for use in health and social care workplaces and has been adapted for use in education, youth work, childcare and playwork settings. It is intended to be used to assess if staff are at higher risk of developing more serious symptoms. The local authority and/or school as the employer and/or voluntary organisation if you are a volunteer, has a duty of care to protect the health and safety at work of employees and this includes understanding if they are in a higher risk category from COVID-19.

The approach of the toolkit is a self-assessment in the first instance. This supports and empowers staff to consider their health and well-being, and understand their personal risk of developing more serious symptoms if they come into contact with the COVID-19 virus as either low, high or very-high.

Following their self-assessment staff should have confidence to discuss their safety at work and any concerns they may have with their line manager to consider the right actions to mitigate and manage that risk and ensure staff are as protected as much as possible.

Schools and settings will want to consider seeking advice from the local authority's health and safety adviser(s) regarding its stress risk assessment process. Staff may also wish to consider the need for an individual stress risk assessment, as a number of factors are important considerations in relation to staff well-being. The Health and Safety Executive provides a generic Stress Risk Assessment[5] for use.

Employer health and safety

Local authorities and schools/settings have a legal obligation to protect their employees, and others, from harm and should continue to assess health and safety risks and consider how to meet equalities duties. Following the steps in this guidance and accessing support from the local authorities health and safety adviser will mitigate the risks of COVID-19 to learners and staff and help schools to meet their legal duties to protect employees and others from harm.

Staff deployment

Schools and settings may need to alter the way in which they deploy their staff, and use existing staff more flexibly to welcome back all learners during the autumn term. Managers should discuss and agree any changes to staff roles with individuals.

It is important that planning builds in the need to avoid increases in unnecessary and unmanageable workload burdens.

[5] www.hse.gov.uk/stress/risk-assessment.htm

If, having pursued all the immediate options available, you still have concerns about your staffing capacity a discussion with the local authority is recommended.

Recruitment

Recruitment should continue as usual.

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) partnerships have worked flexibly to ensure this year's NQTs are ready and prepared to enter the classroom. They will be supported by the ITE partnerships and regional consortia as they embark on their induction programmes. This provision has been designed specifically to support NQTs in the transition from ITE to induction and to develop their teaching practice in the current circumstances.

Changes have been made to the Regulations governing induction to ensure that NQTs will not be disadvantaged by schools' working arrangements during the Coronavirus pandemic. Guidance on the revised arrangements is available on the Induction area on Hwb. The amended Regulations that came into force on 15 July will remain in place until 31 August 2021.

- Interviewing remotely may be a new experience for many schools. The DfE teaching blog provides some information on the experience of implementing interviews remotely. There is also advice that can be sent to candidates on how to prepare for remote interviews.
- When recruiting, schools must continue to adhere to the legal requirements regarding pre-appointment checks. We refer schools to statutory guidance Keeping learners safe.

Supply teachers

Schools can continue to engage supply teachers and other supply staff during this period. We strongly recommend that schools use The National Procurement Services Supply Teachers Framework for Wales when hiring agency workers, as this offers a list of preferred suppliers that must be transparent about the rates they charge.

To minimise the numbers of temporary staff entering the school premises, and secure best value, schools may wish to use longer assignments with supply teachers/staff and agree a minimum number of hours across the academic year. This advice for supply teachers also applies to other temporary staff working in schools such as support staff working on a supply basis, peripatetic teachers such as sports coaches, and those engaged to deliver before and after school clubs.

Expectation and deployment of student teachers

Our ITE partner schools have equal status and responsibility within their ITE Partnerships to deliver their ITE. The integration of school-HEI experiences is fundamental to successfully ensuring student teachers receive high-quality ITE. We

therefore strongly encourage schools within ITE Partnerships to continue hosting student teachers. ITE students have the potential to play a unique and significant role in supporting schools during this time. Schools should discuss with their ITE Partnerships how they can flexibly and innovatively continue to provide their portion of ITE programmes while supporting both school and student teacher's needs.

Staff well-being

Staff and learner well-being should be the primary concern. Key to helping learners feel safe is making sure the staff are feeling safe, this can be achieved by having reliable and consistent information, involving staff in decision-making at local level and having a coherent shared understanding of what the post COVID-19 plan is. The workload of staff at all levels should be monitored by schools and local authorities to ensure it is reasonable and appropriate. 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.

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. Senior leaders will need to consider how to support those who have:

- found the long period at home hard to manage
- concerns over having to deal with learners' well-being issues in the classroom with a lack of support
- developed anxieties related to the virus and their own health and well-being (i.e. fears of contracting the virus in the classroom)
- pre-existing issues that may have increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic
- 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 learners, young people, their families and the systems around them.

