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Welsh Government

Guidance on learning in schools and settings from the autumn term

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

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Introduction

This guidance has been developed to set out expectations and priorities for learning in schools and settings over the next school year.

The purpose of this guidance is to give schools and supporting partners a common set of priorities for learning, regardless of the level of operations in response to COVID-19. Schools will need to prepare for a range of scenarios and this guidance sets out what learning priorities should remain constant throughout those – a single approach which is flexible enough to respond to changing conditions.

The introduction of ‘check-in, catch-up and prepare’ sessions in the 2019/20 summer term has already started our process of addressing impacts arising from the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions introduced in March. Learning and teaching will continue to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2020/21 school year. The approaches taken by schools and settings will continue to evolve to provide learning both in school and elsewhere if the needs arises. The balance between learning in schools and settings and time spent learning elsewhere may well change at particular points in response to the pandemic. **This challenge requires schools to adapt their curriculum planning to be flexible and responsive to changing circumstances. Therefore, this guidance provides a high-level set of expectations for schools and settings in developing approaches to learning and seeks to close the gap between our learners while raising expectations for all.** As schools and settings develop approaches to provide learning in school and outside school, they are able to draw on blended learning guidance (see hwb.gov.wales/distance-learning/developing-approaches-to-support-distance-learning/).

We know most learning will have been impacted in some form over recent months, with more significant impacts expected in vulnerable or disadvantaged groups. There is also a specific impact on those taking formal qualifications in 2021 – those going into Years 11, 12 and 13. The Welsh Government has announced £29m to ‘Recruit, recover and raise standards’, bringing teachers in to schools to provide more in-depth, focused support for those who have specific challenges to enable them to achieve their potential (see annex for a summary). This is not separate from the approach to learning set out in this document, but will be built on the same priority areas, core concepts and approaches.

However, we also know the impacts on learners will have been wide-ranging and will vary according to individual circumstances, e.g. learners in Welsh-medium schools and settings where Welsh is not spoken at home. As such we set out here a single approach to promote learning progress in all groups, expecting this to be adapted and developed for each school’s and learner’s needs and challenges.

Consideration of the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (UNCRC) alongside our well-being goals has highlighted the vital role that our schools and settings have in addressing the needs of every learner. No one can be left behind. That is why we adopted an equitable approach for all learners (who were able) to attend the

'check-in, catch-up, prepare' sessions from 29 June. Nevertheless, for some with specific learning and developmental needs equity of opportunity can only be realised through additional targeted support. That is why our focus remains on learner health and well-being as the prerequisite for learning, but also involves more detailed planning for learning and progression for the medium and longer term.

Later in the summer, supplementary guidance on supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged learners will be published. While the guidance included in this document can and should be applied generally to all learners, there will inevitably be different and additional considerations for schools and settings in planning for the learning and progression of those who face barriers to learning. Further guidance will seek to support schools and settings with this.

Schools and settings will continue to play a pivotal role in supporting local communities, parents and carers in our drive to stay safe and stay learning. Our national mission and education system at every level remain focused on supporting all our children and young people to realise their potential and succeed through these exceptional times. The response to the COVID-19 pandemic from practitioners throughout Wales has been exemplary, evidencing again the capacity of our education profession to rise up and meet significant challenges.

The purpose of this guidance is to support schools and teachers address the needs of all learners.

What should learning look like?

A school's or setting's approach to learning will need to adapt to the changing circumstances that we may face during the response to COVID-19. Schools should therefore develop an approach to learning that is flexible enough to adapt to different scenarios as well as differing amounts of in-school learning and learning at home or elsewhere.

In the context of these uncertainties, a set of broad principles is required that can and should be applied regardless of the scenario. Our aim is to provide clarity, focus and direction for learning, both in the context of the school/setting and in the context of the home or elsewhere, with flexibility for schools to adapt to a range of scenarios; this ensures learners have coherent, consistent and joined-up experiences of learning rather than conflicting demands, unnecessary repetition or a lack of connection between the two contexts. There will be additional considerations for specific learners, including our youngest learners and learners who face barriers to learning. In the case of learners preparing for qualifications there will need to be additional support and details of this can be found below also.

