



# **Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council**

## **Education and Inclusion Service Directorate**

### **CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19): FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs) FOR PARENTS/CARERS**

**VERSION 12 (29/03/21)**

**Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg/This document is available in Welsh.**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This guidance is intended to support parents and carers in relation to the operational arrangements of Rhondda Cynon Taf schools.

These FAQs are informed by Welsh Government guidance:

<https://gov.wales/schools-coronavirus-guidance>

<https://gov.wales/operational-guidance-schools-and-settings-12-april-html>

#### **GENERAL QUESTIONS**

##### **1. How are risks to children, teachers and families managed?**

To prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), schools and other settings use a range of protective measures to create safer environments in which the risk of spreading the virus is substantially reduced. Whilst such changes may look different in each setting, as they will depend upon individual circumstances, they are all designed to minimise risks to children, staff and their families.

Approaches schools and other settings are taking include:

- carrying out risk assessments to directly address risks associated with coronavirus (COVID-19) so that sensible measures can be put in place to minimise those risks for children, young people and staff;
- making sure that staff, children and young people and others do not attend if they or a member of their household has symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19);



- undertaking regular hand washing for 20 seconds with running water and soap or use of sanitiser and ensuring good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach;
- re-enforcing the message to pupils and staff of the need to maintain physical distancing where practical to do so;
- use of foot operated/self-closing pedal bins for the disposal of used tissues/sanitiser wipes;
- installing signage throughout the school building to remind all children and staff of the need for frequent hand washing and social (physical) distancing;
- frequent cleaning of regularly touched surfaces, such as door handles, handrails, tabletops, play equipment and toys;
- provision of antibacterial wipes to facilitate regular spot cleaning;
- minimising contact through the creation of contact groups;
- minimising the number of contacts between learners and staff by avoiding large gatherings such as assemblies;
- altering the environment as much as possible, such as changing the layout of classrooms to avoid face to face contact;
- reducing mixing between groups through timetable changes, such as staggered break times, zoning play areas and by introducing staggered drop-off and collection times;
- pupils bringing and using their own school equipment;
- no unnecessary external visitors to the school and visitors being admitted by appointment only;
- developing protocols around the use of toilets during break and lunch times;
- active engagement with Test, Trace, Protect;
- the wearing of face coverings by all pupils in year 7 and above in school and on school transport (see further information in question 13 below);
- the wearing of face coverings by staff at primary and secondary schools anywhere on the school site (including in the classroom) where social distancing cannot be maintained;
- offering twice weekly lateral flow testing to all staff to identify asymptomatic individuals
- offering twice weekly lateral flow testing to all learners in Year 10 and above to identify asymptomatic individuals; and
- formal consideration of how to reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in school wherever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable.



## **2. Which children can attend the school setting and is it compulsory for my child to attend?**

Following an announcement by the Welsh Government all schools will provide onsite provision for all learners from 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021.

All children are required to attend school unless they are self-isolating or there are other reasons for absence.

You should notify your child's school as normal if your child is unable to attend so that staff are aware of any sickness absence and can discuss this with you.

## **3. Should I keep my child at home if they have an underlying health condition, or live with someone in a clinically vulnerable group, or if I am anxious about my child returning to school?**

Any parent who has medical concerns about their child should seek and follow medical advice provided by their local GP or guidance from Public Health Wales.

### ***'Extremely vulnerable' or shielding learners***

The advice to shield has been paused after 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, therefore staff and learners who were shielding can attend school. Further information is available via <https://gov.wales/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-people-defined-on-medical-grounds-as-extremely-vulnerable-from-coronavirus-covid-19-html>

Every school will continue to carry out risk assessments and put in place controls to minimise risks, such as frequent hand washing, surface hygiene and one-way systems, as appropriate.

Where a learner is unable to attend school due to self-isolation, the schools will continue to provide support and resources in order for learning to take place. This may be through a variety of means, such as work packs and digitally sourced work through Hwb, etc.

### ***Clinically vulnerable learners at 'increased risk'***

In the context of COVID-19, individuals at 'increased risk' are at a greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19. This category includes children and young people who have a range of chronic health conditions. As the advice to shield has been paused, learners in this category should attend school. Every school will continue to carry out risk assessments and put in place controls to minimise risks, such as frequent hand washing, surface hygiene and one-way systems, as appropriate.



