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Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1175
Ein cyf/Our ref JMEWL/10793/21

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
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17 August 2021

Dear Jack

Thank you for your letter dated 22 July on behalf of the Petitions Committee regarding practitioners concerns about the potential for national firebreaks during half term periods.

As you know, coronavirus restrictions across Wales are being eased, however keeping the people of Wales safe and minimising the transmission of the COVID-19 virus remains an absolute priority, particularly given the emergence of the Delta variant. It is vital that we consider and act upon the latest scientific and medical advice available to us, and the recommendations made by our Technical Advisory Group. We therefore continue to monitor the public health situation closely and changes to national restrictions and school operations are considered as part of our 21-day review process.

On the 09 July I issued a [written statement](#) on our plan for schools and educational settings after the summer holiday period. I also wrote to head teachers before the end of the summer term and published updated [Operational Guidance](#) that provided further detail. I therefore expect that school staff received further advice and information on plans for the autumn term from their own head teachers.

It is also our intention to publish an operational framework and supporting guidance at the start of September that enables schools and settings to tailor some of their intervention measures to reflect the level of risk identified locally. The draft framework has been recently shared with our key partners, such as the Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW), the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the Schools Social Partnership Forum and the unions for feedback, before it is published. Schools and settings will be supported by public health officials and their local authorities to ensure COVID-19 measures are appropriate to their own circumstances when learners and school staff return to education establishments after the summer holiday period.

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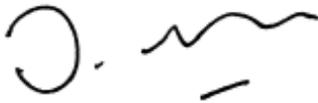
Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

We continue to be in a very dynamic situation related to the operation of schools with decisions that need to be considered alongside wider Government discussions on vaccinations for children and young people and the new rules on self-isolation, which will also have a bearing. We will ensure the changes we make are in line with the wider easing of restrictions in Wales. We have also recognised the need to move to a more localised approach that allows schools to be flexible and able to react and respond to local circumstances and public health issues. We expect this approach to minimise any unnecessary future disruption to learning opportunities.

I fully appreciate how committed our educational workforce are and how hard they have worked especially during the pandemic. However, as you will appreciate, we often need to respond to fast changing situations in relation to the transmission of the coronavirus and whilst we would hope to be able to minimise the need for future firebreaks during school holiday periods, I cannot make any guarantees that this will not be necessary in the future. We also know the long impact that missing school has on our children and young people, it is for this reason that when firebreaks have been necessary in the past that they have been implemented during half-term breaks so as to minimise disruption to the education of pupils.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large 'J' followed by a series of wavy lines and a short horizontal stroke at the end.

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

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