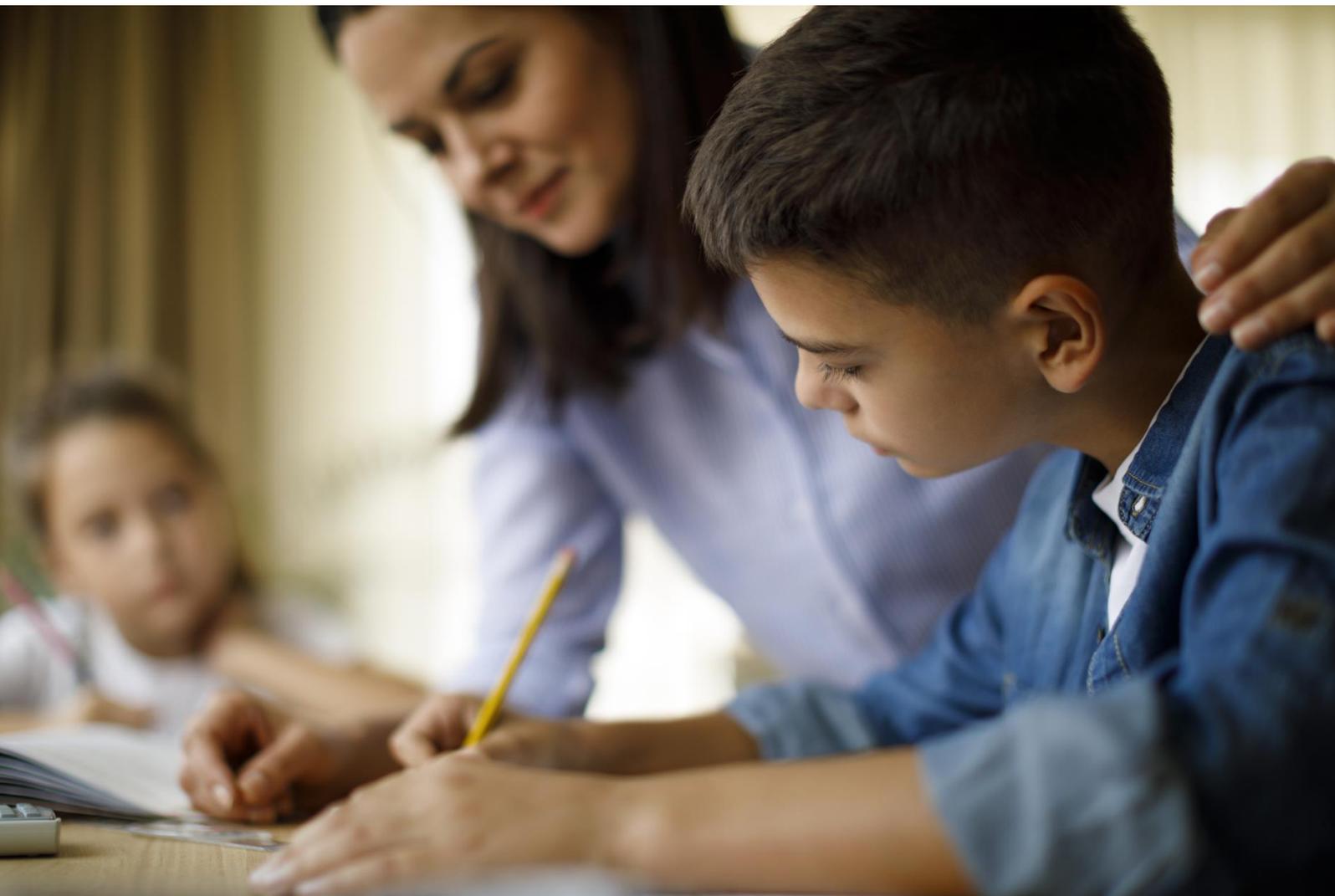




Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Stay Safe. Stay Learning: Continuity of learning policy statement



Stay Safe. Stay Learning.

The following organisations are contributing to the 'Stay Safe. Stay Learning' programme.

Regional Consortia Managing Directors

Local Authority Education Directors

Estyn

National Academy for Educational Leadership

Qualifications Wales

For further information go to
hwb.gov.wales/staysafestaylearning

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

OGL © Crown copyright 2020 WG40590

Stay Safe. Stay Learning.

Context

The response to COVID-19 has dramatically changed our lives.

Both adults and children face very real and pressing challenges to their health and well-being. The risk of infection, the prospect of bereavement and restrictions on leaving home place strains on our physical and mental health and our relationships. Children in particular may struggle with lack of routine, disruption to their learning and isolation from friends.

Our priorities

In this challenging context, the education system has been disrupted but remains of central importance.

During this period when most learners are not able to attend schools and settings in person, the priorities of the Welsh Government, and all our partners across the education system, will be to support:

- the safety of all our learners and our education workforce
- the physical and mental health and well-being of all our learners and our education workforce
- the ability of all our learners to keep learning
- learners' transition back into school and onto the next phase of their learning when the time comes.

Scope

Our 'Stay Safe. Stay Learning.' programme pulls together contributions from across education and beyond to provide support to the whole of our system. We must do all we can to mitigate the impact of school closures on our children, in particular those children who face socio-economic disadvantage, as well as learners with special educational needs that research shows will be most affected.

This week marks the beginning of the summer term, but schools in Wales will not be re-opening their doors to all learners. In these circumstances our task is to find ways to help our children keep learning. This means enabling distance learning and planning for how we can best help children through this time.

In parallel, we need to plan for the reopening of schools. This will only happen when the science advice says it is safe to do so but, even then, we cannot assume that it will be an immediate return to business as usual. This means our distance learning support is likely to have a role to play alongside provision in schools. We also need to consider how to support schools in helping children re-integrate into the school setting when that time comes and determining what the focus of learning should be.

