



Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

Blaenau Gwent Guidance for Whole School Re-opening

Autumn-term 2020

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1. Introduction

1.1 Foreword

We would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to Blaenau Gwent's strategic full whole school re-opening planning document for the start of academic year 2020/21. Firstly, we need to express our appreciation to everyone for all your hard work, commitment and professionalism demonstrated over the academic year 19/20, but particularly during recent months in responding to the emergency response associated with COVID-19.

Across the board, the BG response from colleagues has been outstanding, especially in the following aspects of work recently: -

- Re-purposing of schools – supporting children of key workers & vulnerable learners;
- Re-opening schools – from the 29th June 2020; and,
- Preparing for academic year 2020/21, as we move to whole school re-opening in September 2020, in line with WG expectations.

It is now time, however, to prepare for all of our learners returning to a whole school environment. This document outlines the BG approach and will be a key source of reference for localised implementation in schools and will also provide a framework for a safe and effective return to whole school working. It has and continues to be a dynamic situation moving forward, and therefore, we will work with our schools to review the planning arrangements and this document accordingly.

We both look forward to working with all key stakeholders to continue to deliver quality educational provision for all of our learners in academic year 2020/21.

Interim Corporate Director of Education

Lynn Phillips

Executive Member for Education

Cllr Joanne Collins

1.2 Authority Support

The Council and its partners such as the Education Achievement Service, Shared Resource Service Wales etc. will be providing specific re-opening support to schools via:

- Weekly Executive School Planning Group meetings
- School re-opening site visits
- Risk assessment reviews
- Providing support and information on a daily/weekly basis
- Offering guidance which is frequently updated in line with the latest Welsh Government, Public Health Wales and local operational developments.

2. School Facilities

2.1 Capacities

The annual capacity assessment process will be undertaken earlier in the autumn term than in previous years. The primary focus will be the use of currently unused internal areas of the school building, in supporting schools to address spatial issues associated with the health, safety and welfare of staff and pupils. The secondary aspect of the assessment will focus on the capacity assessments for September 2022.

The Education Transformation team will work with school leaders to understand their facilities requirements and any associated adaptations which may be required. The review process will commence in late September and conclude in early October, in order to inform a programme of physical works throughout the autumn term.

2.2 Social Distancing, PHW Guidance and Environmental Health

Social Distancing

Having assessed their risk, schools, as far as reasonably possible must adapt to the social distancing guidance, adopting it in a way that works for their school, which allows them to deliver for all learners. If schools and settings follow the guidance set out within this document and the guidance provided by Welsh Government, they will effectively reduce risks in their school and create an inherently safer environment.

Please see the link to the latest operational guidance for schools and settings from the autumn term.

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-08/operational-guidance-for-schools-and-settings-from-the-autumn-term-version-2.pdf>

The latest published evidence in relation to the transmissibility in learners under the age of 12 seems to be particularly low. However, minimising contacts and mixing between people to reduce transmission of COVID-19 is still important in all contexts. Schools and settings must consider how to best implement this 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 reducing 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
- 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.

Handwashing

It has been proven that handwashing is the number one preventative measure for reducing the risk of infection, it is vital that the recommended hand hygiene routine is implemented in schools and appropriate signage should be situated around the premises for the children and all staff members.



Hand Hygiene
Routine.pdf



Hand Washing
Techniques.pdf

Clean hands thoroughly, for at least 20 seconds and more often than usual.

Public Health Guidance emphasises the need to ensure that effective and frequent hand washing is an effective way of removing the virus from the hands. The Council will support schools to ensure that learners wash their hands regularly, including when they arrive at school, when they return from breaks, when they change rooms and before and after eating. Regular and thorough hand cleaning is going to be needed for the foreseeable future. Points to consider and implement include:

- Ensure that the school/setting has enough hand washing stations and/or hand sanitiser 'stations' available to ensure that all learners and staff can wash their hands regularly. Please contact Stuart Jones (Procurement) and Emma Jones (Education) should you need to replenish your sanitising station stock

- Children, particularly younger ones, must be supervised whilst using hand sanitiser.
- Ensuring that young learners and those with complex needs effectively wash their hands and assistance provided in a safe manner
- 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

Respiratory Hygiene

Catch it! Bin it! Kill it!

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. Please contact Stuart Jones (Procurement) and Emma Jones (Education) should your stock require replenishment. As with hand cleaning, schools and settings must ensure younger learners and those with complex needs are assisted to undertake this routine correctly. All learners *will need to* understand that this is now part of school life. Learners with complex needs may find it difficult to maintain good respiratory hygiene as effectively as their peers. This should be considered in whole school/individual 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.

What to do if a child or staff member becomes symptomatic

Schools must ensure that they have a designated room/area that is well ventilated and has a door with a window panel (if possible) that can be closed to ensure that isolation of a symptomatic person can occur immediately. Schools are to identify a designated toilet for use solely by a symptomatic person.

The main symptoms to look out for that may indicate the presence of coronavirus are:

- **A high temperature** – this means they feel hot to touch on their chest or back
- **A new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if they usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- **A loss or change to their sense of smell or taste** – this means they will have noticed they cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

Please only follow the procedures below if any of the symptoms above are present

If a **staff member** becomes symptomatic during the course of the session the following procedures should be followed:

- Any member of staff who develops symptoms will be required to go home immediately, as soon as symptoms present. If they cannot leave the school grounds immediately then they should isolate themselves to a dedicated room until they can safely leave the grounds. If at any time a staff member is struggling to breathe and it is not safe for them to leave the school grounds they should be isolated and 111 or 999 called immediately for further medical assistance
- Staff should be advised to contact their GP to seek medical advice and to visit the gov.uk portal to arrange for a COVID-19 test
- School staff are reminded of the requirement of self-isolation and house hold isolation where required in line with COVID-19 guidelines.

If a **Child** becomes symptomatic during the course of the session the following procedures should be followed:

- Upon presenting with symptoms a member of staff is to ensure that the child is isolated in a safe space away from other pupils and staff (maintaining the social distancing requirements). Staff member to contact the parents/carers immediately and arrange collection of the child as soon as possible. In the interim the staff member responsible for the child's care will need to perform the hand hygiene routine explained in section 2.2 – Handwashing, and ensure that appropriate PPE is used (as per section 2.10).
- Schools must move the child to the identified isolation room in the school until they can be safely collected. Following collection of the child, the room and facilities used should be locked or clearly signposted as not to be used and left for as long as possible before cleaning. All equipment that requires cleaning should remain in the room and a sign displayed on the room not to enter until cleaning has been undertaken. The school must ensure that they inform the cleaning staff if this isolation room has been used and the areas where the symptomatic person has been within the school.
- The parents should be advised to contact their GP to seek medical advice and to visit the gov.uk portal to arrange for a COVID-19 test. Guidelines should be followed with regards to self and household isolation.

In line with government guidelines, all potentially contaminated waste must be placed in a black bag, sealed and placed inside a second black bag and stored in a designated area away from all other waste until 72 hours has passed, when it will be disposed of in the normal manner. The waste bag should be clearly labelled. This waste should not be left for the caretaker to collect unless the caretaker is on site and can assist.

Any equipment which may have been in contact with a symptomatic child /staff member must be cleaned and stored appropriately. If disposal is required, arrangements for the safe disposal will be made in liaison with the Environment Directorate's Waste Services Manager.

Please contact Claire Gardner (Education) and/or Emma Jones (Education) in order to initiate contact with the relevant services.

If symptomatic, staff and/or pupils will need to complete self-isolation in line with the latest Public Health Wales Guidance. All household contacts will be required to self-isolate immediately upon becoming symptomatic. Pupils and staff are required to be free of fever for 48 hours prior to re-entering school/the workplace.

If a pupil or staff member becomes symptomatic during the session, cleaning regimes will need to be implemented and the Cleaning Manager informed of the areas in which the person(s) had been present throughout the day.

Schools are not required to inform parents and staff other than those directly affected that a symptomatic person(s) has been on the school site.

Identification of a positive case

If the school is made aware of a positive case of COVID-19 in a staff member or pupil, then they must ensure that they contact the following people immediately with Environmental Health being the priority:

Environmental Health

This must be via an email to:

- EnvironmentalHealthMailbox@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Followed by a phone call to:

- 01495 357813.

Corporate Health and Safety

This must be via an email and/or phone call to:

- Jim Thomas
Email: Jim.thomas@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
Mobile: 07966512415
- Steve Martyn
Email: Steve.martyn@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
Mobile: 07966520584

Education Transformation Team

This must be an email and/or phone call to:

- Emma Jones
Email: emma.jones@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
Mobile: 07969336066
- Claire Gardner
Email: claire.gardner@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
Mobile: 07815005333

Should more than one case be identified, the Council and relevant partner organisations will assemble in order to determine the level of response required, to address infection prevention control measures, isolation of identified contacts, further testing, communications etc.

