

Report to	Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	3 September 2020
Lead Member/Officer	Huw Hilditch-Roberts (Lead Member for Education, Children and Young People/Geraint Davies (Interim Head of Education))
Report author	Geraint Davies (Interim Head of Education)
Title	Post COVID Recovery Plans for Schools

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. The report provides an update on the progression made to enable schools to safely open for all pupils in September and to examine the post COVID Recovery Plans for schools

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. To provide information regarding the actions taken to ensure schools will open safely for all pupils and adapt to life post COVID.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1 Scrutiny Members are invited to discuss the details of this report and its recommendations; and to identify any aspects of the recovery work which may benefit from detailed examination in the future.

4. Report details

- 4.1. Since 29 June, schools had been offering all learners the opportunity to attend sessions to check in, catch up and prepare. These sessions have gone very well and all schools worked hard to ensure all learners attending benefitted from these sessions and had a positive experience.

- 4.2. The Minister for Education announced on 9th July that all learners would return to school in the autumn term. The Welsh Technical Advisory Group (TAG), which provides scientific and technical advice to Government during emergencies, recommended that schools “*plan to open in September with 100% of pupils physically present on school sites, subject to a continuing, steady decline in the presence of COVID-19 in the community.*”
- 4.3. Welsh Government published [Operational Guidance for schools and settings from the autumn term](#) and [Guidance on learning in schools and settings from the autumn term](#) on July 13th to provide guidance on the requirements that would allow schools to open in September.
- 4.4. Appendix 1 provides a brief summary of the main messages contained in the operational guidance.
- 4.5. The Region, LA and Schools had been preparing in advance for 4 possible eventualities:
- ✓ Schools would remain closed in September and distance learning would continue
 - ✓ Check in, catch up and prepare would continue for 30% of pupils
 - ✓ Social distancing would be reduced to 1M therefore 50% of pupils would attend school at one time
 - ✓ Schools open to 100% of pupils.
- 4.6. Following the announcement on July 9th schools have been working with both the LA and GwE to prepare for a full opening in September. Preparations have been in the following areas:
- 4.7. As part of planning for full return in the autumn term, it is a legal requirement that schools should revisit and update their **risk assessments** by building on the learning to date and the practices they have already developed. Schools have reviewed their existing Risk assessments and Corporate Health and Safety are working with them to ensure their appropriateness and robustness. Risk assessments have also been completed to further support pupils and schools in the following areas:

1. Passenger Transport
2. Peripatetic Staff
3. Fire safety

- 4.8. Although the guidance clearly states that there is no need to use personal protective equipment (**PPE**) when undertaking routine educational activities in classroom/school settings, all schools have been supplied with adequate PPE for non-routine activities such as intimate care and First Aid.
- 4.9. All schools have been able to access the corporate **signage** suppliers and have received all necessary signage to direct and inform students, staff and visitors of the processes and procedures highlighted in their Risk Assessment.
- 4.10. Currently Free School Meals (**FSM**) is delivered via direct payment to eligible families. This delivery method will come to an end on August 31st. As schools will reopen fully in September all meals including free school meals will be available in schools through the school meal service. There will be a communication strategy to ensure parents are informed and understand this change during the summer holidays.
- 4.11. The **School Meal Service** have been in discussions with all schools and arrangements are in place to ensure the safe delivery of meals. All settings are different and arrangements reflect individual buildings and individual risk assessments. We have received positive feedback from parents and schools regarding school meals during lockdown.
- 4.12. Schools are required to put in place a **cleaning schedule** that ensures cleaning is generally enhanced that includes more frequent cleaning of rooms and frequently touched areas. The 17 schools who buy into the DCC Service Level Agreement(SLA) are supported and the others are able to buy support as necessary if capacity allows. All schools regardless of being in the SLA have received a Cleaning Risk Assessment with required mitigating actions for their site. We have received additional funding from Welsh Government to ensure schools have an adequate supply of cleaning materials for the start of term. We have allocated the materials based on small (less than 100 pupils), large (over 100 pupils) and secondary schools. Following discussions and

support from Denbighshire Cleaning Services all the cleaning materials will be delivered to the schools in the first week of September.

- 4.13. **Passenger Transport** remains a challenging area. The published guidance on July 13th stated that the latest advice and guidance in relation to public transport would be issued shortly, this was received in August. Schools closed for the summer holidays on July 17th without detailed information in relation to pupil transportation in September. At that moment in time it was unavoidable. Passenger Transport have produced Risk Assessment that has been shared and adopted nationally in response to the guidance received. Although the use of face coverings is not currently required by WG for any learners being transported between home/school on dedicated school transport Denbighshire will be informing operators and parents/carers that all mainstream secondary learners aged 11 and over are required to wear face coverings on all Denbighshire designated school transport and public transport services, unless medically exempt. This was decided following the detailed Risk Assessment completed.
- 4.14. LA officers have met with schools to discuss the recent guidance and to ensure a shared understanding of the various aspects. Schools have created **operational plans** that are relevant to their individual settings and that answer their individual needs.
- 4.15. Local authorities were not expected to continue to provide emergency **childcare** provision in the autumn term and Childcare Hub provision for key workers came to an end on 17 July 2020. Summer holidays provision commenced during the summer break.
- 4.16. During this period a Vulnerable Families and Learner Support Booklet was created that offered advice and guidance to all families and a whole host of information has been posted on the DCC [website](#) to **support pupils** as they prepare for the transition back to full time education.
- 4.17. Schools have received advice and guidance on all aspects of **Human Resources**. A regional approach was taken and all 6 local authorities in North Wales published the same guidance. This was very well received by schools.

4.18. We received notification of additional funding to meet the demands of the **Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards: Accelerating Learning Programme** as announced by the Minister for Education on the 9 July 2020. The primary purpose of the funding was to enable investment in schools to allow them to recruit and deploy additional human capacity to support learners in addressing their needs following the initial COVID-19 crisis and period of school closure. All schools have received their allocation and terms of the grant.

4.19. During the lockdown period and in the preparation for school opening again Education has worked closely with all other services. Under extremely difficult and challenging situations all services have pulled together and worked effectively together. As an Education Service we believe this has been a strength and schools would not be in the positive position they are now without this collaboration.

4.20. Throughout lockdown **Safeguarding** has been a priority. Over the last 23 weeks Children's Services has received a total of 6,852 referrals compared to 7,463 during the same period last year. This is a reduction of 8.19% overall. As schools open fully in September ensuring safeguarding remains a priority is paramount and an increase in referrals is possible. Monitoring systems have been developed to scrutinise the attendance of our most vulnerable families and update safeguarding training has been developed with Barnardo's.

4.21. A Microsoft **SharePoint** has been established for all DCC schools to share documents and guidance. Over 80 documents have been prepared for schools to further support them. These documents cover areas such as:

Safety (Risk Assessments, Policy Changes and advice), **Staffing** (Regional HR Advice), **Communication** (Template letters for schools to use), **Site and Facilities** (Policy changes, advice, support and guidance), **Teaching and Learning** (Blended Learning, distance learning advice), **Management Tasks**, Learner Support (Wellbeing support for pupils)

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

5.1. N/A

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

Costs will be met from existing delegated budgets to schools.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

N/A

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1. No requirement to consult with scrutiny however discussions with trade unions and head teachers have been very positive.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1. N/A

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1. All risks and mitigating actions included in the Opening Schools Risk Assessment.

11. Power to make the decision

Scrutiny's powers in relation to matters detailed in this report are as per:

- 7.1 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000;
- 7.2 Section 7 of the Council's Constitution