Priorities for learning

In summary, when considering their approach to autumn term learning, schools and settings should consider:

- **health and well-being:** learning should support learners' mental, emotional, physical and social well-being, as well as recognise the importance of outdoor learning and play
- **purpose:** all learning should have a clear purpose in mind, focused around what is important for learners now and in the longer term
- **literacy, numeracy and digital competence:** learners should have opportunities to develop and apply these skills across the curriculum
- **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
- **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
- **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.

Health and well-being

In summary:

- learning should support learners' mental, emotional, physical and social well-being
- learning should recognise 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.

Mental and emotional well-being

For many learners, simply engaging in meaningful learning experiences will support their mental well-being; this will help them to feel a sense of purpose, progression and enjoyment in learning.

School can offer learners a range of mental health benefits. It may provide them with time with friends, a sense of routine and a chance to spend time with adults in school who are important to them.

Communication and conversations can offer important support. Conversations about how learners are feeling will continue to be critical. Staff should encourage learners to discuss their questions and concerns.

All learners should have access to a range of tools and support for their emotional and mental well-being at school. As before the pandemic, dedicated specialist support will be available to those specific learners that require it, while universal support will support learners more generally in understanding their own well-being, in building resilience and in developing coping mechanisms to manage the challenges of COVID-19. Schools should consider how youth work approaches or universal pastoral support could be used.

Relationships and social well-being

School has the potential to be a welcomed opportunity for learners to meet friends, revive social connections and to spend time with adults in school who are important to them. Some learners will need additional support to reconnect. Education settings are social places and therefore play a vital part in developing a sense of belonging and connectedness in their learners. This happens in multiple interactions throughout a day in a school or setting and not just in the classroom.

Learners will require time, support and understanding to develop new behaviours; appropriate opportunities to play, socialise and nurture relationships can support this. Practitioners should ensure that learners have time, space and structured activities to re-form relationships with other learners and with staff.

Physical well-being

Schools can provide important opportunities to support learners' physical health and well-being. This gives young people opportunities to enjoy a range of physical

activities. It can also help them to understand the importance of a healthy, balanced diet and help them to access and enjoy foods as part of this. The pandemic may have had an impact on learners' access to these. Their sleeping habits may also have changed. Indeed, for many learners routine will need to be re-established and this may be especially difficult given the evolving nature of provision in response to the pandemic. Schools and settings should consider how learners can enjoy activities to support their physical health and to understand and develop healthy behaviours. Particular emphasis should be placed on enjoyment as this supports them to develop health-affirming behaviours.

Play for all learners

Practitioners should recognise the important role of play for learners of all ages. This is critical to their development, their well-being and their socialisation.

All learners should be given opportunities to play and socialise, both through structured activities and unstructured play. Risks should be minimised by keeping learners in contact groups and continuing to facilitate play activities outdoors as far as possible. Break times may need to be staggered to support this.

Outdoor learning

Schools should maximise the time learners spend outdoors. This has important physical, mental and educational benefits and helps combat transmission of COVID-19.

There are organisations that can support schools and settings when considering outdoor learning; a wide range of resources are also available. Schools and settings can access support via Hwb as well as through the Wales Council for Outdoor Learning at www.walescouncilforoutdoorlearning.org/, including their *High Quality Outdoor Learning for Wales* (Outdoor Education Advisors Panel, 2018) guidance.

Purpose

In summary:

- all learning should have a clear purpose in mind, focused around what is important for learners now and in the longer term
- as schools and practitioners develop their priorities and focus for learning, they should then seek to ensure that learning drives towards these
- learning should acknowledge the situation of each learner following the disruption and develop clear learning actions in response.

Adjusting the approach to learning requires schools and practitioners to understand their priorities for learning and the needs of their learners. In thinking about the priorities and focus for learning, schools and settings may wish to consider the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales as an articulation of our aspirations for every learner in Wales.

As schools and practitioners develop their priorities and focus for learning, they should then seek to ensure that learning drives towards these. The key priorities for

learning outlined in this guidance should be considered as part of that, but schools and settings may also wish to consider:

- our vision – what knowledge, skills and dispositions do we want learners to develop?
- what challenges are learners facing and how can we help them overcome these?
- how can we ensure learners make progress? Are our expectations high enough?

