Estyn

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

Cadw'n Ddiogel.
Dal ati i Ddysgu.
Stay Safe.
Stay Learning.

Key principles to support the continuation of school and PRU business

Version 1.0 23 April 2020

Continuity of learning

The response to COVID-19 has dramatically changed our lives. In this challenging context, the education system has been disrupted but remains of central importance.

During this time when most learners are not able to attend settings and schools in person, Welsh Government and its partners are working across the education system in a number of ways to offer support to leaders, governors, practitioners, parents, carers and learners in key priority areas.

The Minister for Education launched Wales' 'Stay Safe. Stay Learning' programme on 20 April to support education professionals and learners as we respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of this programme Estyn have worked in conjunction with ADEW and regional school improvement consortia and have developed this advice for schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) to support them in continuing with school/PRU business. This document is not statutory.

This document forms part of that work and is linked to the activities of the continuity of learning 'Stay safe. Stay learning.' programme.

We would like to thank the following steering group members for their significant contribution to the development of this advice:

- Association of Directors of Education in Wales

- Regional consortia

- Church diocesan authorities.

We would like to thank the following partners for their contributions:

- National Academy of Educational Leadership in Wales
- Welsh Local Government Association.

Thank you also to the unions and school leaders who shared their feedback on drafts of the advice with us.

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.

Cefnogir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru

Supported by
Welsh Government

Areas of school/ PRU business

Homeworking

Meetings and routines

Governance – for school and PRU leaders

Governance – for governors

Particular support for smaller schools and PRUs to make use of the technology and larger, more complex schools to manage complexity

Using technology

Homeworking

What should leaders do?	What should leaders avoid doing?	What should leaders consider?
Ensure that the wellbeing of staff (including leaders) and pupils is at the core of any decisions and arrangements. Liaise regularly with members of staff over expectations and consider their wellbeing and family commitments/pressures. Be flexible and enable staff to balance caring and family duties with their work. Ensure that deadlines are appropriate and realistic. Keep connected with colleagues regularly. Encourage social connection and peer support.	Avoid giving short/immediate deadlines to complete tasks.	Guidance issued by their local authority. Data protection. NQTs. Working from home guidance provided by ACAS at: https://www.acas.org.uk/working-from-home Whether deadlines and expectations take account of pressures at home.

Meetings and routines

What should leaders do?	What should leaders avoid doing?	What should leaders consider?
Ensure that lines of communication are clear and agreed, that they work and that all staff members have a point of contact and are contacted regularly to check on their wellbeing. Be flexible in methods of communication used and consider a range of approaches. Prioritise what should be communicated and establish a routine that works for all. Encourage team working and collaboration in order to share responsibilities, reduce workload and avoid duplication. Listen to staff and consider union advice. Establish guidelines for any virtual meetings. Have backup plans for communication and leadership responsibilities. Have a central system to hold information that staff can access when they need to. Ensure that essential recruitment and induction processes can go ahead and have contingency plans in place where this is not possible. Provide clear guidance on sickness absence, caring responsibilities and arrangements for flexible working. Keep basic records of staff and pupils attending the school, PRU or hub and any additional costs incurred. Be aware that applications available through the Hwb platform have been approved nationally.	Avoid an excess of information and briefings. Avoid making too many demands on staff in terms of meetings and routines. Avoid holding overly long meetings without start and end times. Avoid copying all into every briefing or email. Avoid assuming that everyone has access to technology e.g. a printer. Avoid assuming that everyone can attend a meeting at a set time as they may have caring responsibilities.	Technology/devices/ connectivity available to staff Safety/privacy of equipment, apps and digital platforms (including maintaining regular technical updates to reduce risks).