Should a positive case/cases be identified, a group with relevant representatives from within the school, the Council and wider partners will be assembled to agree a communication piece for circulation. Therefore, schools should refrain from undertaking direct communications with third parties until such time as a joint communication has been agreed.

Testing for Coronavirus

In order to provide symptomatic staff and household members with a wider choice of testing centre (including the new centre at Cwm) or a home test, we are now encouraging staff and household members to book their own test via the Welsh Government website at the following link:

<https://gov.wales/apply-coronavirus-test> or by calling free on 119 (between 7am and 11pm). People with hearing or speech difficulties can call 18001 119.

Staff members are expected to keep the headteacher and/or line manager updated throughout the testing process. Schools are required to inform HR when a test has been arranged and when the result has been received by emailing: HR.Management@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

If for any reason a test is unavailable via this method please contact the Civil Contingences team at emergency.planning@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk who will refer directly (Rodney Parade only).

The link is also open to members of the public wishing to book a test. Therefore, can all schools please ensure that parents/carers of pupils are aware of this process for testing of symptomatic pupils and family members.

Finally, can we please remind everyone of the need for the whole household, and any connecting household, to isolate in the event of a member becoming symptomatic.

Up-to-date guidelines are available on the Welsh Government website at the following link:

<https://gov.wales/coronavirus>

Please note: You should only have a test if you are symptomatic or you have been instructed by Environmental Health/Public Health Wales or any other medical profession.

The Welsh Government Guidance states:

'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'.

Environmental Health colleagues are presently liaising with Welsh Government regarding the supply for Blaenau Gwent, along with the guidance around issue and use. Further information will be provided during the last 2 weeks in August 2020.

Test, Trace and Protect

In response to an infection, Blaenau Gwent schools, staff and parents will be asked to engage in the Test, Trace, and Protect strategy if they have been identified as a positive case or a contact of a positive case.

The Test, Trace, Protect strategy is to enhance health surveillance in the community, undertake effective and extensive contact tracing, and support people to self-isolate where required to do so. Actions will be informed by international experience and we will maintain strong engagement with the public throughout.

<https://gov.wales/test-trace-protect.html>

Please see attached the Test, Trace and Protect strategy for educational settings:



test-trace-protect-g
uidance-for-educati

This process will be initiated as soon as a positive result is shared by the laboratory, which will be picked up and managed by the Contact Tracing Team. The team will trace household and wider contacts; Environmental Health would then liaise directly with the school in order to undertake school-based tracing with the headteacher.

Please note that the welsh government guidance states that documentation for test, trace and protect procedures need to be kept for 21 days, however

guidance from the Health and Safety team states that documents need to be kept for 28 days.

2.3 Education Facilities

The Division of Responsibilities Guidance will be in operation from the start of the autumn term 2020, with the TE100 process continuing alongside as the operational maintenance and repair management tool. Repairs and requests will be prioritised in line with the health and safety of staff and pupils and/or to facilitate school operations in order to minimise contractors and work onsite



Final - Division of
Responsibilities Guida

All contractors will be required to confirm that risk assessments are in place, their programme and areas of work are recorded, this should include management of COVID-19 mitigation.

The Council are required to ensure that contractors operating on BGCB premises have sufficient training, insurance, licenses, checks i.e. disclosure and barring etc. Contractors need to be made aware of health and safety policy and practice relating to Council premises i.e. asbestos registers, fire risk assessments etc. Physical works and alterations also require careful programming in consideration of planned maintenance, school-based activities, access requirements and so forth.

In accordance with the Division of Responsibility Guidance self-help approaches in need to be managed as follows:

'Self-help approaches - this involves the use of external parties approached directly via the school to address minor works identified by the Headteacher and/or a member of school staff. In instances where this is deemed to be the best approach by the school, Technical Services/Corporate Landlord approval must be sought prior to work being carried out in order to ensure compliance with legislation and the Council's policies'.

This guidance does not preclude schools from carrying out works that are cost efficient to the school, they do however ensure that headteachers and governing bodies comply with necessary technical and health and safety precautions/requirements prior to the works being undertaken.

All works carried out must be risk assessed failure to do so could lead to enforcement action or even prosecution by the HSE or Fire Authority.

It is essential that any maintenance work planned to be carried out on school sites is taken forward in line with the requirements of the Division of Responsibilities Guidance and is reported to the Education Transformation and/or Technical Services Divisions via a self-help form prior to any works being initiated.



Schools self help
approval applicator

The responsibility for day to day facilities management within the school setting lies with the head, part of which includes the weekly flushing of rarely used hot and cold water systems (taps, showers, water features etc.) throughout the school premises which caretaker's/site managers normally do, (rarely used would be defined as not used at least once a week). Recent advice of two weekly flushing was only required during the school holidays, this additional measure was due to the implications of the extended lockdown and the water safety issues it created. In the event of extended periods of closure similar advice may be given. This is required to manage the risk of legionella and if the school is not fully occupied the risk will obviously increase so all systems need flushing weekly. If a school's caretaker were to be taken ill or have to self-isolate in the future the head will need to identify staff within their school who would be able to undertake the required flushing, this should already be in the school's business continuity plan, a record will need to be kept showing the date and time of the flushing and the name of the person undertaking the work.

Statutory testing regimes by contractors and caretakers need to be maintained, particularly maintenance during the emergency response period, so this will not affect the safe reoccupation of schools in the Autumn Term.

There are numerous statutory testing/checks that are required as a bare minimum every school will be required to ensure the caretaker/site manager carries out the following:

- 1) Weekly fire alarm tests (if an electrical alarm system is installed)
- 2) Monthly emergency lighting test
- 3) Monthly fire extinguisher check
- 4) Weekly flushing of rarely used water outlets

Toilet Extract Fans

All windows in the toilets need to be closed and not opened.

Fans should run constantly 2 hours before buildings open and 2 hours after buildings have been vacated.

Mechanical

Currently, as per the guidance, schools are required to by-pass recirculating air and ensure 100% fresh air supply/100% or just over extracted air. This will not be a problem in the

summer/autumn months; however, it may become an issue in the winter months when the air temperature is considerably colder. No definitive guidance is available as yet regarding ventilation for the winter period. This will be monitored and the guidance updated in the autumn term 2020 to reflect the necessary changes.

Natural Ventilation/Windows

All school buildings must use as much natural ventilation/open windows as they can (with the exception of toilets) whilst trying to maintain thermal comfort. ****Please note fire doors can no longer be propped open in order to increase ventilation and/or support effective circulation of staff and pupils. The former Fire risk assessments will need to be employed.***

Split Unit/Ceiling Unit Air Conditioning

If the air conditioning unit only serves a single room, it is acceptable to leave it working as it normally would. If the air conditioning unit serves multiple rooms, where there are multiple units or high levels of occupation in rooms it should be switched off. Even with air conditioning working, as much natural ventilation as possible is required.

2.4 Health and Safety and Fire Risk Assessments

The Health and Safety team will resume their annual Health and Safety and Fire risk assessment inspections in the autumn term. There is, however, likely to be a backlog and which will require redress in the first instance. However, if schools have any particular concerns please do not hesitate to contact the Health and Safety team for advice.

Any schools that have had significant alterations during the summer holidays will require a fire risk assessment review. Please contact the health and safety team to arrange this.

The South Wales Fire and Rescue Service have recently confirmed for the autumn term that they will expect the normal standards of fire safety management to be applied in schools. In other words, whatever flexibility was given during the hub provision and summer term this will now cease. ***The primary consideration is that any fire doors that were propped open to reduce COVID-19 touch point risks must now be kept closed.*** The only exception to rule being if the doors are held open with a device linked to or that reacts to (e.g. a door guard device) a fire alarm activation which has been accounted for within the schools Fire Risk Assessment. Fire drills will also be expected to be carried out as normal, in adherence with social distancing guidelines.

There is a potential low fire risk associated with alcohol based sanitisers (those containing 60% or more alcohol), used in line with COVID-19 mitigation. As these products are alcohol

based they are flammable, however, the risk only occurs if there is an ignition source. As the primary COVID-19 hygiene control measure is handwashing with soap and water, there is no need to stock large quantities of sanitiser on school premises. Most schools have small quantities on site (anything from 50ml to 1 litre containers/dispensers). However, it is recognised that sanitiser will be needed where handwashing facilities are not readily available and/or as an additional control measure. Precautionary measure need to be taken as follows:

- Do not store or use hand sanitiser next to an ignition source (cookers, workshop machinery, bunsen burners etc.)
- Do not store large quantities (e.g. 5 litre containers need to be decanted into smaller containers where possible)
- Ensure that stock is stored in an enclosed fire resistant structure with ventilation. Contact Health & Safety for advice if required.

2.5 Re-opening and Individual Risk Assessment Requirements

An updated model risk assessment will be provided prior to re-opening along with associated guidance to assist schools to review their existing risk assessment. The Council and school settings must take all necessary steps to protect staff, learners and others from COVID-19.