Literacy, numeracy and digital competence

In summary:

- learners should have opportunities to develop and apply these skills across the curriculum
- these skills are fundamental – they unlock learning and further knowledge acquisition
- opportunities should be authentic – it is important that these skills are embedded within other broader learning rather than applied in isolation to wider learning.

Learning in the autumn term should continue to contribute to raising standards in literacy, numeracy and digital competence. These skills form the foundations of all learning and are essential for learners to be able to unlock knowledge.

Digital competence, problem-solving and creativity will help enable learners to learn through digital means and become flexible to different operational scenarios.

The development and application of these knowledge and skills will be critical during this period. In their absence from school, learners may have missed opportunities to develop these skills, which may affect their ability and readiness to learn. Supporting learners' digital competence in particular will be important in facilitating access to learning outside school.

An adapted approach to learning in schools should provide authentic opportunities to develop and apply literacy, numeracy and digital skills, and embed these in all learning across a broad and balanced curriculum. Practitioners can use a wide range of topics, activities and resources to develop knowledge and skills. It is important that these skills be embedded within other broader learning rather than applied in isolation.

The National Literacy and Numeracy Framework and the Digital Competence Framework present a common approach supporting schools and practitioners to ensure learners have frequent opportunities to develop, extend and apply these cross-curricular skills.

This should include opportunities across learning time to:

- develop listening, reading, speaking and writing skills
- apply numeracy and solve problems in real-life situations
- use a range of technologies to function, communicate and make sense of the world.

Broad and balanced learning experiences

In summary:

- learners should have learning experiences that span a broad curriculum and include opportunities to develop a breadth of understanding and a range of knowledge and skills that then lead to further depth
- it is critical learning draws on a range of disciplines and that certain disciplines are not lost.

Learners need to acquire both breadth and depth of knowledge and experience in order to be fully engaged but also to help them to develop and to widen the opportunities available to them. Throughout the disruption caused by COVID-19, it is critical that this is not lost.

It is important that learning continues to provide breadth, drawing on different subjects, domains, disciplines and topics. Areas such as the creative arts should not be lost; it can offer opportunities to develop skills and knowledge such as creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem-solving, personal effectiveness, planning and organising. Schools and settings may also want to draw on the Curriculum for Wales guidance on cross-cutting themes and skills integral to the four purposes. As learners develop and specialise, it is important that schools continue to provide a broad and balanced set of options that support individuals' learning pathways. Schools should be as ambitious as possible in offering options.

Schools and settings should also continue to support learners to develop effective communication skills in English and Welsh. This is critical in preparing learners to take part in a bilingual Wales.

Progression and assessment

In summary, learners should make meaningful progress throughout this period. Learning should be designed to support increasing depth and sophistication of learning over time. Assessment should be focused to help learners move to the next steps in their learning.

Progression

Over the course of the disruption caused by COVID-19, our expectation is that all learners should continue to make meaningful progress. This is critical to learners' long-term education and their lifelong well-being. As learners progress, they develop an increasingly sophisticated understanding of concepts and application of knowledge, skills and learning should support them to do this. It is important to see

progression in this way: deepening understanding and application of knowledge and skills, rather than simply covering more and different content or topics.

The existing programmes of study support practitioners in determining what the next steps of progression should be for their learners. They may also wish to use the principles of progression and descriptions of learning in the Curriculum for Wales guidance to support this.

Learners will make progress at a different pace and each individual should be challenged and supported appropriately to move their learning forward, taking account of any barriers to their learning that need to be addressed.

Assessment

The purpose of assessment is to support each individual learner to make progress at an appropriate pace, ensuring that they are challenged and supported appropriately. As learners continue to learn in different places, assessment should not be about 'testing' in an attempt to 'catch up' and cover everything they would have done before the COVID-19 outbreak. It should help develop a holistic picture of the learner – their strengths, how they learn and areas for development – in order to enable them to be ready to learn and to agree their next steps. Assessment is an integral part of the learning process, with practitioners working with learners to help identify their strengths, areas for development and next steps in learning.

Learner well-being is the first and foremost priority for schools and settings as learners learn both in the school/setting and in other places. It therefore has a key role to play not only in helping learners to take their learning forward but also in enabling them to be ready to learn.

