

Learning guidance during the coronavirus firebreak – October 2020

2-6 November 2020

Overall approach in schools

1. Primary schools and special schools (including PRUs, EOTAS and all SEN units attached to mainstream schools) will re-open as normal after half term on 2 November.
2. Secondary schools will be open for children in years 7 and 8.
3. Pupils in years 9-13 will receive their education at home from 2 November until 6 November. They will return to school on 9 November.
4. Those sitting GCSEs and university entrance exams in November will be able to do so at school/college.
5. Free school meals arrangements have already been put in place for half term and will continue for learners in years 9-13 in the week of 2 November.
6. Pupils at all stages of education will continue to receive their entitlement to education from 2 November to 6 November.
7. Welsh Government advises all schools, teachers and school-based staff to have a full and meaningful break over half term.

Provision of learning in schools

8. Learners experienced significant disruption to their learning and wellbeing during the course of the summer term, and into the autumn with varying periods of self-isolation. There is an existing and increasing disparity between learners and schools in how much time they have spent learning.
9. The approach taken to the firebreak recognises that older children are more able to engage in self-directed learning alongside structured learning tasks and online teaching. Remote learning does not require that existing lesson times are honoured as in school – a more flexible approach may be preferable to maintain learning, motivation and wellbeing. However, an appropriate routine may be preferred. This is a decision for the school but there is no expectation that teachers will work outside school hours.
10. Schools should provide as full a learning offer as possible to all pupils.
 - a. Where schools have established effective arrangements to enable learners to work from home, they should continue to use them, for example, they might draw on experiences from the lockdown period.
 - b. All learners not in school should be provided with sufficient and appropriate work to ensure they continue their learning during the 2 November week, but only from 2 November. Welsh Government advises all schools to take a full half term week.
 - c. Where learners are not in school, schools should keep in contact with them, including with individual check ins as appropriate. This could include a class registration at the beginning of a session, for example.
 - d. Schools should continue to assess pupils' work and provide feedback in line with their agreed approach, though may need to be modified for online purposes.

- e. The full breadth of the curriculum should be available to all learners, including those learning remotely, on the basis of a reasonable endeavours approach.
- f. Schools are not required to stick to a rigid timetable of lessons, but may prefer to do this to facilitate online learning.
- g. The school should consider the priorities set out in the Welsh Government July learning guidance in relation to focus of learning and parental engagement.

Provision of teaching in schools

- 11. Teachers have also experienced significant disruption over the course of the summer and autumn term, and have worked under pressure to continue to teach in a variety of contexts. There are some examples of excellent practice in Wales in blended and remote learning offers, and a range of support available through the regions and others (see below).
- 12. We recognise that different schools and teachers will be more or less prepared to provide a mixture of on-site teaching for years 7 and 8 alongside remote learning for years 9-13, from 2 November. We recognise that this will be a challenge but are committed to schools providing a full learning offer.
- 13. Teachers in primary schools and special schools and SEN units, PRUs and EOTAS where appropriate, should be on the school site in order to provide for their learners.
- 14. In secondary schools:
 - a. Teachers can work together to develop a set of resources to support all learners, including those supporting remote learning, and use them to teach pupils. These teaching activities might include structured tasks, self-directed learning experiences and online lessons.
 - b. School leadership should create and enable the collaborative, teamwork and support for teachers: building capacity, capability and confidence to deliver this challenge together, recognising appropriate social distancing.
 - c. Technology and digital resources on the school site are likely to be more consistent across teachers and more reliable to enable remote learning.
 - d. In order to achieve both the collaborative building and delivery of this, teachers and support staff will be needed on the school site during the week.

The below provides background to curriculum and learning, links to useful resources, and frequently asked questions.

Background

Learning guidance

- 15. The **learning guidance** in July set out the following priorities for learning – <https://gov.wales/guidance-learning-schools-and-settings-autumn-term-covid-19>:
 - a. **health and well-being:** learning should support learners' mental, emotional, physical and social well-being

- b. **purpose:** all learning should have a clear purpose in mind, focused around what is important for learners now and in the longer term
- c. **literacy, numeracy and digital competence:** learners should have opportunities to develop and apply these skills across the curriculum
- d. **broad and balanced learning experiences:** learners should have learning experiences that span a broad curriculum and that include opportunities to develop a breadth of understanding and a range of knowledge and skills
- e. **progression and assessment:** learners should make meaningful progress throughout this period. Learning should be designed to support increasing depth and sophistication of learning over time. We encourage the use of assessments to help learners move to the next steps in their learning
- f. **partnership with parents, carers and learners:** schools should develop a common understanding and language with parents, carers and learners; this can help underpin learning and support learning experiences.

Remote learning resources

16. The learning guidance also emphasised the need to develop a blend of in-school and out-of-school learning. Progress has been made on this including with the support of strategic partners. The regional consortia are available to support and advise schools on how best to provide a remote learning offer for the week of 2 November and beyond where individuals or groups of learners need to work at home. Further information can be found here:

GwE: <https://sites.google.com/hwbcymru.net/ccg-gsc/cc-gwe-sc>

ERW: <https://porth.erw-rhwyd.cymru/repository>

EAS: Supporting Our Schools Playlist and <https://thingi.easmysid.co.uk/playlists/view/ba278c77-6411-4f8f-a49f-13e94f0e115f/en#page1> (you'll need Hwb account to log in)

CSC: <https://www.cscjes-cronfa.co.uk/blended-learning>

Hwb also hosts a range of support documentation and guidance, here: <https://hwb.gov.wales/>

Recruit Recover and Raise Standards

17. The Welsh Government has provided nearly £29m in the Recruit, Recover, and Raise Standards scheme to support learning and teachers recruited to this programme may help to provide additional support for exam cohorts, vulnerable learners and learners in Welsh medium schools in English-speaking households. Examples of how schools across the sector have used this funding can be found on Hwb – <https://hwb.gov.wales/distance-learning/sharing-our-experiences/>.

Modification of curriculum requirements

18. To support schools over the autumn, the Minister for Education has modified the curriculum requirements for both September and October to a reasonable endeavours basis. A reasonable endeavours basis does not remove the requirement for schools to seek to fulfil their curriculum and assessment duties.

Instead, it requires schools to do everything they reasonably can to discharge these duties. If schools have taken all reasonable steps but they are still unable to do so, then that duty will be treated as satisfied. Notices to modify curriculum requirements may only apply for a specified period of time, which must not exceed one month (Coronavirus Act 2020). The expiry of the one month period or cancellation of a notice does not prevent the making of a further notice in relation to any provision.

19. The Minister for Education will seek to modify these requirements again for November to reflect the varying learning approaches of the week of 2 November. We will look to publish additional FAQs in the week of 9 November to clarify a direction of travel for some subject specific issues to address practical concerns to ensure schools provide as broad a curriculum as possible.
20. FAQs to follow shortly.