As part of planning for full return in the autumn term, 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. School settings, working with their Council, 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.

As a Council, we will be working with the schools and settings to ensure that we implement sensible and proportionate control measures, to reduce the risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level, whilst not negatively impacting on the well-being of learners and staff.

Schools should work with staff, parents/carers and learners so that there is clarity on what and how the revised arrangements will work in practice. They must have 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.

The Council, 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 them.

Once completed the risk assessment will be reviewed by the Council who will provide feedback to each headteacher prior to the commencement of the autumn term 2020.

2.6 Catering

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.

Free School Meals

The Council has a legal duty with regard to the provision of free school meals. The Council is currently exploring the option of continuing the direct payment methods for the first 2 weeks of the autumn term 2020. Further information will be released week commencing 17th August 2020.

Free breakfast in primary school

Section 88 of the School Standards and Organisation Wales (2013) determines that there is not an absolute requirement to provide a breakfast service unless a school specifically asks that it is provided. However, Government advice and guidance actively encourages the provision where it has been common place previously. This is only advice and therefore, whether it is taken on board or not is a matter for an individual Council. It has therefore been determined that the provision can be relaxed during the first 2 weeks of the autumn term in particular to explore pupil numbers and necessary adjustments. There will however, be an emphasis on returning to this provision as soon as it is safe and practicably possible to do so.

Guidance for the hospitality sector has been developed and is available at the following link, this includes guidance on catering facilities which Councils, 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>

The breakfast club specification (below), which is managed by the catering service, outlines what the catering department will seek to provide to primary schools across Blaenau Gwent during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Primary Classroom
Packed Breakfast Cl

The catering service specification (below) outlines what the catering department will seek to provide to primary schools across Blaenau Gwent during the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to hot meal lunch time service - dining room service.



Primary School Hot
Food Service in the d

The below specification details how the primary classroom packed lunch service will operate and what the catering department will seek to provide to primary schools across Blaenau Gwent during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Primary Classroom
Packed Lunch Servic

The specification below details the grab & go, hot and cold service - dining room and additional service area that the Catering team will provide to secondary schools during COVID-19 pandemic.



Secondary Grab &
Go Service in the din

All of the above will be regularly reviewed in line with school plans or WG guidance.

2.7 Cleaning

Increased cleaning will be implemented, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often using standard products, such as detergents and bleach.

Schools and settings should follow the latest cleaning in non-healthcare settings. Points to consider and implement include putting in place a cleaning schedule that ensures cleaning is generally enhanced and supports the following activities:

- 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.

All primary schools will have an additional 30 hours per week split over two shifts throughout the day as follows: 9am -12pm and 12pm -3pm. Secondary schools will have an additional 60 hours per week with the hours split the same as the primary schools over two shifts. Special schools will have the same cleaning provision as the secondary schools. The cleaning specifications have been provided below:



Final service
standard - Comps = 2



Final service
standard -Primary Scl

2.8 Access and Visitors

Access to the school for pupils

Access to the school should be from one controlled point, with the queueing system and 2 metre social distancing rules adhered to at all times. 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. 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 using social stories.

Parent appointments

Schools should consider communicating to parents/carers that gathering at the school gates or coming onto the site without an appointment is not allowed. If accessing the school for a pre-planned appointment, then social distancing must be adhered to and they should only access the school through the agreed controlled entrance point. Once on the school site, the parent/carer must only access the areas of the school that have been agreed, access to other areas is not allowed. Guidance on social/physical distancing, areas of the school they can access and hygiene should be explained to parents/carers on or before arrival.

Other staff

Supply teachers, peripatetic teachers and/or other temporary staff can move between schools. They should ensure they minimise contact and maintain social distancing with other staff and children.

This includes the Gwent Music team who are on furlough until 1st September 2020. We have been advised that the service will contact the Council imminently to discuss the level of service which Gwent Music is able to offer throughout the autumn term.

Specialists, therapists, clinicians and other support staff for learners with SEN should provide interventions as usual whilst adhering to social distancing guidance, ensuring cleanliness and sanitisation takes place within their dedicated workspace, which is to be agreed between the providers and the schools. Where social distancing is a potential issue

and/or staff from within the above services are visiting multiple sites and pupils, it is advisable that they wear a face covering at each setting.

Other staff should ensure that they follow all the preventive measures and risk assessments which have been put in place by the school.

Visitors

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. Where visits can happen outside of school hours, they should. Visits should only be essential at this time and should always be pre-planned so that the relevant precautions can be put in place prior to the visit. All visitors should be limited to the areas that they can access within the school. Essential visitors are defined as those who facilitate effective school operations, which could not take place without their engagement.

The Council recommend that schools ask all visitors to complete the attached questionnaire on arrival prior to them entering the school. This will enable the school to maintain a record of visitors should track and trace be required.



COVID Visitors
Questionnaire 06.08

2.9 Mixing of Groups and Staff

Minimising Contacts and Social Distancing

It is well known that minimising contacts and mixing of groups/individuals reduces transmission of COVID-19. Schools must consider how to best implement this and do everything possible to minimise contacts and mixing while delivering a broad and balanced curriculum. Examples of management methods will include: the creation of learner bubbles, staggered start and finish times, breaks and lunch periods. Limited mixing of year group bubbles, designated toilet provision etc. It is acknowledged and understood that schools will have constraints relating to buildings, staffing and other associated resources, and that flexibility may be required. It is imperative that hygiene, cleaning routines and contact tracing fully underpin school operations.

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 bubble or group. It is accepted that learners and especially the younger age groups, cannot socially distance from staff or from each other; however, consistent groupings will provide an additional protective measure over and above hygiene and cleaning routines. Maintaining distinct contact groups that do not mix or do so infrequently and only when absolutely required makes it quicker

and easier, in the event of a positive case, to support contact tracing methods which 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.

In secondary schools, particularly in the older age groups at Key Stage 3 and 4, 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, this is 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 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 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 older learners 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. The Council 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 operate a risk-based approach with consistent control measures 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.

Measures within the Classroom

Maintaining a distance between people while inside and reducing the amount of time they are in face-to-face to contact lowers the risk of transmission. Public health advice indicates 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.

For learners old enough, they 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.

2.10 Personal and Protective Equipment and Other Resources

PPE is not required for sessional or routine use in schools. Current guidance stipulates that the use of PPE by staff within education settings other than to administer first aid, medical and/or intimate care; should be based upon a clear assessment of risk, taking into account each individual setting(s) and the needs of the individual learner(s).

All staff should understand how to put on/remove PPE in order to reduce the risk of onward transmission of infection. A HSE video on correct donning and doffing is available below, please note that the video is aimed at care workers but the procedures for donning and doffing off PPE is the same for school staff.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GncQ_ed-9w

Orders for PPE and associated resources to aid school operations throughout the autumn term need to be placed and coordinated centrally and so that appropriate funding sources identified.

Please note, PPE and resource-based orders placed prior to the autumn term will need to be focused on replenishment of stock.

Stock will be available for collection only from the Depot.

There is presently a shortage of gloves on order until October/November, however, Corporate Procurement currently hold a limited supply centrally which can be accessed upon request.





Orders for the following items need to be placed via Stuart Jones (Procurement) and Emma Jones (Education):

- Disposable Gloves Bx 100 (S, M, L & XL)*
- Disposable Masks Bx 50
- Disposable Aprons Bx 250's
- Visors
- Anti Bac Wipes (Pk 72/100/200)*
- Anti Bac Spray 750ml
- Anti Bac Hand Soap 5Ltr
- Hand Sanitiser 5Ltr
- Hand Sanitiser 100ml*

*Sizes may differ subject to availability

Initial orders need to be placed ***no later than 24th August 2020 via email to the aforementioned parties.***

PPE: Availability, Ordering and Use

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Respiratory protection</p> |  | <p>For first aid with a pupil or staff member who has become unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 and needs direct personal care a fluid resistant surgical mask is required.</p> <p>If a pupil’s risk assessment requires intimate care and there is a risk of splashing to the eyes from coughing, spitting or vomiting a fluid resistant surgical mask is required.</p> |
| <p>Gloves</p> |  | <p>For first aid with a pupil or staff member who has become unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 and needs direct personal care disposable gloves are required.</p> <p>For intimate care disposable gloves are required.</p> <p>For cleaning equipment or surfaces that might be contaminated with body fluids such as saliva or respiratory secretions disposable gloves are required.</p> |
| <p>Eye protection</p> |  | <p>If a pupil’s risk assessment requires intimate care and there is a risk of splashing to the eyes from coughing, spitting or vomiting, safety goggles, safety spectacles (these can’t we worn over prescription spectacles) or visor are required.</p> <p>For first aid with a pupil or staff member who has become unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 and needs direct personal care and there is a risk splashing to the eyes from coughing, spitting or vomiting safety goggles, safety spectacles (these can’t we worn over prescription spectacles) or visor required.</p> |
| <p>Body protection e.g. Disposable aprons</p> |  | <p>For first aid with a pupil or staff member who has become unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 and needs direct personal care a disposable apron is required.</p> <p>For intimate care a disposable apron is required.</p> <p>For cleaning equipment or surfaces that might be contaminated with body fluids such as saliva or respiratory secretions a disposable apron is required.</p> |

Donning or Putting on PPE

Before putting on the PPE, perform hand hygiene. Use alcohol hand rub or gel or soap and water. Make sure you are hydrated and are not wearing any jewellery, bracelets, watches or stoned rings.

