

## School operations: checklist for January 2022 planning days

Please find below key areas that you should consider when revisiting your contingency plans and risk assessments for the forthcoming term. This list is not exhaustive and is to help support you with these processes. It should be considered in conjunction with the Local Infection Control Decision Framework and the guidance for education settings on children and young people with higher clinical risk and clinically extremely vulnerable adults. Please note that the introduction of any measures needs to be proportionate with what is happening in wider society - schools should aim to ensure arrangements align as closely as possible to arrangements in place for learners in other environments.

<p><b>Staffing capacity</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How will you manage and communicate arrangements for operating at various levels of staff absences e.g. 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%?</li> <li>▪ Staff and secondary aged learners should be strongly encouraged to undertake an LFD test before they attend school on a Monday/Wednesday/Friday and record their results. You may wish to consider issuing communication to remind staff of the importance of taking the test, recording the results and not attending work if the result is positive or if they have any COVID-19 symptoms.</li> <li>▪ Staff should continue to take up the offer of vaccination/booster if/when the offer available-</li> </ul>
<p><b>Plans for moving to remote learning</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Any periods of remote learning should be kept to a minimum and only put in place in response to specific situations i.e. lack of staff capacity due to illness.</li> <li>▪ Do you have robust plans in place to move to remote learning if necessary? We acknowledge that special schools in particular will need to consider specific issues in planning for periods of remote learning.</li> <li>▪ Do learners have the required equipment and information to move quickly to remote learning as a temporary measure should this be required?</li> <li>▪ How will you determine which year groups may have to move to remote learning? For example, where practical, prioritisation should be given to exam year groups to continue with in-person learning.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Provision for children of critical</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ During any period of remote learning for all/some classes/year groups consideration must be given to</li> </ul>

<p><b>workers and vulnerable learners</b></p>	<p>onsite provision continuing for children of critical workers and vulnerable learners. Whilst it might be challenging to put in place such arrangements there are potentially wider impacts if this provision is not in place. For example, the effect on health and social services. These arrangements should be clearly communicated to families. You may also wish to discuss this provision with your local authority particularly if you have specific concerns about your ability to provide for these groups of learners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How will you prioritise onsite provision for children of critical workers and vulnerable learners if capacity is limited?</li> <li>▪ Have you recently reviewed which of your learners would be captured within these groups?</li> <li>▪ What provision will be offered for children of critical workers and vulnerable learners if there is disruption to onsite provision?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Contingency plans for learners in exam years</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In the event of disruption to onsite provision, how will you ensure learners due to sit exams during January 2022 can continue to do so safely?</li> <li>▪ How will you continue to support learners in exam years during any periods of disruption to onsite learning? In doing so you should consider the additional package of support for learners in exam years announced prior to the Christmas break.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Operational arrangements</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ You should now review your operational arrangements based on the variable measures for the 'Very High' level as set out in the <a href="#">Local Infection Control Decision Framework for schools</a>.</li> <li>▪ What preparations need to be made prior to the return of learners in order to implement any changes e.g. one way systems, seating plans etc. (acknowledging that some measures will not be appropriate for younger learners or those with additional learning needs)?</li> <li>▪ How will these measures impact other areas? For example, transport, provision of free school meals and breakfast clubs.</li> <li>▪ How will you communicate any changes to staff, learners and parents/guardians?</li> <li>▪ Consider how you can ensure adequate ventilation. Further guidance is available <a href="#">here</a>. Carbon dioxide monitors have been made available to all schools –</li> </ul>

	<p><a href="#">a 'how to use' guide for these devices</a> as an aid to managing ventilation in education settings is available.</p>
<b>LFD test supplies</b>	<p><u>For primary schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Initial supplies of LFD kits are being made available to you via your local authority to support the new arrangements for learners identified as contacts of a positive case (see below). Work is underway to enable you to order supplies for direct delivery to your school in the near future. We will inform you when these arrangements have been put in place.</li> <li>▪ Do you have sufficient supplies of LFDs for staff to support routine testing arrangements? Please ensure you submit orders online before the weekly cut off point (Tuesdays at 5pm).</li> </ul> <p><u>For secondary and special schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do you have sufficient supplies of LFDs for staff and learners to support routine testing arrangements? Please ensure you submit orders online before the weekly cut off point (Tuesdays at 5pm).</li> </ul>

We'd also like to bring to your attention some updates and reminders on key topics that will be of interest to you in preparing for the return of learners.

### **Changes to self-isolation arrangements for those identified as contacts of a positive case**

- Arrangements on self-isolation have changed. All over 18s who are fully vaccinated (having received two full doses of an approved vaccine) and children aged 5 to 17 are now asked to take lateral flow tests (LFTs) every day for 7 days if they are identified as a contact of a positive COVID-19 case. This is known as 'Daily Contact Testing'. Please note that contacts of a positive case are unlikely to equate to an entire class/group (see below for further information on the latest on contact tracing).
- We recommend those undertaking Daily Contact Testing take their test before they arrive at school each day. These individuals do not need to self-isolate for that day unless they have a positive lateral flow test or develop symptoms. If they develop symptoms, they should book a PCR test as soon as possible.
- Unvaccinated adults identified as a contact of a positive COVID-19 case must isolate for 10 days and should use lateral flow tests on day 2 and 8.
- Our position on children under 5 years old remains unchanged - they are not required to self-isolate or test as contacts.