When it is not possible to employ a counsellor for this specific purpose, leaders in 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 working closely with the occupational health provision. 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.

Learner well-being

Learner and staff well-being should be of primary concern. When phasing all learners back to schools and settings, local authorities working with their schools and staff should consider how this has an impact on well-being.

For example, staff should positively reinforce behaviours around social/physical 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, supported by a clear risk assessment. 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' well-being 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 learners 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 special educational needs 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. Schools and settings may need to consider what adjustments are needed to their behaviour policies to respond to this.

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/physical 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 learners safe. There is an opportunity now for these working practices to be further consolidated.

The Welsh Government has produced a non-statutory guide to remind practitioners working across agencies of their responsibilities to safeguard learners and to support them in responding to concerns about learners at risk. The guide links to and should be used with the national Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

Food in schools (including free breakfasts in primary schools)

Normal legal requirements will apply regarding provision of food in schools, and food provided should be in compliance with the ***Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Wales) Regulations 2013***. Food provided 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. The Welsh Government's ***Statutory guidance for local authorities and governing bodies*** is designed to assist with the implementation of the Regulations.

Vulnerable and disadvantaged learners may require additional support to access food and drink in school and local authorities working with schools and settings should consider the needs of all pupils when making arrangement for catering provision. Additional needs will vary considerably and may be made more acute because of special provisions set in place during the COVID-19 outbreak. Examples might include issues around physical access, difficulties with communication, and allergies or special diets.

Free school meals

Local authorities are reminded that legal duties with regard to the provision of free school meals will apply. Even if, during the first two weeks of the autumn term, a school has decided that a learner who is in receipt of free school meals will not be expected to attend school on a particular day because of a staggered start to the term, the duty to provide that learner with a free school meal must be met.

Additionally, when making arrangements for providing eligible learners with free school meals, school governing bodies and local authorities must[6] take reasonable steps to ensure that a learner cannot be identified by any person, other than a person authorised under legislation, as a learner who receives a free school lunch.

Local authorities and governing bodies need to be particularly mindful of this duty if they are making arrangements for pupils to collect free school meals, if they are arranging for the delivery of free school meals to pupils' home addresses or if they have needed to adapt till systems in their canteens and cafeterias to meet social distancing requirements.

Guidance for the hospitality sector has been developed and is available at the following link, this includes guidance on catering facilities which local authorities, schools and settings may find helpful to refer to. Further advice is also available on:

https://www.food.gov.uk/

https://gov.wales/tourism-and-hospitality-businesses-guidance-phased-reopening-html

https://www.ukhospitality.org.uk/page/WalesGuidance

Breakfast provision and after school provision

Local authorities, working with their schools must consider resuming free breakfast schemes in primary schools and should consider resuming any other breakfast provision and after school provision whether this is provision offered by the school or run out of the school by a private provider. If a learner attends more than one setting, for example school and wrap-around or after school provision, the learner should remain in the same, small group across both settings wherever possible.

[6] Under section 7 of the ***Healthy Eating in Schools (Wales) Measure 2009***

Where that is not possible, they should remain in small consistent groups within both settings. Where learners need to attend more than one setting, parents/carers, schools and settings will need to discuss these risks and consider how to manage them.

Local authorities should support schools and providers will need to work in close partnership to fully consider how they can make before and after school provision work alongside their wider protective measures.

Schools and childcare partnerships working is vital in this regard as many parents/carers rely on wrap around and out of school childcare at either end of the school day.

Estates

We do not consider it necessary for schools and setting to make significant adaptations to their site to enable them to welcome all learners back. However it is recognised that lunchtimes may need to be extended to ensure pupils have time to eat.

It is highly unlikely that, schools will need to deliver any of their education on other sites (such as community centres/village halls) because spaces used by more than one class or group can be cleaned between use.

All buildings-related risk assessments should be prepared in consultation with the local trade unions. Following a risk assessment, some schools may determine that small adaptations to their site are required, such as additional wash basins. This will be at the discretion of individual schools/settings, based on their particular circumstances.

It is important that, prior to reopening for the autumn term, all the usual pre-term building checks are undertaken to make the school safe[7].

If buildings have been closed or had reduced occupancy during the COVID-19 outbreak, water system stagnation can occur due to lack of use, increasing the risks of Legionnaires' disease. Where mains water has been turned off since the close of the promises at lockdown, when it is reconnected it will need running through to flush away any microbiological or chemical residues built up while the water supply was disconnected.

