

# Return to school September 2021

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# Context

- Schools closure announced Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 for Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> March.
- FSM strategy agreed and implemented.
- Approximately 1,000 applications for childcare for key workers processed on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> and Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March.
- 6 mainstream hubs and 1 ALN base established Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March.

# Context

- 4 mainstream additional hubs and 2 vulnerable pupil hubs.
- Over 1,700 staff contributed.

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# July 2020

- Schools re-opened on Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> June, 2020, in order to check in, catch up and prepare - maximum of 1/3<sup>rd</sup> capacity.
- Risk Assessments (RAs) were completed for all school sites and staff and pupils who are vulnerable.
- LA guidance was issued.
- Weekly meetings with headteachers continued.

# September – December 2020

- Local lockdown in Caerphilly CBC in early September.
- Revised Risk Assessments, in conjunction with LA support.
- FSM deliveries continued throughout the term for all those eligible until 30<sup>th</sup> September and then for those self isolating throughout.

# September – December 2020

- Welsh Government directed secondary pupils to learn remotely from 11th December.
- LA decision for primary schools to learn remotely from Thursday, 17<sup>th</sup> December. LA to provide provision for vulnerable pupils and key workers where needed.
- TTP process very demanding for senior leaders, supported by LA staff.

# January 2021 – April 2021

- National lockdown – 4<sup>th</sup> January, 2021
- On site learning resumed as follows :
  - Foundation phase pupils - 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2021
  - Pupils in years 7-9 - 15<sup>th</sup> March.
  - Pupils in years 10-13 - 12<sup>th</sup> April.
- Provision for children of key workers and vulnerable pupils on school site throughout.

# April 2021 – July 2021

- Completion of statutory testing and Centre Determined Grades process.
- Several outbreaks of positive cases, resulting in high number of pupils and staff required to self isolate.
- Preparation for return in September 2021.



# July 2021 – August 2021

- Ongoing work for the Core Guidance for schools to be published in August.
- Core Guidance will replace Operational Guidance after a period of transition in the autumn term.

# What have been the successes in 2020-21?

- Excellent working relationships between LA and schools, leading to extensive and effective collaboration.
- Highly valued support from all LA staff teams and services, including the newly established headteacher helpline.
- FSM delivery programme.
- All schools remained open despite very high numbers of pupils/staff self isolating.

# What have been the most challenging aspects of 2020-21 for schools ?

- Keeping everyone safe by reviewing, communicating and embedding risk assessment regularly throughout the school year.
- Managing messages for pupils, staff, governors and parents/carers – particularly when rules changed and/or when they differed from England.
- Managing the spectrum of attitudes to Covid – from extreme anxiety to non-compliance with any mitigation.
- Coping with the workload involved in the ever-changing demand for reactive practice and, in particular, out of hours work in identifying and contacting close contact.

# September 2021 onwards - What will be different?

- No recommendation for bubbles, contact groups.
- No recommendation for face coverings in classrooms.
- Unless testing positive, no-one under 18, nor those fully vaccinated, will be required to self isolate.
- No-one fully vaccinated will be required to self isolate.
- Close contacts will receive a “warn and inform” notification.

# What challenges remain ?

- Embedding the new decision-making framework in the Autumn Term.
- Supporting those most anxious in the school community, to adjust to the new situation.
- Embedding the identification and contacting of close contacts.
- Supporting all pupils/staff in wellbeing and learning going forward.

# Related Links

**(latest guidance)**

Public Health Wales

<https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19>

Welsh Government

<https://gov.wales/coronavirus>

# Questions

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