- Put on your plastic apron, making sure it is tied securely at the back
- Put on your surgical face mask, if tied, make sure securely tied at crown and nape of neck. Once it covers the nose, make sure it is extended to cover your mouth and chin
- Put on your eye protection if there is a risk of splashing
- Put on non-sterile nitrile gloves
- You are now ready

Doffing or Taking off PPE

Surgical masks are single session use, gloves and apron should be changed

- Remove gloves, grasp the outside of the cuff of the glove and peel off, holding the glove in the gloved hand, insert the finger underneath and peel off second glove
- Perform hand hygiene using alcohol hand gel or rub, or soap and water
- Snap or unfasten apron ties around the neck and allow to fall forward
- Once outside the patient room. Remove eye protection
- Perform hand hygiene using alcohol hand gel or rub, or soap and water
- Remove surgical mask
- Now wash your hands with soap and water.

Please see below a link to HSE guidance on the difference between the use of face masks and face coverings whilst at work;

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/ppe-face-masks/face-coverings-and-face-masks.htm>

2.11 ICT

The SRS Education team have successfully completed several key and very intensive projects over the last few months to help schools cater for the needs of digitally disadvantaged students; help schools move towards the blended learning approach and progress Welsh Government's EdTech programme.

The Council have been in discussions with Welsh Government colleagues over the past few weeks and it has been concluded that we maintain the existing distribution, licencing and revenue arrangements associated with devices and Mi-Fi units which have been allocated until further notice. This will allow us to effectively respond to the unknown/ongoing risks around further COVID-19 outbreaks. The ability to react to local lockdowns would be

severely impacted if we ceased these services now. In addition, there is a small supply of devices held locally, which can be drawn upon to further support digitally disadvantaged learners should this be required.

SRS emphasis has always been on support as staff and students return. Schools should log calls via VFire where support is needed and liaise with their engineers in the first instance. SRS aim to provide support remotely wherever possible to minimise the need for onsite visits in line with current guidance for schools. Where this is not possible, they can attend site, engineers will need to be advised of the school's protocol for visitors. If equipment needs to be taken away for any reason, SRS requests that device collection takes place at the school's reception in order to minimise time on site.

The Council and SRS are mindful of the need to build and deliver equipment that has been purchased for schools from Welsh Government HWB EdTech funding. Originally, Councils were advised by Welsh Government that lead times could be extensive and that 5 or 6 months could be expected. We know that Welsh Government continue their efforts to bring this forward and SRS has worked with Blaenau Gwent officers to place orders as early as possible to minimise the impact upon teaching and learning in schools and ensure Welsh Government have the best chance to fast track orders. SRS will receive these devices in waves, and as these waves start to arrive they will be a key priority.

2.12 Co-located Provision and 3rd Party Licensing

Co-located provisions operating under license on school premises must be provided with a copy of the schools re-opening risk assessment. They will be required to agree to abide by and sign a copy of this risk assessment, along with any subsequent reviews. In addition, licensees are required to complete their own risk assessment associated with delivery of the provision for which they are responsible, and share this with the school. Key considerations for each risk assessment include:

- The use of shared spaces
- Access and visitor control measures
- Contact tracing
- The management and mixing of groups

3. School Management and Support Functions

3.1 EAS, School Improvement and blended learning offer

Support for School Improvement

The Directorate will continue to work closely with our commissioned school improvement service the EAS, to ensure that agreed principles and practices continue to be aligned. The EAS Playlist continues to be the main conduit for communicating school improvement activity to our schools.

[Supporting Our Schools Playlist](#)

Moreover, the following arrangements are in place for the commencement of the new academic year 2020-21.

Appointment of Additional Capacity within School Improvement.

The Council's Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) agreed a temporary structure for the Education Directorate in the summer term 2020. The interim structure report also made the point that there needs to be consideration of the Education Directorate's permanent structural and financial requirements at a later point to address capacity, particularly in the school improvement aspects of work. To support the interim structure with strategic capacity and skills in school improvement, it has been agreed to introduce an interim fixed term post of Lead Officer - School Improvement for a period of 12 months – subject to review by the newly appointed Corporate Director of Education. Importantly, the role will facilitate a continuation of the Education Directorate's improvement journey, supporting schools with re-opening and continuing to develop, whilst also responding to COVID-19 and delivery of priorities identified within the Corporate Improvement Plan. The recruitment process is underway to appoint to this new position for the new academic year.

Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP)

Welsh Government has now released the principles of the ALP. It is clear that during the COVID-19 emergency crisis that many learners have not progressed as much as they might in terms of their progress in learning, some having been impacted more seriously than others. Evidence from a range of reliable sources, including those focusing closely on Wales, suggests that most or all learners have been affected, and that the most vulnerable have been affected the most. The comments in this paper should be read in the context of the Welsh Government Learning Guidance, designed to inform practice as we return to school in September 2020. See the following link for more information:

<https://gov.wales/guidance-learning-schools-and-settings-autumn-term-covid-19>.

Blaenau Gwent planning meeting will be circulating further information regarding the localised approach to schools by the end of week commencing 17th August 2020.

Principle 1: Learners in Greatest Need: Affected Cohorts

The most affected cohorts currently appear to be:

- Pupils preparing for examinations in the forthcoming academic year (years 11, 12 and 13) who have relatively little time between returning to school and taking life-changing public examinations
- Vulnerable and disadvantaged children, as defined by a range of approaches, but including the poorest children and families, learners with special educational needs, learners from BAME communities and learners in Welsh medium schools who live in non-Welsh speaking households
- Year 7, because of the disruption to the transition from primary to secondary schools

The cohort analysis above, which is in line with the findings of many other countries and territories with similar characteristics to Wales, has informed the allocation of funding, and will inform the priority groups we expect to be addressed by the work we do. We should note, though, that there will be individuals not in these groups who will need support, and it is an important principle that head teachers will decide which groups and individuals will get additional support.

Principle 2: The Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards Curriculum: Areas of Support Learners Should Receive

Curriculum reform remains our central priority for education in Wales, and indeed, Blaenau Gwent. It is essential that all our work with the education system in the context of COVID-19 aligns with international best practice, which is also the basis of our curriculum reform proposals. The focus for the coming year will be:

- Literacy, numeracy and digital competence within a broad and balanced curriculum – for the examination years, this will include higher order reading and writing skills, high level mathematics where relevant, and digital competence at the appropriate level and as relevant to learners progressing with their qualifications
- Development of independent learning skills, to enable and motivate learners in all groups to make accelerated progress by working more effectively alone and out of school
- Support and engagement through coaching – this in recognition that the most disengaged learners will need coaching and emotional support as well as support for examination preparation and skills

This focus will be particularly relevant for the priority cohorts. It is intended to work closely with Qualifications Wales to ensure our approach to curriculum and learning is consistent with and promotes the credibility and validity of the 2021 exam series.

Principle 3: Growing Capacity: What the Funding is designed to provide

The Welsh Government response to the situation is to dedicate financial resources to the creation of new capacity in the system. The investment amounts to almost £29 million and will be enough to grow capacity in the system by the equivalent of 600 teachers and 300 teaching assistants. Alongside this, Blaenau Gwent will use our current investment in Professional Learning, digital infrastructure, connectivity, devices and content to enrich the experiences schools make available to learners. Welsh Government and this Council do not want to place restrictions on head teachers in how they go about appointing and deploying this new capacity and recognise that:

- Schools may appoint teachers, teaching assistants and other roles in the school designed to provide coaching, in line with the school's understanding of its learners
- The new capacity may be full time or part time
- The new colleagues might work across more than one school
- Head teachers may appoint new teachers to the school in order to release those who know their pupils best to work with them to accelerate their progress
- There may be instances where a group of new colleagues is recruited to work across a whole cluster or collaborative partnership
- The skill-sets of new colleagues will need to reflect the needs of groups and learners
- The delivery model within which new colleagues work will be specific to the needs of the school and its learners

Principle 4: Reducing Bureaucracy and Ensuring Transparency

The allocation of nearly £29 million across Wales to a project at a time of severe financial stress across the education system and beyond means that there is a need to ensure that such resources are used well. Whilst at the same time, keeping the paperwork to a minimum, so we are proposing:

- The school should set out what it intends to do with the resources in a simple way, indicating the number of pupils included and an outline of the curriculum and staffing solution
- This should be agreed by the school's CA in the case of schools currently designated as requiring red and amber levels of support
- The intention should be signed off by the Governing Body and made available to the school's parents and community
- Welsh Government are advocating a 'learning brief' as part of the education system, by sharing intelligence and insights in respect of the impact of the programme as it develops.