HSE guidance covering water management and legionella is available on the Health and Safety Executive website[8].

[7] Department for Education: Managing school premises during the coronavirus outbreak

[8] Legionella risks during the coronavirus outbreak

Drinking Water Inspectorate's guidance[9] on bringing buildings back into use after a period of disuse may be helpful. The guidance covers a range of quality issues that should be considered.

It will be important that schools ensure good ventilation throughout their sites (for example, by opening windows and doors frequently where it is safe to do so). Good ventilation is essential at all times. Schools should ensure all systems are working in their normal operating mode and should:

- check whether there is a need to service or adjust ventilation systems, for example, so that they do not automatically reduce ventilation levels due to lower than normal occupancy levels

- note that most air conditioning systems do not need adjustment, however where systems serve multiple buildings, or where schools are unsure, advice should be sought from appropriate heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) engineers or advisers.

Natural ventilation via windows or vents should be used as far as possible. Where centralised or mechanical ventilation is present, recirculatory systems should be adjusted to full fresh air, if this is not possible systems should be operated as normal. Where ventilation units have filters present ensure enhanced precautions are taken when changing filters.

Educational visits

The Welsh Government, in line with the UK Government's advice, continues to advise against all overseas education trips for children under 18 organised by educational settings. We will keep this under review.

Non-overnight domestic educational visits can resume in the autumn term. These should be done in adherence with protective measures, such as COVID-secure measures in places at the destination. Visits should be thoroughly risk assessed to ensure they are done safely. As part of the risk assessment, schools will need to consider what control measures need to be used and ensure they have taken into account wider advice on visiting indoor and outdoor venues. Schools will want to consider the needs of all learners taking part in an educational visit, including their ability to comply with COVID safety measures at the venue. They should also be mindful of the safety of supervising staff. Schools will also need to have contingencies in place should there be changes to national (Wales), regional or local coronavirus measures.

School uniform

It is for the governing body of a school to make decisions regarding school uniform. Some schools relaxed their uniform policy over the summer term. We would, however, encourage all schools to return to their usual uniform policies in the autumn

[9] Guidance on Drinking Water Supply Operations in Response to Coronavirus (CoViD-19)

term. Uniform can play a valuable role in contributing to the ethos of a school and setting an appropriate tone.

If a governing body decides to relax its uniform policy a poverty conscious approach should be taken, which bears in mind that some families may struggle to purchase specific or additional items of clothing. PDG-Access should be promoted to eligible families.

Maintaining school-based vaccination programmes during COVID-19

We are very grateful for the support that schools give in hosting NHS vaccination sessions. Delivering vaccinations to children in school has always been a vital element of the national immunisation programme, helping to ensure equity and high vaccine uptake.

The UK's childhood immunisation programmes are highly successful in reducing the incidence of serious and highly infectious diseases such as measles and meningococcal infections. It is important that high levels of vaccination are maintained to prevent a re-emergence of these, and other, preventable diseases.

This autumn, preventing co-infection with flu and COVID-19 is a key priority to protect public health. Flu vaccination for primary school children will be especially important. Children are 'super spreaders' of flu and the nasal spray vaccine offered in this age group has been highly effective. Flu vaccination provides benefits to individual children and indirect protection this offers to the rest of the population. Increasing uptake in all eligible children would have a significant impact on reducing transmission of flu across all groups in the community.

A concerted effort is needed to substantially increase uptake in order to prevent unnecessary added pressure on the NHS and social care.

Headteachers and school staff across Wales have always been very supportive of school vaccination programmes. Maintaining these programmes during the COVID-19 pandemic has, and will continue to, present many challenges. The practical support offered by schools to allow access to school premises for all school age immunisation sessions has never been more valued and important.

Schools should engage with their local immunisation teams to provide immunisation programmes on site, ensuring these will be delivered in keeping with the school's control measures. These programmes are essential for children's health and well-being.

Contingency planning

Although the intention is for all learners to return to school in the autumn, every school will also need to plan for the possibility of a further local lockdown.