Learning across the breadth of the curriculum should draw on a wide range of assessment approaches, building a holistic picture of the learner's development. Practitioners with younger children will continue to use observations to assess progression in learning through play-based activity. It is important that the observations focus on skill development that may have developed positively and unexpectedly during this period, and that there is not a focus on 'learning loss'.

Working with groups of learners in the school or setting, practitioners will spend time with individuals and develop their understanding of the way they learn, thus enabling them to support their progress as they continue to learn both at the school or setting and at home or elsewhere. When planning their learning approach, practitioners will also adapt and develop to ensure that assessment forms a fundamental part of supporting learners when they are not present in the school or setting.

Online personalised assessments are available throughout the school year to provide schools with a flexible means of gaining information on their learners' reading and numeracy skills. They have been designed to support progression and engage learners in understanding where they are in their learning journey. As such, practitioners are encouraged to use these assessments at a time that they consider appropriate to support the progress of individual learners and to help them to identify the next steps in learners' learning.

Learners can access the feedback on their skills in reading and numeracy through their Hwb accounts. This feedback can help support individual progress in these cross-curricular skills, providing learners with an understanding of their strengths and possible next steps.

Partnership with parents, carers and learners

In summary, schools should develop a common understanding and a clear concise language with parents/carers and learners. This can help underpin learning and support learning experiences.

Learners

Regular active engagement between the learner and practitioner is at the heart of the learning process and is especially important as learners continue to learn in different places and take more ownership of their learning as a result.

Learners should be supported to have responsibility for their learning, engaging in dialogue and communicating with practitioners regarding what they are learning, how they are learning and their progression in learning. Learners will need different levels of support to contribute to the learning process depending on their individual context. Learning away from the school or setting, however, provides an opportunity for learners to develop knowledge and skills to take ownership of their learning.

Parents and carers

The participation of parents and carers in learning is essential for developing learning experiences which involve learning both inside and outside of school. Parents and carers engaging with learners at all ages should help consolidate school-based learning. Schools will have to develop understanding for parents, carers and learners to understand their roles in this process. Communication should always be clear, concise and effective.

Schools and practitioners should consider:

- how schools or settings will support parents and carers to understand and engage in their child's learning at home
- communicating to families the importance of sharing learners' experiences during this period
- reassuring children, parents and carers. Many families and will be anxious about putting children at risk and schools have a role in reassuring them. Communication should be factual, clear and based on the latest evidence and guidance
- how feedback on learning should be presented, focusing on supporting the learner to move forward by reassuring them, acknowledging effort and achievement, and agreeing those next steps.

Legislative requirements

- On 24 June the basic curriculum requirements for Wales, as well as the associated assessment arrangements for schools and non-maintained nursery settings, were suspended as part of the Coronavirus Act 2020. This was

intended to provide schools and settings with the necessary space and flexibility to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- As mandated under the powers in the Coronavirus Act 2020, the notice initially applies for a period of one month from 23 June to 22 July. This will be reviewed in light of public health advice. We are also mindful of the need for schools and settings to adapt their approach to learning during the autumn term as they negotiate a range of challenges; we will consider this in all decisions. Welsh Government will clarify the expectations for legislation in due course and our focus will continue to be the needs and interests of learners in these unprecedented times.
- This does not stop schools making use of the programmes of study or assessment arrangements such as the personalised assessments, where these are appropriate to their local context and the needs of their learners. In particular, the principles and pedagogies of the Foundation Phase Framework can continue to be used to support learning and also to provide a foundation for the Curriculum for Wales. Schools and settings can also use the Curriculum for Wales guidance at hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales to support their work at this time.

Information gathering and feedback

A central priority for the coming year is to understand the benefit to learners of a more flexible school approach to learning and assessment. This will be core to our analysis of various elements of learning progress during the COVID-19 pandemic, and what works in preparation for the Curriculum for Wales. Our evaluation process will involve information gathering and an opportunity to feed back on how schools are developing learning; this will inform further work. We intend this to be ongoing and not linked to accountability.