Principle 5: The Principle of Collaboration

Regions, Local Authorities, Universities and Other Partners

Nationally, Welsh Government want to encourage strategic education partners to collaborate in support of this work. Welsh Government are already seeing examples of this

emerging across the system, and this activity will provide further opportunities for the regions, Councils, Universities, FE Colleges and other partners to support children, families and schools in returning to school.

School Level Collaboration

Blaenau Gwent's Vision for Education is formed around a school-led, self-improving system, which is in line with Welsh Government's desire to encourage clusters and collaborative working of schools to pool their resources and achieve critical mass in growing capacity. This include cross-phase collaboration, collaboration between schools in the same phase and collaboration based on partnership delivery e.g. Post 16 provision. In Blaenau Gwent, we are establishing a Post 16 Partnership Board in collaboration with Coleg Gwent and key stakeholders to drive this agenda forward. The Partnership Board will be formally constituted in the new academic year.

From a Blaenau Gwent context, we advocate this school to school approach and have experience of how this operated through the supply cluster project, but we await confirmation as to the level of funding that we are to receive and we will be in contact as soon as this is known so that we can support schools in securing the additional capacity as soon as possible.

INSET Days.

Should schools wish to seek the support of the EAS staff in their INSET days they should contact Sarah Davies PCA to discuss their requirements.

Staff Visits

The schools' Challenge Adviser will make contact with schools early in September to gain an understanding of their operating model and to discuss priorities and support needs. Consequently, EAS staff will not visit a school without first having received a copy of the school's risk assessment; this is to ensure it is safe to do so within the context in which the school is operating.

Blended Learning

Headeachers will have received the guidance that has been developed by Estyn and the EAS that provides information related to how they may consider developing integrated approaches to support blended learning for the opening of schools in September 2020. The guidance support schools as they re-evaluate learning for the foreseeable future in response to a range of challenges:

- Supporting learners to return to 'learning fitness'
- Developing learning which allows learners to continue to progress
- Ensuring coherence for learners between in school and remote learning

- Develop appropriate learning while current curriculum requirements have been *dis-applied
- Use the ethos, principles and guidance of the new Curriculum for Wales as support to the current challenges, rather than this being an additional burden
- To encourage practitioners to use and develop their professional judgment to best benefit learners



**Developing
Integrated Approach**

Autumn term PL events:

Virtual professional learning activities will continue to be offered during the autumn term. There will also be opportunities for bespoke PL for individual schools to be delivered in this way. The dates of all PL activities will continue to be shared through the EAS Playlist.

SDP/Grant: A Readiness Approach

Headteachers will have received the EAS document entitled a Readiness Approach and will be aware of the timeframe for updating SDP's by October half term. In line with the agreed approach and mindful of the demands placed upon the education sector in the current circumstances, coupled with the start of a new academic year, Blaenau Gwent will be looking to hold virtual SDP and grant planning meetings with those schools selected on either 19th or 21st October 2020 just prior to the Hwb deadline date of October half term for final submission.

As part of this process the Council will write to those schools that have been selected week commencing 7th September 2020 and invite the head teacher and Chair of Governors to the virtual meeting where their SDP and grant plan will be reviewed. During this meeting, appropriate additional support and guidance to schools that can be provided will be discussed.

This regional review and evaluation process aims to support all schools in ensuring that the processes for school improvement planning are effective. There is an expectation that within the current context that plans address emerging needs. These include:

- The school's distance learning strategy and blended learning offer
- The targeted provision to support all groups of vulnerable learners
- The school's communication and support strategies with parents/carers/learners.



**A Readiness
Approach to Approv**

Schools Causing Concern

For those schools identified as a School Causing Concern (SCC) headteachers will already know that the formal SCC meetings were suspended during our emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic and meetings were replaced with informal supportive check in and catch up meetings towards the latter part of the summer term. However, whilst being mindful of the demands placed upon headteachers at this time, it is intended that for the year ahead as we shift towards a business as usual approach, this will see the re-establishment of the half termly schools causing concern meetings that are convened in line with the agreed regional policy. The dates of these meetings for the year ahead will be communicated to relevant Chairs of Governors and schools at the start of the 2020/21 academic year.

Governing Body Meetings

Almost all schools have now undertaken governing body meetings 'virtually' at one point or another over the past few months. These have been, in the main, implemented successfully. If schools feel that during the autumn term (or beyond), to avoid any unnecessary meetings and additional people in your schools, the wish to carry on with virtual meetings the EAS will facilitate these. To ensure that the team can provide schools with support for governing body meetings in the autumn term if schools haven't already done so please complete the following below:

[Form to provide meeting dates.](#)

If schools have already provided future dates, through a clerked ordinary / AGM meeting, these will already be held on the database and there is not a need to re-submit, unless schools wish to amend dates.

For all except urgent meetings, the statutory timescales detailed in the SLA will apply. If a school intends to hold a 'face to face' governing body meeting, then the school will need to ensure appropriate risk assessments are in place that are in the line with the latest Welsh Government guidelines.

Please do not contact GB clerks directly, as the team will manage availability, send out Microsoft Teams meeting invitations, along with the agreed agenda and latest guidance. If individual governors or the whole governing body require support to use MS teams, please get in touch governor.support@sewaleseas.org.uk and the EAS team can arrange support. The Council's LA Governor Appointment Panel is now meeting virtually to process applications for LA governors and are considering applications for those LA governors whose term of office is due to end in the autumn or spring terms. Headteachers and Chairs of Governors are encouraged to provide the following application form to those LA governors whose term of office is due to lapse within the timeframe specified above.



Should schools require further advice regarding the filling of other governor vacancies, this can be accessed by contacting the EAS governor support team.

3.2 HR Guidance

Risk Assessment

Covid-19 Individual Risk Assessment

A risk assessment, which is available via this link: [Covid-19 Individual Risk Assessment](#) should be used for all workers within the Authority, who fall into the following categories:

- All workers who have previously received a shielding letter from the Government (“the Extremely Vulnerable”)
- Vulnerable Workers (to include all pregnant workers) as previously defined by Government guidelines
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) workers (reported as being most affected and at risk of the COVID-19 pandemic)
- Workers who live with the Extremely Vulnerable

For all categories to whom this risk assessment applies, where workers have been absent from the workplace and a return is being considered, this risk assessment **must** be carried out **prior** to staff entering the workplace. This risk assessment should also be reviewed regularly, and whenever anything material changes e.g. in relation to an individual’s health or working environment, to ensure it is up to date and fit for purpose.

This risk assessment should be carried out in conjunction with the All Wales COVID-19 workforce risk assessment tool available via this link: [Self-Assessment Tool](#). The self-assessment tool should then be discussed with managers and will inform discussions relating to the COVID-19 Individual risk assessment.

If headteachers/business managers require further advice, please contact their Senior HR Business Partner.

Pregnant Workers

During the outbreak, pregnant workers have been advised to follow stringent social distancing to reduce the risk of severe illness from coronavirus. There is a long-standing requirement for employers to put in place measures to ensure workplace safety where a significant health and safety risk is identified for a new or expectant mother. *Please refer to the Staff*

Guidance from Organisational Development for detailed information and advice in relation pregnant worker using the link below:

<http://intranet/coronavirus-staff-information.aspx>

Staff Well Being

The Council recognises that employees may face increased pressures at work, as well as potentially their own personal illness or caring responsibilities. Supporting employee health and wellbeing will be critical for the Council to support an extended response. Heads/Business Managers are encouraged to provide opportunities for staff to discuss any concerns with them and consider the Council's provisions for leave and flexible working and the use of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

Details and useful information from our EAP, Care First, can be accessed at the below overleaf.

Employee assistance programme (Care First)

Care first is free to use 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and staff don't need to ask their manager to use the service. Call 0800 174319 to speak to a professional counsellor or information specialist in confidence about a range of issues such as well-being, family matters, relationships, debt management, workplace issues, and much more.

For additional support during this time, a number of webinars are also available on the Care First Lifestyle website. The details are circulated to all e-mail users on a regular basis with a variety of webinars relating to the difficulties of COVID-19, such as managing stress in uncertain times, how to manage change, etc.

The Organisation Development Division also provides regular advice and guidance to managers and staff and the latest guidance can be found here:

<http://intranet/coronavirus-staff-information.aspx>

In addition, free help and support for education staff is also available through the Education Support Partnership:

www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk

Occupational Health Service

The Authority's OH service will continue to provide a service and the following will apply:

- Only electronic referrals will be accepted during this period. All referrals must be emailed to occupational.health@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
- In the absence of an employee signature on the referrals, Heads/Business Managers must confirm that they have discussed the content with the individual

- Referrals must include a contact email address for the employee
- All appointments will be held remotely via telephone call.