- Anyone identified as a contact, who is fully vaccinated or aged 5 to 17 can access daily contact testing instead of self-isolation, regardless of whether they are a household or close contact.
- Primary schools will shortly be receiving an initial supply of LFDs – initially via their local authority and then directly to schools. These tests are being made available to ensure that parents who are unable to access tests via other routes are able to access LFDs if their child is identified as a contact. Your local authority will be in touch shortly to explain how LFT kits for 5-11 year olds will be made available. Primary schools will be able to order further supplies of test kits in due course for learners aged 5-11 using the same method as currently used for staff members.
- Primary and secondary staff and secondary age learners are advised to undertake LFD testing three times a week at present on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday using LFTs and record their results – this should continue. Where a member of staff becomes aware that they are a contact of a positive case via any means then they should undertake LFD testing for 7 days and then revert to testing 3 times a week as advised for education staff.
- Staff working with those learners who are at higher clinical risk or clinically vulnerable have been advised to test daily in line with social care. [Further information](#) is available.

## Contact tracing

Warn and Inform letter templates have been updated to reflect the latest advice. As the arrangements on self-isolation have now changed, please ensure you make use of these revised versions.

If there is one isolated confirmed case of Covid-19 in a class in any school, this is not evidence of transmission within a class, particularly when community transmission is very high. When a single case is identified, primary and special schools should issue an inform letter. Secondary schools do not need to do this as they operate on a different basis including learners being encouraged to undertake LFD tests three times a week - inform letters are therefore not considered necessary.

If there are two or more cases within 7 days in a class, the approach for primary and special schools would be that the school issues a warn and inform letter stating that there are two or more cases in a class and advising parents/carers that it would be prudent for the class to undertake LFD tests for 7 days to try and prevent coronavirus spreading more widely in the school.

If you have already issued a warn and inform letter during the past 7 days, we do not advise issuing a further warn and inform letter to the same group of parents and should instead continue to monitor the situation.

It is acknowledged that for some learners it may not be possible to undertake daily testing i.e. those with special educational needs. Given secondary schools operate

on a different basis and that learners are encouraged to undertake LFD tests three times a week it is not considered necessary to move to 7 day testing in secondary schools. However, if a learner or member of staff becomes aware that they are a close contact of a positive case via TTP or by other means they should test daily for 7 days before reverting to three times a week. In addition, many secondary learners have been vaccinated and are generally more likely to be able to identify and provide details of their close contacts for use by TTP.

### **Staggered start and end times**

As was the case in the 2021 spring and summer terms, we have temporarily disapplied the Changing of School Session Times (Wales) Regulations 2009. In practice this means that schools can vary the start and end of the school day, as well as the start and end of the lunch break, as part of measures to reduce the risk of transmission of Covid. This current disapplication is in place until 31 January 2022 at which point it will be reviewed. Whilst you may wish to consider this mitigation as part of the overall mitigations in place for your school this may not be proportionate or appropriate depending on your schools context. You may wish to consider other alternatives such as different entrances for different year groups, one way systems, and different zones in the yard for different year groups.

We will be seeking feedback from Directors of Education and other partners on implementation together with any associated impacts.

There are a number of important factors that should be considered in deciding whether it is appropriate to stagger these timings, as follows:

- Any decision made to stagger school day timings should consider all three of our guiding principles, as set out in the Local Infection Control Decision Framework, which are as follows.
  - To enable schools to offer as wide a range of support and experiences as possible, including the provision of free breakfast and after school clubs, extra-curricular activities and practical subjects.
  - To secure the best outcomes for all learners by considering both their educational needs and wellbeing.
  - To manage ongoing risks of COVID-19 as safely as possible as for other infections, and ensure clarity of actions required if there is a case in a school.
- If as a school, you determine that staggered start/finish times are a necessary mitigation as part of a suite of measures you should inform your Director of Education of your plans before introducing these changes. This is particularly important if, potentially, there are knock on effects to other areas for example, before and after school provision including breakfast clubs; transport; catering.
- How would such changes support other operational arrangements in place at your school? Timings should only be staggered if there is a clear rationale for doing so. An exit strategy must also be considered – the current disapplication of

regulations that enable schools to stagger school day timings is in place until 31 January 2022 at which point it will be reviewed. There is no guarantee that this disapplication will be extended therefore schools should be prepared to move back to current arrangements at the end of January.

- How would such changes impact on teaching and learning? Schools should ensure that the staggering of school day timings does not lead to a reduction in the total duration of teaching and learning for any learner.
- How would such changes impact on the delivery of other services such as the provision of free breakfast in primary schools? The Welsh Government expects that breakfast clubs should operate as normal, unless it would be unreasonable for them to do so. Local authorities are still under the same legal duty to provide a free school breakfast (section 88 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013). Local authorities may wish to discuss any decision not to provide free breakfasts with their legal advisors.
- How would such changes impact on learners who use dedicated school transport or public transport to travel to and from the school?
- How would these changes impact break times? It is important for learners' wider health and wellbeing that they have sufficient and timely break times including sufficient time to eat their meals.
- How would such changes impact on parents/carers? For example, will staggering start and end times lead to parents/carers spending extended periods at the school gates to drop off/collect siblings of different ages?
- How do you plan communicating arrangements to learners and their parents?