Developing a blend of in-school and out-of-school learning

At any level of operation, schools and settings will need to think carefully about how time in the school or setting should be used. During this period, contact time will be valuable and precious. Practitioners should think about the balance and relationship between learning time in school and learning elsewhere, using contact time carefully and effectively and identifying how time at home or elsewhere can support making connections and consolidating learning. They should consider a wide range of pedagogical approaches that effectively use school and out-of-school learning to empower learners. Learning time at home can include practising skills and deepening knowledge that has been introduced during contact time but also could include acquiring new knowledge and understanding. Time at home can also allow older learners to research, prepare and think before exploring and consolidating concepts, knowledge and skills during contact time. They should seek to support these skills both in school and out of school. Practitioners should always seek to develop digital skills in the context of wider learning rather than trying to teach them in isolation.

In developing their approach to learning experiences, schools and settings should consider guidance on blended learning_(see [hwb.gov.wales/distance-learning/developing-approaches-to-support-distance-learning/](https://www.hwb.gov.wales/distance-learning/developing-approaches-to-support-distance-learning/)).

Responding to different situations

Many uncertainties face the education system as we prepare for the next academic year.

The UNCRC's right to an education applies without exception, regardless of the scenario or any barriers to learning faced by individuals. A further lockdown or a period of blended learning does not absolve local authorities of their duty to provide a suitable education. However, it is recognised that that duty may need to be implemented differently for some learners for periods of time.

If during the next academic year there is a return to lockdown, or some form of blended learning approach is necessary, the following expectations apply in terms of contact and duration of learning.

- All learners should be contacted regularly to 'check in' – this would provide an opportunity to check on the safety and well-being of the learner as well as to explore their learning experience and consider possible additional support.
- All learners should be provided with the duration of learning time they would receive were they in their school or setting, regardless of whether or not some of their learning is taking place at home or elsewhere. There will be exceptions to the implementation of this expectation; however, it should be the starting position for all learners.

Preparing an approach for the autumn term

In summary:

- schools can use Curriculum for Wales approaches to help adapt and become more flexible to changing conditions during COVID-19, but this is not the same as schools' wider preparation for the Curriculum for Wales. We will publish expectations for preparation for reform early in the autumn term
- in preparing an approach for the autumn term, over time learning should look to become more consistent with the principles and ethos of the Curriculum for Wales.

As schools begin to think about learning and teaching for the next term and school year, the Curriculum for Wales guidance (see hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales) may offer useful support. The recent disruptions have highlighted that now, more than ever, learners' education should be based on the four purposes. Practitioners will be developing and changing their approaches in response to the changing situation. The four purposes offer a central focus for the learning and teaching they develop. Many of the answers to the flexibility, autonomy and challenges of the foreseeable future are found in the Curriculum for Wales guidance, which has been developed with practitioners over recent years with greater flexibility as a key principle. The new curriculum should not be seen as an additional burden, but rather an important solution for many of the challenges we are now facing.

As a long-term consideration, schools and settings will of course need to consider how they will prepare for rollout of the new curriculum. We are working closely with regional consortia and Estyn to redevelop expectations and suggested approaches for schools and will publish these at the beginning of the autumn term to help schools prepare over the next two years.

Phase-specific guidance: Foundation Phase

The return to operations has an important significance for early years learners who are at a critical stage of cognitive development (which supports their approach to learning). Schools and non-maintained settings should ensure learners are fully supported in this development, given the implications for later learning. The ethos, approach and pedagogy of the Foundation Phase remain critical, and can be applied to all learners in the early years and Key Stage 2.

Practitioners may consider a blend of approaches that include problem-solving, creative and critical thinking; in addition, provision can be adapted to ensure that children are able to access a breadth of learning experiences. A clear vision for learning and the significance of the learning environment are critical to access experiences that allow younger children to apply, extend and consolidate their skills. Consideration should be given to how parents and carers could be supported to engage in their child's learning at home, to help ensure access to rich learning experiences in a blended learning environment.

Secondary schools and qualifications

Secondary schools

It is important that secondary schools continue to provide a breadth of learning and continue to offer opportunities to specialise; the response to COVID-19 should not prevent learners from accessing these. Schools should be as ambitious as possible in their menu of offering, including within and towards GCSE specialisms. They will need flexibility in order to manage this. It will require staff to teach multiple contact groups and may require learners from different contact groups to be taught simultaneously. This should not be avoided, but where possible minimised.

Where children in multiple contact groups are taught simultaneously, schools should adopt the approach to risk estimation and management outlined in the operational guidance. They should continue to promote positive learning through digital means as this can support problem-solving approaches and digital literacy, as well as providing or allowing flexibility in a range of different operational scenarios. As earlier in this guidance, schools should look for longer-term consistency with the Curriculum for Wales approach.