3.3 Home to School Transport

The Council has a statutory duty to provide free home to school transport for all eligible learners of compulsory school age, in line with the Blaenau Gwent Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy (2020).

- Social distancing guidance to passengers on public transport (<https://gov.wales/travelling-safely-during-coronavirus-pandemic-guidance-public-html#section-42710>) will not apply **on dedicated** home to school transport from the autumn term 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, and those learners may also be together in school
 - 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.

Key Principles

- Vehicles will be confined to individual journeys with the same groups of pupils each day, as opposed to multiple journeys conveying different groups of pupils.
- It is expected that transport providers use PPE at all times and have effective and agreed cleaning regimes in place, pre and post each journey.
- Screens should be provided on vehicles where possible in line with the required standards.
- Escorts and drivers who provide assistance to learners whilst on transport should where appropriate levels of PPE in line with the needs of the child, young person and current Welsh Government guidance ([as detailed in section 2.10](#)).
- Transport providers must maintain daily records of pupils on each journey and ensure that they comply with the Test, Trace and Protect strategy.
- Providers must ensure that they complete risk assessments, which **must be** submitted to the Council for review prior to operation commencing, to ensure safe and effective operation in compliance with Welsh Government and Public Health Wales Guidance.

- Seats will be allocated where possible with no movement permitted on the bus.
- Providers will be expected to implement sanitising stations on the vehicles and comply with Welsh Government guidance to support respiratory hygiene – catch it, kill it, bin it.
- There will be a zero tolerance policy for those who do not abide by the rules and or exhibit poor behaviours during a journey. Therefore, operators will have the right to exclude pupils and refuse transport for 5 days pending a review by Transport, Education and the School.
- Parents must be advised that learners must not board home to 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). Learners should also not attend school if they are in a household that is required to self-isolate as contacts of a case under TTP or in quarantine if returned from a country specified by the FCO. Learners should not routinely have their temperature taken. This is not a reliable method for identifying COVID-19.
- If a learner develops symptoms whilst at school/setting or their educational institution, they will be sent home. They must not travel on home to school transport. The school or setting should contact the parent/carer who should make arrangements for the learner’s journey home.
- This equally applies to drivers and escorts.
- Anyone with symptoms must follow the guidance: <https://gov.wales/self-isolation-stay-home-guidance-households-possible-coronavirus>
- Learners, drivers and escorts who have been in contact with someone that has developed symptoms whilst at a school/setting or education establishment or on home to school transport do not need to go home to self-isolate unless they develop symptoms themselves (in which case, they should arrange a test) or the symptomatic person subsequently tests positive (see below) or if they have been requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace.
- All parties must perform hand hygiene by washing their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and running water or use hand sanitiser after contact with someone who has symptoms before boarding and after leaving the transport.
- If a person with symptoms has been in a vehicle that provides home to school transport, the vehicle must be cleaned and disinfected with appropriate disinfectant with special attention to touch points e.g. rails, arm rests etc. to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people. See the COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance for information, including carrying out cleaning procedures and adjusting ventilation

- Wherever vehicle capacity allows, distancing between individual passengers, or groups of passengers, will be employed. In particular, distancing will be considered where children attending different schools travel on the same vehicle and for certain children with complex needs e.g. those that spit uncontrollably. In these cases, alternative dedicated transport may be considered to be more appropriate.
- Where schools/parents procure their own transport for pupils, the responsibility of the risk assessment and COVID-19 mitigation lie with headteacher/parent and **not** the Council.

4. Pupils

4.1 Attendance, Inclusion and Vulnerable groups

In addition to the Operational Guidance for Schools and Settings from the Autumn Term, Welsh Government has also issued Guidance for Supporting Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Learners. The Guidance for Supporting Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Learners is intended to supplement the Operational Guidance and should be read alongside it. The two guidance documents have been written to assist schools to put in place proportionate protective measures for children and staff but also enable learners to receive an inclusion education that offers a broad and balanced curriculum allowing them to thrive and progress.

The Guidance for Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Learners reaffirms the responsibility of all schools and the Council to adhere to existing Welsh Government Inclusion guidance as well as the SEN Code of Practice and other relevant legislation.

The two guidance documents acknowledge that schools will need to make judgments about how to balance and minimise any risks from COVID-19 with providing a full educational experience for children and young people as has always been the case with other Health and Safety risks. It also acknowledges that there cannot be a one size fits all approach and that each school will have local challenges to address.

As such, in terms of managing the needs of pupils as they return to school full-time, the local context, individual pupil need and background will all contribute to how each pupil will need to be supported.

Over the past weeks, a range of information has been circulated to schools from the EAS, the Educational Psychology Service and the Gwent Attachment Service which have highlighted the importance of emotional wellbeing and the importance of a pupil centred approach to understanding and managing pupil need at this time.

Education teams are available to support schools in discussing individual pupils and considering how to reduce risk and support learner well-being.

Attendance

Attendance guidance from 1st September 2020 until further notice.

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 but correct coding will enable WG and LA to track any COVID-19 related absences and support any 2nd wave concerns, as well as ongoing welfare of pupils.

All learners, including those that were previously shielding, will return to their school or setting from 1st September 2020. Those learners who have been advised that they no longer have the need to shield 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 Council/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 Councils 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.

The Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) will continue to be based either at home or at their secondary school. Contact with primary schools will be by telephone, email etc. however, should the primary school require a face to face meeting this will need to be arranged in advance to restrict the number of schools being visited on any one day.

Public Health Wales advice on learner attendance

HPA ‘Guidance in infection control in schools and other childcare settings’ must be followed along with the additional advice below, which specifically relates to COVID-19:

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

- Feel unwell, have any of the three identified COVID-19 symptoms (a new continuous cough, or a high temperature or loss of or change to their sense of taste or smell) or they have tested positive to COVID-19 in the past 7 days
- Live in a household or are part of an extended household with someone who has symptoms of COVID-19 or has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days.

Guidance on Recording Attendance

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 school closure (in the event of subsequent school closures). | Not required to attend |
| I | Illness, including COVID-19 | Authorised Absence |
| All other codes apply as per the guidance on school attendance: | https://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 council.

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 pupils

Should be used for planned days where pupils are not required to attend such as planning days in the first weeks of term.

Y: The code for partial openings or enforced school closure.

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 use these as usual.

Children Missing from Education (CME)

Due to COVID-19 there may have been a number of pupil movements since March 2020 resulting in pupils moving within or out of the County Borough. There have also been a number of in-year transfers that have been processed just before, during or after lock down. If you are unable to contact any of these parents, please follow your CME processes and refer to your EWO as soon as possible.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

Where parents are anxious about their child returning to school, there could be an increase in the number of parents deciding to EHE their child. If you become aware of any parents thinking about this, please can you discuss this with your EWO immediately so that they can make contact with the parent.

EWS Welfare Check Request

COVID-19 2020 - 1st September 2020 onwards until further notice.

Please complete this and email to your EWO if you wish to escalate concerns re non-contact or non-school attendance.



EWS Welfare Check
Request Form.docx

The EWS must also adhere to social distancing and risk assessment requirements but where a school has used a variety of methods to engage with a pupil and carer they are able to attempt “door knock” sightings and contact with pupils and carers. They can also advise re escalation or CME/EHE issues that may arise.

ALN Panel

ALN panel dates have been circulated and will commence via Microsoft TEAMS. The first Panel is scheduled for 15th September 2020. This panel will not be considering new requests but those outstanding from the summer term in the first instance.

Support for Vulnerable Groups

GEMS

GEMS staff will be available to start back in schools from 14th September 2020; however, this will be subject to receiving guidance from schools as to how GEMS staff will be able to work safely in schools in line with current Welsh Government guidance. GEMS staff will contact all timetabled schools during the first week back to see when they are able to go to school and ask what risk assessments are in place to ensure the safety of all concerned.

Working practices, and the way GEMS supports pupils is unlikely to be the same as it was prior to the school closures but arrangements will be looked at further in September.

SenCom

Welsh Government Operational Guidance for schools and settings states that peripatetic services such as those provide by SenCom to learners with speech, language and communication needs or a hearing, vision or multi-sensory impairment should look to resume interventions as usual. To allow schools the initial time required to fully re-open, SenCom will initially continue to provide their remote offer and will not begin a full programme of physical visits from the start of the autumn term.

Early in the autumn term SenCom will be in contact with all schools to share their risk assessments and discuss the best approach to adopt for children on their caseload in each school. In the interim should you require support on specialist equipment, advice or a training need then please contact SenCom directly.