Already schools have been re-purposed to provide support for our critical workers and vulnerable children across the country; and schools and practitioners have been working hard to enable learning to continue. The efforts undertaken by our headteachers, staff and families have been enormous, and our strategic partners across the education system have been outstanding in their support.

We will ensure that across the wider education system all of our partners and stakeholders are encouraged and supported to contribute to this response. The recent past has given us an opportunity to work in partnership on education reform, and we are taking this sense of collaborative professionalism and joint mission into our response to the COVID-19 emergency. We will do this by balancing two important imperatives – to keep our children safe and to help our children to keep learning.

During the lifecycle of this programme, we will encourage feedback and continue to build a consensual collaborative approach to supporting our system. We welcome feedback and engagement with all elements of the ‘Stay Safe. Stay Learning.’ programme by our partners and stakeholders across the education system.

Our national mission to raise standards, reduce the attainment gap and ensure an education system that is a source of national pride and enjoys public confidence, has driven progress for our learners, teachers and schools over recent years. We mustn’t – and won’t – lose sight of those shared ambitions for every single child during these extraordinary challenging times. This period of disruption means that we must work together, in new and different ways, to keep our children safe and to support them to keep learning. Our shared commitment – right across the country – to combine equity with excellence means that we can navigate this period and invest in tackling issues such as digital exclusion, continue to move forward with a world-leading approach to online learning, and support bespoke professional learning for our education workforce.

Our intentions

Welsh Government and its partners will be working across the education system in a number of ways to offer support to leaders, governors, practitioners, parents/carers and learners during this period.

Key to our work will be the recognition that this is an extraordinary set of circumstances and that we are being asked to work in different ways and take on unfamiliar tasks. Our usual roles and responsibilities may be changing and meanwhile, we are dealing with the unparalleled stress and anxiety caused by the virus and social distancing measures. While we will look to support ongoing learning across the system, we will do so in a way that is mindful of the pressures we are all under.

As outlined in our priorities we believe the most important thing in this time of unprecedented change and disruption is the safety and well-being of our children and our workforce and doing all we can to support the physical and mental well-being of our children and young people throughout this period.

We will support parents/carers to support their children's learning, recognising that, while they are a child's primary educator, they are not teachers and being clear that we do not expect them to recreate school at home.

We will enable learning to continue through a wide-ranging programme creating the necessary infrastructure and support for continuity of learning we will offer guidance and support around key areas such as distance learning and how to maximise the benefits of our national digital learning platform, Hwb.

While we commit to support ongoing learning, we recognise this will require new ways of working and possibly new skills for our practitioners in enabling distance learning. We will work with key partners such as the regional consortia to offer support and professional learning to adapt to this where it is needed.

We will seek to ensure as far as possible that no learner is disadvantaged because of access to technology, where they live, their age, their special educational needs, the language of their school or home, or their demographic profile. We will also be working to consider the support learners will need on their return to school. We will manage this programme to ensure that the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged learners and the principles of inclusion are central to the delivery of the programme.

Our plans to support the system

Wales is well placed to support schools, practitioners, and learners during this period as we have Hwb, our national digital platform for learning and teaching in Wales. Hwb provides its users with access to a range of bilingual, digital tools and resources.

In the last weeks, a wide range of resources have already been created and made available to learners across Wales. Leaders and teachers across Wales have made great efforts to continue to engage learners by making resources available and signposting families to suitable support.

It is however not enough to put content into our system, or even to provide links to the wide range of professionally created resources that recent events have highlighted and made available. The Welsh Government plans to add value to this ongoing process by supporting a national and concerted effort that enables schools during this period to create and share high-quality programmes for distance learning with resources to support a wide range of activities – including for those learners and families who do not have access to connectivity and devices.

Throughout our plan, we will ensure Welsh-medium, English-medium and bilingual schools, settings and learners have the same entitlement to support. We will focus particular attention on learners in Welsh-medium schools who live in households where Welsh is not spoken and find ways to maintain their exposure to the language.

We will also carefully identify and manage the response to any group of learners for whom there is a higher risk to learning. There are key learner-groups who will need particular support in this period, such as vulnerable learners and those who face

socio-economic disadvantage, as well as learners with special educational needs and those learners who face transition across key phases.

We will be targeting support and action at all levels of the education system and will provide a range of guidance and support. This will include:

- Headteachers, leaders and governors
 - Guidance covering supporting the well-being of themselves, their staff and learners.
 - Guidance on the development and management of learning online.
 - Guidance on other forms of distance learning.
- Practitioners including teachers and those who support learning in our schools
 - Guidance and support on the use of the Hwb toolset to support continuing learning for learners of all ages.
 - Guidance on best practice in creating and using online and other forms of learning resources.
 - Guidance as to the structure, content and learning design of distance learning.
 - Guidance in sharing and curating resources across the system.
 - Access to professional learning to enable any available time and space to be used to develop their practice and their understanding of the new curriculum in readiness for when schools reopen.
- Parents/carers
 - Guidance in supporting children's health and well-being and their learning at home.
- Learners supporting access to learning through:
 - technology
 - high-quality resources for learning
 - purposeful learning activities and experiences both online and offline.

We will create these resources by:

- working in partnership with local authorities, regions and strategic partners across our education system
- working with the regions, local authorities and schools to support learners who cannot access technology.

As announced by the Minister for Education last week, the first elements of support will:

- address the digital exclusion by working with local authorities and schools on making access to Hwb and its learning opportunities more widespread, and addressing equipment and connectivity issues

- provide guidance and support to school staff in developing practice in the new way of learning
- provide guidance and support to schools on using Hwb to continue doing school business.