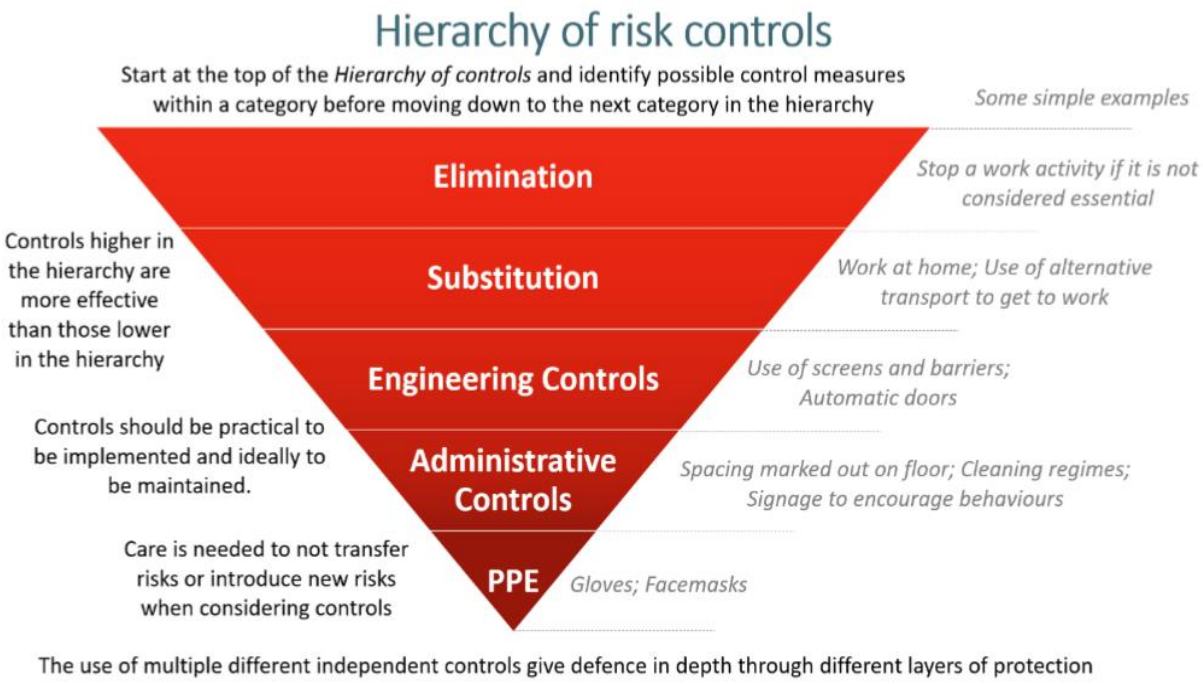
Given our uncertainty over future transmission levels, for the foreseeable future, it is essential that we prepare for a range of possible circumstances.

Welsh Government will work closely to monitor health conditions working closely with Public Health Wales and local authorities, in particular in the case of potential localised outbreaks.

Policies and procedures

Schools and settings, working closely with the local authority may wish to revisit their policies and procedures in light of this guidance, including fire evacuation, behaviour and security.

Annex A: Approach to risk estimation and management[10]



This hierarchy of controls is a way to prioritise risk control measures based on how effective different types of control are in reducing risks. Risk reduction measures should be assessed in order of the priority given in the hierarchy; it is not a case of simply jumping to the easiest control measure to implement. Types of control higher up the hierarchy are more effective at reducing risks than those lower down. Controls should be practical to be implemented and, ideally, should be able to be maintained easily over time.

It is critical to remember that it will only rarely be feasible to eliminate the risk completely. The combination of controls introduced should aim to reduce the risk to as low as reasonably practicable prioritising structural, environmental interventions over individual level ones.

This of course does not simply mean considering risks of transmission, but also balancing these against risks to wider health and well-being and learning. Ultimately schools need the flexibility to respond to these risks as they are able to.

[10] assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/891990/S0329_Risk_Estimation_to_inform_risk_assessment.pdf

When considering contact between contact groups, we would advise schools to consider:

1. **Elimination:** Redesign the activity such that the risk is removed or eliminated.
2. **Substitution:** Replace the activity with an activity that reduces the risk. Care is required to avoid introducing new hazards from the substitution.
3. **Engineering controls:** Design measures that help control or mitigate risk.
4. **Administrative controls:** Identifying and implementing the procedures to improve safety.
5. Having gone through this process, PPE should be used where the guidance states recommends this.

Annex B: Health and safety risk assessment

Coronavirus (COVID-19) specific

Everyone needs to assess and manage the risks from coronavirus (COVID-19). This means school employers and leaders are required by law to think about the risks the staff and learners face and do everything reasonably practicable to minimise them, recognising they cannot completely eliminate the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19). School employers must therefore make sure that a risk assessment has been undertaken to identify the measures needed to reduce the risks from coronavirus (COVID-19) so far as is reasonably practicable and make the school COVID-secure. General information on how to make a workplace COVID-secure, including how to approach a coronavirus (COVID-19) risk assessment, is provided by the HSE guidance on working safely.

