

Addysg / Education



Pennaeth Addysg /
Head of Education – Garem Jackson

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20 March 2020

Dear Parent/guardian

We all need to do what we can to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus amongst Gwynedd's residents and communities.

The arrangements outlined in this letter will be monitored and adapted as circumstances develop, which, as you will appreciate, is occurring at pace. The guidance issued is based on the most recent advice from UK & Welsh Government and from discussions across the Council.

This is why the UK and Welsh Government have given clear guidance on self-isolation, household isolation and social distancing.

This is also why the UK and Welsh Governments have asked parents/carers to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and asked schools to remain open as care provision only for those children who absolutely need to attend.

It is important that schools and other educational establishments remain safe places for children, and we must prioritise the health of our staff. The fewer children who go to school, and the fewer children in our schools, the lower the risk that this virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals.

Care provision

Schools have, therefore, been asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children - children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the local COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

Children of "key" workers

Parents whose work is critical to the COVID-19 response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors. Many parents working in these sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. Every child who can be safely cared for at home should be.

The key principles to be followed are:

1. Children who can be kept at home safely should remain at home.
2. If a child needs specialist support, is vulnerable or has a parent who is a critical worker, then care in your local school will hopefully be available for them.
3. Parents should not rely on childcare from individuals in the recognised vulnerable groups.
4. Parents should also do everything they can to ensure children observe the same social distancing principles as

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adults.

If a parent works in one of the key sectors listed below, and they cannot keep their child safe at home, then their children will be prioritised for care provision:

- NHS;
- Armed services;
- School staff and child care staff;
- Care home workers;
- Social workers;
- Police, community and civil staff;
- Prison officers and probation officers;
- Fire officers;
- LA emergency planners;
- Environmental health officers;
- Highways Agency traffic officers;
- Government and Local Government staff that have been identified by their departments as key workers during this period.

If your child requires access to the care provision as of 23.3.20 (Monday to Friday 8am-5pm) as a result of a parent meeting the above criteria, please inform the school. We kindly ask that you provide them with a suitable lunch where possible, but if this is not possible a packed lunch will be available.

We are grateful for the work of teachers and workers in schools for continuing to provide care for the children of key workers. This is an essential part of our local effort to combat this disease.

“Vulnerable” learners

Children considered as vulnerable can also access the above provision. If you have an allocated Social Worker or are open to Children and Family Services i.e. Team Around the Family, you are considered to be in a “vulnerable” group. We therefore urge you to discuss school attendance with your allocated worker/Social Worker.

Learners eligible for Free School Meals

Learners eligible for Free School Meals do not necessarily qualify for the care provision automatically (please refer to the above definition regarding eligibility).

We will put in place short-term measures to ensure the needs of Free School Meals learners can be met in a flexible way. From next week (week beginning 23.3.20) a lunch pack will be provided to all children/young people who are eligible for Free School Meals. In the short-term this will be provided at the child’s usual school and will be available for collection during the school’s usual lunch time.

Finally

We understand that we have all experienced times of significant anxiety and concern in recent days and weeks. I fully appreciate this fact and I am extremely grateful to you for your patience as matters are clarified.

Similarly, I again want to express my thanks and gratitude to all school staff who have worked extremely hard to keep things going in these difficult times and who have thought and acted for others.

We will endeavour to provide further updates as required.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. P. Jackson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Garem Jackson
Head of Education