Governance – for school and PRU leaders

What should leaders do?	What should leaders avoid doing?	What should leaders consider?
Establish and agree clear channels of communication with members of the governing body/ management committee/ management committee and the clerk if applicable. Revisit agreed delegated functions to enable fewer governors to make critical business decisions. Give updates to members of the governing body/ management committee on changes to the school's or PRU's business (including arrangement for distance learning for pupils and staff home working), arrangements to support vulnerable pupils, arrangements to look after children of key workers. Be mindful about sharing personal information / private contact details about members of staff that could potentially breach GDPR. Work with the chair of governors/ chair of the management committee to create distributed leadership to deal with any eventualities/illness. Liaise regularly with the chair of governors/ chair of the management committee for support, to provide updated advice and to share responsibilities. Keep up to date with guidance from the Welsh Government, the local authority and the diocesan authority (if appropriate) about governance and share appropriately. Complete urgent business e.g. agreeing the school or PRU budget and staffing (aligned with local authority/diocesan authority policy and procedures).	Avoid sharing non-urgent or irrelevant information with the governing body/ management committee. Avoid unnecessary meetings or meetings without a clear focus. Avoid contacting people outside of the working day unless pre-arranged. Avoid contacting people if they or a member of their family is unwell or if they are self-isolating and not able to participate in school or PRU business.	Use of virtual meetings. What business is non-urgent and can be deferred to a later date. The most recent government updates and guidance for governors. Simple technical advice and guidance available. Advice from your LA /Diocesan/ Consortium Governor Support Service. Whether all meetings are quorate and that Terms of Reference of sub-committees are adhered to.

Governance – for governors

What should leaders do?	What should leaders avoid doing?	What should leaders consider?
Place the wellbeing of leaders, including the headteacher, other staff and pupils at the heart of their work and decision-making at all levels.	Avoid assuming that all governors have a full understanding of the latest technology and/or access to IT equipment and the internet.	Welsh Government guidance on governance.
Be aware of family and personal pressure for staff and other governors.	Avoid placing unreasonable or unnecessary demands on school and PRU leaders.	Ways of keeping in touch with individual governors.
Ensure that contact details are up to date and shared with relevant people.	Avoid holding unnecessary or lengthy meetings.	If it is possible to hold virtual meetings.
Agree the best way to communicate with governors and the clerk if applicable.	Avoid contacting people out of office hours, (unless pre-arranged by mutual consent and for a specific purpose).	Support for the wellbeing of the headteacher and other leaders.
Ensure that all governors are aware of online safety.	Avoid dealing with non-urgent business if it can be deferred to a later date.	How best to distribute leadership within the governing body.
Establish a structure of distributed leadership to cover any illness or unavailability.		
Ensure that the Emergency Plan/ Business Continuity Plan is updated to cover the current pandemic.		
Revisit agreed delegated functions and terms of reference to enable fewer governors to make critical business decisions.		
Ensure that governors have an overview of the school's or PRU's initial arrangements for pupils' distance learning, pupil and staff wellbeing, staff home working arrangements, arrangements to provide childcare for key workers, arrangements to support and monitor the wellbeing of vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils.		
Keep up to date with the latest guidance from the Welsh Government, the local authority and the diocesan authority (if appropriate) and act accordingly.		
Deal with urgent business e.g. agreeing the school or PRU budget		

What should leaders do?	What should leaders avoid doing?	What should leaders consider?
and staffing (aligned with local authority/diocesan authority policy and procedures).		

Particular support for smaller schools and PRUs to make use of the technology and larger, more complex schools to manage complexity

What should leaders do?	What should leaders avoid doing?	What should leaders consider?
Small / Federated schools and PRUs Consider ways of reducing the feeling of isolation amongst leaders and staff. Consider whether there is an effective support system for working across the cluster / federation so that teachers can share resources. Ensure that the workload for teachers of classes where there are multiple aged pupils is reasonable. Consider whether there are appropriate IT support in place. Ensure that there are contingency plans involving the local authority and governing body/ management committee should staff become unavailable for work. **Large schools** Ensure that there are lines of support for all staff including teaching and non-teaching staff. Set up a communication pyramid to filter information. Ensure that there is effective distribution of responsibilities and contingency plans if staff become unavailable.	**Small / Federated schools and PRUs** Avoid an expectation for teachers of classes where there are multiple aged pupils to prepare detailed differentiated work for each group.	

Using technology

What should leaders do?	What should leaders avoid doing?	What should leaders consider?
Ensure expectations pay due regard to individual teacher, pupil and parent wellbeing and what is practically achievable within the current climate. Take into account the context of the school or PRU and its community, the available technology, connectivity and be flexible in approach. Choose learning approaches that are manageable, relevant, engaging and appropriate to the age and development of the pupils. Balance digital with screen-free activities.	Avoid setting unrealistic expectations of what can be achieved that could impact negatively on the home working experience. Avoid assuming equality of access to technology, connectivity and equipment for all.	Safeguarding. Behaviour code for online working. Access to technology (including internet connectivity).

Further guidance is available from unions and professional bodies.