SenCom - Getting in touch

- If a child or young person, who staff believe should be known to SenCom is returning to school or struggling to access school work from home, please get in touch. SenCom can offer remote advice for children and young people with Sensory Impairment or Speech, Language and Communication Needs, to support them in these settings. If you would like to take up this offer, please contact SenCom via **01633 648888** or by the email addresses:

sencom@torfaen.gov.uk / ComIT@torfaen.gov.uk / HIS@torfaen.gov.uk / VIS@torfaen.gov.uk

As part of the service offer whilst SenCom works remotely, the Hearing and Vision Impairment Services have developed temporary websites for parents and education staff to find a wide range of resources. We are now making these sites widely available and they can be accessed via the following links

- <https://sites.google.com/view/sencom-vis>
- <https://sites.google.com/view/hi-service-sencom/home>

SenCom - Hearing Impairment Guidance – Face Masks

The evidence remains clear that maintaining social distancing and good hand hygiene is the most effective way to protect yourself and others from contracting coronavirus. In Wales, teachers are not expected to wear face masks although we have to appreciate some staff will want to wear a face covering for their own reassurance. The safety measures that are recommended to keep people safe can mean that those with a hearing impairment feel particularly anxious about a return to school.

The service would therefore like to take this opportunity to share a clear message about the impact this may have on children and young people with a hearing impairment. Hearing equipment such as hearing aids and cochlear implants are vital pieces of equipment in enabling the user to access spoken language. However, they have limitations. Typically, they

will work well when the speaker is up to two metres away from the hearing impaired child/young person.

We would like to raise awareness of the steps that can be taken to support communication. This might include:

- temporarily removing the face mask and communicating within the current safety guidance (e.g. ensuring hand washing before and after, not touching the face when the mask is removed, remaining within the social distancing guidelines of staying 2 meters apart)
- using alternative forms of communication – such as writing things down or via text messages, depending on the individual needs of the child
- [dictation or translation apps](#) can sometimes provide a speech to text option when out and about
- ensuring the listening environment is as quiet as possible
- communicating through a window/glass panel – portable screens have been used by some services
- considering the need for face-to-face meeting, and whether a video call could work as an alternative for individual deaf children
- The National Deaf Children’s Society have produced an [infographic video](#) that summarises the above top tips
- Following Welsh Government guidance children and young people in class are seated facing forwards at a two metre social distance. This means that they will not be able to see the faces of their peers in order to access lip pattern and facial expressions to aid their understanding of what is said. It will therefore be important that the class teacher repeats, rephrases and clarifies what others say so that the child/young person can follow a discussion
- If a child/young person has been issued with an additional listening device, it is important that it is used in school and also at home to support online learning, if appropriate. This equipment can help to reduce the effects of background noise, distance and reverberation. It can also be connected to devices such as laptops and tablets to improve access to audio for supporting online learning and to help the child or young person to connect socially with family and friends

If a hearing impaired child/young person is experiencing difficulties accessing their learning, please contact the service to discuss.

Some people have also asked about clear face masks – where you can see someone’s mouth. If face masks are going to be used, these would be preferable.

<https://www.theclearmask.com/product>

Face masks which are washable and can therefore be reused;

<https://www.friendlyfacemasks.co.uk/>

The National Deaf Children's Society have a blog about [how to make DIY clear face masks at home](#) for those that would like to do so. Such DIY face masks would obviously be for use by the general public, and not for use in health settings.

You do need to be aware that condensation can be an issue with such masks that are worn close to the face. There are a number of solutions to this, from rubbing an unscented bar of soap on the inside and polishing off to products such as Muc-Off Anti-Fog Treatment which can be bought from Amazon has been recommended.

There has also been discussion over whether face visors or shields might be better still, particularly for professionals working in services for deaf children. School could consider face shields for staff that require the reassurance of a face covering whilst working. These have been produced by the Design Technology Departments in many schools.

In addition to this additional advice, it is essential that all the strategies that would usually be in place to ensure a deaf friendly environment are adhered too. Virtual Deaf Awareness training opportunities are available that staff should complete to raise awareness or remind them of the important things to consider. Please contact the service to discuss on 01633 648888 or email joanne.plant@torfaen.gov.uk.

4.2 Youth Service

Counselling Service

Counsellors will return to school in line with BACP Guidance. Counsellors will continue to support young people with their mental health and emotional wellbeing in schools for year 7 to 11 and in the community for year 6 and post 16. There is a deficit in counselling days in some schools due to counsellors reducing hours and moving settings. The process of identifying additional counsellors is underway. It is anticipated that these will be in place early September 2020. There has also been additional funded awarded until March 2021 to provide additional counselling hours to address the anticipated 'spike' in referrals post lockdown and the return to schools.

Funding has also been afforded for play therapy up until March 2021. The service is currently in the process of identifying an appropriate venue and therapist to undertake this work with children below year 6. As soon as the service is in place then the appropriate agencies will be informed with referrals being taken from SPACE Wellbeing Panel in the main.

A psychologist will also join the Youth Service in the autumn term. Youth Workers will have access to the psychologist for consultation and support in their roles when supporting young people in a variety of settings.

Youth Engagement and Progression Framework

Schools and professionals will continue to work closely with the Youth Engagement and Progression Coordinator (EPC) to facilitate the Early Identification Tool (EIT) and the Vulnerable Learners Transition Group. These processes can help identify individuals who are at risk of being Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). Through the continuation of this work we can ensure children and young people receive early intervention and appropriate support.

School Linked Staff (Inspire 2 Achieve)

Inspire 2 Achieve (I2A) continues to offer support to young people aged 11 – 16 across all secondary provisions within Blaenau Gwent. The staffing teams consists of 2 x Year 6-7 Transition Workers, 2 x Year 11 Transition Workers, 1 x Health and Wellbeing Worker, 4 x Youth Workers (linked to mainstream secondary provision), 1 x Alternative Education Worker, 1 x Group Delivery Worker. Referrals come via I2A Team Lead and EPC. Support is delivered via 1:1 and group work, via the development of action plans with young people. Termly plans are shared with key school links outlining projects and activities for each provision. I2A is a rolling project, meaning staff support young people during the school holidays, in addition to the school term.

Positive Futures

Positive Futures will continue to provide an alternative education programme off-site for those referred. The project will liaise closely with schools to determine the most appropriate method of delivery ensuring that each referring school and pupils attending are not compromised. Young people referred will attend the provision and work through a programme that addresses their behaviour concerns and puts interventions in place in order to maintain their full time educational status.

4.3 Safeguarding, Children Looked After Mentors and Operation Encompass

Wales Safeguarding Procedures

The Wales Safeguarding procedures guide safeguarding practice for all practitioners. Please refer to these procedures. They are available to download as an app or use the web based version <https://safeguarding.wales/>

The Welsh Government has produced non-statutory guide to remind practitioners working across agencies of their responsibilities to safeguard children and to support them in responding to concerns about children at risk.

<https://gov.wales/keeping-children-and-young-people-safe-non-statutory-guide-practitioners>

During the COVID-19 outbreak the Information, Advice and Assistance Team (IAA) continue to be fully operational, the office hours remain as 9am - 5pm Monday – Friday.

The IAA Team will be able to offer advice if you have concerns for a child: **01495 315700**

Referrals can continue to be made to Blaenau Gwent Children’s Services using a multi-agency referral form (MARF) [here](#).

The MARF should be sent to: **DutyTeam@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk**

After 5pm, on weekends and Bank Holidays

Contact the South East Wales Emergency Duty Team (EDT): **0800 328 4432**

If you think a child or young person is in immediate danger, contact the Police on 999

Advice in relation to safeguarding in education is also available:

- **Sarah Dixon, Safeguarding in Education Manager**
Sarah.Dixon@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk Tel: **07815 005241**

Children Looked After (CLA) Mentors in Schools

CLA education mentors provide 1:1 support to a small number of CLA pupils. The service works on a referral/priority needs basis and is not a service available to all CLA pupils. This is considered to be an essential service. In preparation for the start of the autumn term Social Services have undertaken the following preparations for this work to be delivered in schools:

- RAG rated the children who we believe are in priority need for this service from September.
- Minimised the number of children who will receive this support in school (to put this into perspective, we have prioritised 9/10 pupils to receive the 1:1 support in school, most of whom were already receiving the service prior to lockdown).
- Ensured that the service will only be delivered in BG schools (not in neighbouring LA’s)
- Our planning has been such that mentors will not be attending multiple sites in one day. We are able to restrict the sessions to no more than one school in any one day.

At present Social Services are not able to provide a timetable of when the mentoring sessions will take place as this has to be done in conjunction with the CLA designated member of staff for the school that each pupil attends. The sessions have to be planned around each pupil’s individual school timetable (and room availability within the school).

Mentors work term-time only and will liaise with the small number of schools that the identified pupils attend upon their return in September 2020. The mentors will not start

these sessions until those discussions have taken place with each of the relevant schools and the relevant planning has been completed. Mentoring sessions will not commence until after 14th September 2020.

At the moment, there are only 6 BG schools that the mentors will be linking with and there will be no more than one mentor attending an allocated school.

