



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

Supporting information for learning in schools and settings from 15 March

This update has been drafted for schools and settings as they return to on-site teaching for all learners.

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It is meant to support them in their thinking and planning in the transition to face-to-face learning and to help learners to continue to progress. Schools and settings should continue to refer to the **learning guidance**, which sets out priorities for learning for this year and read this update in conjunction with that. Later this year, we will set out a more detailed plan on how we will support schools and settings to address the medium- and long-term impacts of the disruption over the last year.

Schools and settings have responded to a range of challenging circumstances over the course of the disruption and there is evidence of very strong practice. The varied length of time that learners have been learning remotely and their ability to engage with that, means that learners will come to face-to-face learning from a variety of different social, emotional and cognitive experiences. These may be both positive and negative but will mean learners will return with different starting points in their learning.

Supporting the foundations of learning

It is critical that any approach prioritises learners' well-being, confidence and motivation. Schools and settings should give learners plenty of time to regain their confidence, motivation and enjoyment of being in school again, as well as their relationships with staff and other learners. Similarly, learners will benefit

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from activities that support their mental, social and physical well-being; outdoor and play-based activities (as well as activities that encourage learners to be creative, expressive and collaborative) can be particularly supportive of this regardless of the age of the learner. This focus on well-being is an ongoing enabler of learning: as learners engage with more learning, these foundations cannot be lost or ignored.

Approaches to learning should also recognise that many learners will readily welcome the opportunity to learn in a physical setting again. The breadth of the curriculum, including practical aspects, is critical to engaging all learners. Schools and settings should guard against narrowing learning to the detriment of learners' motivation and well-being.

To ensure that they have the best opportunity possible to settle back into learning, services need to work together to provide the joined-up support that children and families need. We already have an effective infrastructure in place to provide early help and support for children, young people and their families through our Families First services. As they return to school and wider well-being issues become apparent, schools and settings should continue to refer children and families that need additional support to these early intervention services.

We are also continuing with a broad approach to improve the mental health of young people, from prevention and early intervention through to improving access to specialist services. Further details of additional measures can be found on the [Welsh Government website](#).

Learners' progression

Each learner will have their own specific learning needs, with their own particular context. In the next period, the focus should be on helping learners to progress from where they are, rather than an approach based around 'catch up' or 'deficit'. This will depend on understanding learners' individual needs: where they have made progress, where progress has been limited and how they can be supported to progress in both their strengths and development needs. This approach should take into account the foundations of learning and should not

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impede the confidence, motivation, enjoyment or well-being of learners.

Building knowledge and skills, and covering core concepts to support progression, remains a priority and should continue to be a focus within learning and teaching.

Assessment is an integral part of the learning process and over the next period should continue to focus on supporting understanding individual learners' needs, their well-being and identifying next steps to support their progression. Learners should be an active part of this process, with regular feedback being given.

To develop a shared understanding of learners' individual needs and to support progress, practitioners should have regular discussions with learners, parents and carers. Discussions with other practitioners and cluster schools and settings are also important to support transition.

To create greater space and flexibility for this more individualised approach to assessment, we will be disapplying the requirements for end of key stage assessments (Foundation Phase, Key Stages 2 and 3) and the associated moderation requirements.

Our policy on requirements around personalised assessments and continuous assessment of the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 and 3 is that they will continue on a reasonable endeavours basis to enable teachers to understand and support individual learner needs. Further information on expectations for continuous assessment and personalised assessments will be provided.

Existing Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards provision which will continue in the summer term and beyond should help provide bespoke support for learners with particular needs.

We know that many schools have already begun this process with Foundation Phase learners. We welcome the commitment of teachers to spend the time working with their learners and supporting them into face-to-face learning as a first step for all.

Foundation Phase

The early educational experiences of young children are of paramount importance and learning support has to be applied in a way that takes account of the age, abilities and stage of development of the child and the nature of provision. Support should draw heavily on current Foundation Phase pedagogical practice.

Outdoor learning and play-based activities, with a focus on well-being and a need to connect with their peers and the adults around them, is especially important.

Children's social interaction with their peers happens primarily through play and evidence demonstrates that play is critically important for children's social, cognitive and literacy development. Play helps them to make sense of things they find hard to understand and gives them a sense of control and independence. A play-focused approach will support young children in returning to school in person and with their longer-term emotional health, as well as provide a solid foundation for learning now and into the future.

It is essential that time and space is made to ensure a child's learning needs are assessed and understood and they are supported to move at their own pace. Any temptation to move to more formalised learning in the Foundation Phase must be avoided.

The **Foundation Phase Profile** is a well-established formative, observation-based resource for all practitioners working in the Foundation Phase. The Full Profile includes a wider range of skills that support assessment as a child moves through the Foundation Phase, as well as providing an understanding of their learning and development needs. Practitioners could use the Full Profile to support their understanding of the learning and development needs of each child, and use the resource to review progress regularly.

Qualifications years

Continuing to progress in their learning will support learners to have confidence

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in moving to their next steps in education, training or employment. In light of wider learning expectations, schools and settings providing education other than at school can also use space and flexibility to address pressing needs such as those associated with centre-determined grades for general qualifications this summer.

We have invested significantly in the creation of e-learning resources to support learners in preparation for their GCSE and A level assessments. Resources are already available through the [WJEC](#) and [Hwb](#) to support preparation for assessments, and these can also be used to enable learners to engage with aspects of syllabi that have not been covered because of disruption. Resources will also be available in April to support learners in the transition from Year 11 to 12; from 12 to 13 and to the first year of their university experience. In addition, we will work with schools, settings, colleges and universities in Wales to support them to enhance and enrich the transition experience for learners.

Where learners are planning to progress into a new educational setting – whether that is a different school, further education college, work-based learning or university – schools and settings are responsible for supporting and preparing them for their transition. Many learners will be particularly anxious about progressing to a new environment and new programme of learning, following the disruption of the past year. They may have gaps in their knowledge which will impact on their next stage of learning.

Schools and settings should work closely with the ‘receiving’ learning provider to ensure a smooth transition, including [sharing information](#) so that the new provider can fully support the individual’s learning and well-being needs.

Sharing approaches

There are plenty of successes to share from the last year and there will be further successes to build on in this next phase. Schools and settings should seek to understand the principles underpinning other approaches and why those approaches have been effective, rather than looking to simply adopt a solution developed in another context. This gives real opportunity to build on these principles and apply them to face-to-face learning: in particular, using blended

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learning approaches and building on enhanced digital skills.

Schools and settings should look to share and reflect on different approaches. Local authorities, regional consortia, further and higher education institutions, Estyn and other supporting partners also have a critical role in helping to share these approaches. Collaborative delivery of post-16 learning, for example between schools and colleges, provides valuable opportunities to help learners to catch up and to offer them a rich and varied programme of learning so that they can make the best choices.

Welsh Government support

As **announced** by the Minister for Education, a further £72 million will be made available to support learners directly as part of the response towards recovery and progression (including continuation of Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards support for early years, vulnerable learners, and qualifications years). £15m has also been made available to support disadvantaged and learners with additional learning needs.

In the summer term, we will set out a plan to support schools and settings to address the medium- and long-term impacts of disruption. We will work closely with practitioners and partners to develop this. This aim of this plan will be to ensure all learners have the long-term foundations for learning and are enabled to progress, underpinned by high-quality learning and teaching. We recognise that practitioners have a high level of competing demands. Creating space for them is fundamental to this approach and will be a key part of any plan.

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