Local authorities will continue to support schools and settings undertake a COVID-19 risk assessment by considering the measures in this guidance to inform their decisions and control measures. A risk assessment is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork, but rather about identifying sensible measures to control the risks in the workplace, and the role of others in supporting that. The risk assessment will help local authorities, schools and settings and employers decide whether they have done everything they need to. Local authorities and schools as employers have a legal duty to consult their employees on health and safety in good time. It also makes good sense to involve pupils (where applicable) and parents in discussions around health and safety decisions to help them understand the reasons for the measures being put in place. Employers can do this by listening and talking to them about how the school will manage risks from COVID-19 and make the school COVID-secure. The people who do the work are often the best people to understand the risks in the workplace and will have a view on how to work safely. Involving them in making decisions shows that the school takes their health and safety seriously.

Sharing your risk assessment

Schools and settings should share the results of their risk assessment with their workforce. If possible, they should consider publishing it on their website to provide transparency of approach to parents, carers and learners (HSE would expect all employers with over 50 staff to do so).

Monitoring and review of risk controls

It is important that employers know how effective their risk controls are. They should monitor and review the preventive and protective measures regularly, to ensure the measures are working, and taking action to address any shortfalls.

Roles and responsibilities

All employers are required by law to protect their employees, and others, from harm. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, the minimum employers must do is:

- identify what could cause injury or illness in the organisation (hazards)
- decide how likely it is that someone could be harmed and how seriously (the risk)
- take action to eliminate the hazard, or if this isn't possible, control the risk.

Schools must appoint a competent person to ensure they meet their health and safety duties.

The relevant duties under health and safety legislation fall to the employer. While in many cases the day-to-day running of the school may be delegated to the headteacher and the school management team. In most cases, the employer is responsible for ensuring that risks are managed effectively. This includes health and safety matters.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provides more information on the role of local authorities and schools as employers in the guidance The role of school leaders - who does what and a simple guide to who the employer is in each type of school setting in its FAQs section, under 'Who is accountable for health and safety within a school?'. References to actions by employers in this guidance may in practice be carried out by headteachers in schools, but the employer will need to assure themselves that they have been carried out, as they retain the accountability for health and safety. If not already done, employers should ensure that a coronavirus (COVID-19) risk assessment for their school is undertaken as soon as possible. As many learners have already attended school earlier in the year, the employer is likely to have gone through a lot of this thinking already. We recommend that employers use this document to identify any further improvements they should make.

Wider guidance on the risk assessment process

Health and safety risk assessments identify measures to control risks during education and childcare setting activities. Health and safety law requires the school employer to assess risks and put in place measures to reduce the risks so far as is reasonably practicable. The law also requires employers to record details of risk assessments, the measures taken to reduce these risks and expected outcomes. Schools need to record significant findings of the assessment by identifying:

- the hazards
- how people might be harmed by them
- what they have in place to control risk.

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.

Risk assessments consider what measures you need to protect the health and safety of all:

- staff
- learners
- visitors
- contractors.

Schools will need to think about the risks that may arise in the course of the day. This could include anything related to the premises, provision of food and beverages or delivery of its curriculum or activities, whether on-site or in relation to activities offsite.

Consulting employees (general)

It is a legal requirement that 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. As an employer, you cannot decide who the representative will be.

At its most effective, full involvement of staff creates a culture where relationships between employers and staff are based on collaboration, trust and joint problem solving. As is normal practice, staff should be involved in assessing workplace risks and the development and review of workplace health and safety policies in partnership with the employer. Consultation does not remove the employer's right to manage. They will still make the final decision but talking to employees is an important part of successfully managing health and safety.

Leaders are encouraged to ensure that consultation on any changes to risk assessments that will be in place for the start of the autumn term commence with staff before the summer break, to ensure that those that are on term-time only contracts have adequate time to contribute.

Resolving issues and raising concerns

Employers and staff should always come together to resolve issues. As providers widen their opening, any concerns in respect of the controls should be raised initially with line management and trade union representatives, and employers should recognise those concerns and give them proper consideration. If that does not resolve the issues, the concern can be raised with HSE. Where the HSE identify employers who are not taking action to comply with the relevant public health legislation and guidance to control public health risks, they will consider taking a range of actions to improve control of workplace risks. The actions the HSE can take include the provision of specific advice to employers through to issuing enforcement notices to help secure improvements.