Operation Encompass

A summary of the current processes associated with Operation Encompass is detailed below:

Interim Process:

- Police will e-mail Operation Encompass information to the nominated education safeguarding representative(s) in each Council area via a secure, designated Operation Encompass e-mail address
- This designated e-mail address is monitored and managed Monday to Friday by nominated education safeguarding representative(s) before the start of the school day
- The representative who receives the information will check or add the school name(s) for the stated child or children on the PPN
- This representative will securely email the information to the school's Designated Safeguarding Person (Key Adult), prior to the start of the school day. The email will have a 'read receipt' attached. The DSP will take the necessary action to support the child or young person (see below for further advice)
- All information will be recorded, stored and secured in line with existing child safeguarding process.

Weekend notifications

- To ensure that schools are aware of any children that have experienced domestic abuse over the weekend, the operation encompass process will continue as stated above.
- Councils will be emailed alerts on a Saturday and Sunday morning
- On a Monday morning, Councils may have alerts from Saturday, Sunday and Monday to email to the relevant schools. These emails will include any incidents that have occurred between 7am Friday - 7am Monday.

For more information, please refer to the following updated detailed guidance:



OE School 'interim'
guidance Jan 2019 B

4.4 Wellbeing and Healthy Schools

Health and Wellbeing of Learners

In the run up to school re-opening, a range of information has been shared with schools both via the EAS and directly. These included from the EAS:

- 'The 5 R's to Recovery' playlist
- 'W.E.L.L. Plan'
- 'All Together Now' playlist

And from the Educational Psychology Service:

- 'Psychologically-informed support for when schools re-open'. (This was developed as a joint piece of work with Health and Social Services and will be promoted further by your Educational Psychologist in September.)
- 'Managing Our Worries'
- 'Home School Communications'
- 'Transition Back to School'

Learning should support learners' mental, emotional, physical and social wellbeing as well as recognising the importance of outdoor learning and play. Well-being is a critical enabler of learning: learners who are not content, safe and secure will not learn effectively.

As learners spend more time at their school or setting, learner and staff well-being will continue to be a key concern. The ongoing pandemic means that learners may continue to spend varying amounts of time learning remotely. Learners who are not content, safe and secure will not learn effectively. Practitioners should continue to focus on supporting well-being as a foundation for learning.

Practitioners will need to have particular regard for learners who are unable to attend a school or setting at any point in time and how they can be supported remotely.

Education Psychology Service

Educational Psychologists will be in touch with ALNCos in September 2020 to arrange planning meetings which will take place via Microsoft TEAMS. The agenda for the planning meetings, currently being finalised, will be provided to ALNCos at the start of autumn term. The work to be undertaken during the year will be agreed at the planning meeting. Given present uncertainty about the practicalities of school visits, it is likely that, for the first term, this will consist of a blended approach, determined by the nature of the work agreed.

Please see attached psychologically –informed support for when schools re-open:



BG
Psych_Support_Schc



GSABG_cefnogi_ail
agor_ysgolion.docx

Healthy Schools

Healthy Schools Officers nationally, working with Public Health Wales, have identified three areas of focus for September 2020 and three working groups have been established to prepare for September 2020. The three areas of focus are:

- Infection Prevention Control Working Group
- Mental and Emotional Health and Wellbeing Working Group
- Physical Activity (Active travel, outdoor learning) Working Group

The role of each group will be to start pulling together a 'road map' of priorities to support a whole school/setting approach in that focus area, along with collating information about resources/programmes from teams across Wales. More information will be available as this work progresses and Shan Palmeria will be able to provide a full update in September 2020.

4.5 Childcare

Firstly, it is important to note that there is no requirement for schools to offer keyworker childcare provision during the autumn term 2020. Welsh Government has, however, indicated that this could be subject to review in line with the potential for a second outbreak.

Welsh Government issued guidance to the childcare sector to enable them to re-open and extend their provision from keyworker only provision in June 2020. The guidance, which has subsequently been updated this month (August 2020), outlines the measures childcare providers need to put in place to ensure their provision is safe for children, staff and parents and includes advice on: prevention; minimising contacts; use of outdoor space; infection prevention and control; hand hygiene; PPE; risk assessment; action to be taken in the event of a child becoming ill; decontamination and cleaning.

The former requirement that children were to be cared for in bubbles of 8 has been removed, but settings will have to be able to demonstrate that children are cared for in consistent groups to minimise social contacts. Providers can decide for themselves how many children they feel safely able to care for, taking account of their registered numbers, the space available to them and the need for staff to socially distance from one another. There is flexibility under this guidance for children to attend more than one setting, so wraparound care is now allowed, however, there is an expectation that providers will work with parents, schools and potentially other settings to measure and mitigate against risks with an expectation that children will be cared for in consistent groups. The guidance suggests ways consistent groups could operate within childcare settings by organising children into groups related to their class, year group or school and suggests providers need to work with parents and schools to discuss risks and how to manage them.

Settings providing care to school-aged children are also required to consider the guidance for schools and form a judgement on which measures are most appropriate and relevant to their particular operating model.

All childcare settings will have risk assessments to show how they are operating under the current restrictions, taking account of guidance available, outlining measures they are taking to keep their provision safe. The Early Years Childcare and Play team offer advice and support to the sector and can assist with any identified issues.

<https://gov.wales/protective-measures-childcare-settings-keep-childcare-safe#:~:text=Although%20the%20protective%20measures%20recommended%20in%20this%20guidance,school%20and%20holiday%20schemes%2C%20both%20registered%20and%20unregistered.>

4.6 Educational Trips and Visits

Outdoor Learning and Educational Visits

It has been advised for schools not to use venues which involve travel. However, learning outdoors has many educational and health benefits. During the pandemic, it also provides opportunities for ‘social distancing’ and fresh air, and so schools should consider how they can maximise the amount of time that children and young people spend outdoors.

In addition to using their own playgrounds and gardens, many schools routinely use outdoor areas adjacent to and nearby the school for educational activities, sometimes designated as a ‘Local Learning Area’. It should be possible to continue to use most venues that are in walking distance, within current limitations. It might also be possible to negotiate temporary exclusive use of an outdoor area close to an establishment, with the landowner.

Planning and Managing Activities during the Pandemic

Schools should consider avoiding activities which have a high likelihood of minor injuries, so as to reduce the need for first aid, close contact with participants, or visits to hospital.

If the planned activity is in an area open to the public, schools should consider carefully how they will ensure that the group is isolated from the public. Venues should be selected to minimise any possible interaction with the public.

During some activities, it may be possible to designate or mark out ‘zones’ within which individual participant’s work, to avoid contact between them.

It is important to keep parents informed about plans and the precautions schools are taking, both indoors and outdoors, as they will naturally be concerned.

Hygiene and Outdoor Learning

The same attention should be given to hygiene when outdoors as when indoors. For example:

- Regularly washing/sanitising hands including when going outside, before and after touching shared objects such as activity equipment, before eating and after using the toilet
- Avoiding touching objects shared by the public – for example, a member of staff could hold a gate open to avoid everyone touching it
- Avoiding activities which involve touching each other (e.g. holding hands)
- Sanitising equipment before it is used.

Consider carrying, or having easily available, antiseptic hand gel, antiseptic wipes, tissues, bags for waste, gloves and face masks and possibly disposable aprons and eye protection, in case staff need to administer first aid or give direct support or personal care to a participant.

Be aware that antibacterial hand gel usually contains a high proportion of alcohol, and could therefore be a temptation for abuse by some young people. It should be used under close staff supervision.

Overseas and Domestic Visits

Current government travel guidance for educational settings advises against all overseas and domestic visits for children under 18. Government advice is also to avoid public transport and unnecessary journeys. It is, therefore, not advisable to use venues which involve travel.

When booking future visits schools are asked to please ensure that they consider insurance, the Council can advise on this. For more information, please contact:

Penny Jones: penny.jones@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

4.7 Use of Leisure Facilities

Leisure Supporting Education

Sport Centres across Blaenau Gwent have been closed since 23rd March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and are now in the first phase of reopening. The Leisure Trust has worked to create a flexible reopening model which will allow leisure services to start the rebuilding phase whilst not hindering access to schools for their physical education requirements.

One way systems have been created throughout the centres and whilst we continue to live with the threat of COVID-19 this will need to be adhered to by both the public and all school

attendees. Sanitising stations are situated in every section of the building and strict cleanliness rules have been put in place to ensure that the equipment is placed back in the correct position and kept as clean and sanitised as possible. These measures will be shared with the schools and there will be an expectation that everyone will abide by them for the safety of all the centre users. If and when schools are allowed to use sports centres the responsibilities for COVID-19 risk management will have to be clearly defined, for example the supervision of pupils will fall entirely within the school's responsibility.

Whilst the majority of equipment is readily available the Trust has had to decommission some to allow for social distancing within the facilities, however, the Trust will be reviewing the latest Welsh Government guidance on a weekly basis to return to full activity as soon as possible.

By the time the schools return for the new academic year the trust will be in the 4th week of reopening. Further guidance on activities including swimming is anticipated within the next 2 weeks. A further update will be provided once arrangements have been confirmed.