Qualifications

This guidance is intended to support learners of all ages but we recognise there are additional considerations for those due to take exams next summer.

Our 'Recruit, recover and raise standards' plan will seek to build up learning confidence, knowledge and skills in the cohort of learners undertaking formal examinations in 2021. This is intended to support learners and ensure they are not disadvantaged. We will seek to gather information and develop feedback on how learners in this cohort are progressing with this additional support and will share it with Qualifications Wales to help inform their considerations for 2021.

Qualifications Wales (working with WJEC) is also considering changes that can be made to examinations in 2021 to provide learners with an appropriate opportunity to demonstrate their ability, while recognising the significant disruption to their teaching and learning. These adaptations need to preserve the integrity and validity of qualifications.

In support of this, we have announced that in 2020/21, as for 2019/20, qualification awards data will not be used to report on attainment outcomes at a school, local authority or regional consortia level and must not be used to hold schools to account for their learners' outcomes.

Schools should consider this, and the wider learning priorities set out in this guidance, when planning their approach to learning in the next academic year. Planning should include consideration as to the number of qualifications it is reasonable to expect learners to undertake to allow them to both demonstrate their full potential and to perform to the best of their ability.

Qualifications Wales and WJEC have consistently kept their website up to date on their latest announcements and considerations, including the intention to hold the usual November exam series, primarily to support learners wishing to resit

qualifications. Further information on the approach that will be taken in 2021 will be provided before the end of the summer term.

Resources

Welsh-medium resources

We are working in partnership with stakeholders to identify the need for additional resources and supporting materials to support schools in responding to the challenges, developing and sharing resources at pace. We would look to provide any necessary additional resources early in the autumn term.

Among those resources are around 120 new Welsh-medium teaching resources and 50 Welsh language books; all of these can now be accessed via Hwb. Further resources to support a blend of learning in and beyond school continue to be developed for the autumn. A programme of online activities as well as suggestions for family activities to reinforce Welsh language skills will also be available for the start of the summer holidays. CYSGLIAD is also now available free of charge as a result of a partnership between Bangor University and the Welsh Government.

Black, Asian and minority ethnic

A working group is being established to oversee the development of learning resources (and to identify gaps in current resources or training) related to Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, including their contributions and experiences. The working group will also consider recommendations for professional learning.

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

As part of our approach to resources, we will also look to develop resources to support high-quality STEM enrichment activities.

Annex

Recruit, recover and raise standards

The 'Recruit, recover and raising standards' plan is a new £29m fund to enable the recruitment of around 900 teaching staff for 2020/21 academic year only to provide support for learners most affected by school closures. Priority cohorts are Years 11, 12, and 13 in secondary schools, and vulnerable learners.

What will the learners be taught?

This guidance steps forward from the summer 2020 check-in, and emphasises the importance of purpose-led learning, broad and balanced coverage with recognition of literacy, numeracy and digital competence as core. Independent learning and motivational skills will also be central to this package. We will look to create as much flexibility as possible in the curriculum for schools, while still managing the pressures of COVID-19. The 'Recruit, recover and raise standards' plan will focus on the same set of priority learning areas as all other learners.

We will 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.

We remain committed to co-construction in the development of the new curriculum guidance and will continue to progress this work with partners over the year to support schools towards curriculum reform.

How will they be taught?

The support package, provided at a school level, could include extra coaching support, personalised learning programmes and additional time and resources for exam-year learners. This is additional to providing 10,000 digital learning devices, ensuring eligible children continue to receive free school meals and increasing mental and emotional health and well-being support.

The Welsh Government will provide training and learning resources for new and existing teachers to support teaching in this context. Resources will be relevant and applicable to in-school and non-school learning, and so relevant in the long term in all COVID scenarios.

Where will the additional capacity come from?

The additional capacity will take the form of the equivalent of:

- 600 teachers from the newly qualified teachers and supply teacher cohort
- 300 teaching assistants.

National framework, local realisation

We will not impose a rigid formula for how to respond to the situation at local level, but we will provide a framework and guidance that schools, local authorities and regions can make use of in developing the plans, approaches and solutions their local communities and children and young people need.