### ***Living with a person who is either shielding or at increased risk***

If a learner lives in a household with someone who is at increased risk or was previously "shielding", as the advice to shield has been paused, learners in this category should attend school. Every school will continue to carry out risk assessments and put in place controls to minimise risks, such as frequent hand washing, surface hygiene and one-way systems, as appropriate.

### ***Parents/carers and learners who are anxious***

Schools are aware that some pupils, parents/carers may be reluctant or anxious and schools will have support in place to address this. This may include learners who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

Parents/carers of learners with significant risk factors who are concerned can discuss such concerns with the school and the school will explain the measures in place to reduce the risk and provide the required reassurance. All pupils of compulsory school age **must** attend school unless a statutory reason applies (for example, the pupil has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is self-isolating, is absent for a necessary religious observance, etc.).

## **4. Are remote learning opportunities provided for children who need to self-isolate?**

Remote learning opportunities will be provided for learners in all year groups who need to self-isolate.

## **SCHOOL BUILDINGS**

## **5. What measures have been taken to ensure safety on the school site?**

Minimising contacts and mixing between people reduces transmission risk. Hence, schools endeavour to keep groups separate and maintain distance between individuals where possible.

For younger learners the emphasis is on class sized contact groups where possible and keeping children in their contact groups throughout the school day; and for older learners (for example, in secondary schools where pupils need to access a broad curriculum) the emphasis is on physical distancing where possible outside of the classroom, wearing face coverings in circumstances where social distancing cannot be maintained and maintaining year group sized contact groups.



Adults are to maintain a 2 metre distance from each other and from pupils (whenever possible). This will not always be possible, particularly when working with younger learners, learners who have complex needs or who need close contact care; however, adults maintaining distance when circumstances allow, even if only for some of the time, will help. The wearing of face coverings by adults and learners in Year 7 and above in circumstances where physical distancing cannot be maintained is also strongly advised.

All schools have installed signage to facilitate social (physical) distancing and remind all staff and learners of the need to maintain social distancing.

One-way systems are in operation (where possible) and floor/wall markings will be used to identify one-way routes.

Timetables will try to ensure that movement around the site is kept to a minimum and congested corridors are not created.

Classrooms are rearranged so that space is optimised; surplus furniture removed and the layouts ensure face to face contact can be avoided where possible.

Schools avoid large gatherings, such as assemblies with more than one group.

School start/end times and lunch and break periods may be staggered.

Where possible, separate toilets have been allocated to different contact groups. Toilets will be regularly cleaned throughout the day.

Hand sanitiser and hand soap is readily available with regular reminders of the importance of good hand hygiene.

Schools will have a good supply of foot operated pedal bins for the safe disposal of tissues and wipes – the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach is being promoted and be made part of each school’s culture.

Windows have been opened (where possible and safe to do so) to improve natural ventilation.

All schools have updated risk assessments in place ensuring the safety of their settings - the assessment directly addresses risks associated with coronavirus (COVID-19) so that sensible measures can be put in place to minimise those risks for children, young people and staff.

## **6. Are there regular hand-washing facilities for staff and pupils?**

Pupils and staff are encouraged to wash or sanitise their hands upon arrival at school/when leaving school and regularly throughout the day, especially before and after



handling food, when using the toilet facilities and when someone has sneezed or coughed.

These routines are built into the school's culture, along with behaviour expectations. Younger learners and those with complex needs are further assisted to help them get this right.

Signage is in place throughout school buildings identifying hand sanitiser locations and each sink area has signage reminding all of the need for frequent hand washing. Plentiful supplies of hand soap and hand sanitiser are available throughout all school buildings.

## **7. How often are schools being cleaned?**

Daily cleaning frequencies/durations are greatly increased at every school. Cleaners have received instructions regarding enhanced cleaning requirements and the identification of surfaces, which require additional/more frequent cleaning, such as door handles, tabletops, handrails, play equipment, toys etc.

Resources that are shared between contact groups, such as sports, art and science equipment are frequently and thoroughly cleaned, especially where it is necessary for them to be used by more than one contact group.

Antibacterial wipes are readily available to facilitate regular spot cleaning.

## **8. What if a parent/carer wants to enter the school building to speak to a teacher?**

No parents/carers will be permitted within any school building unless they have a pre-arranged visit. Should teacher/parent contact be required, this should be by appointment and arrangements for audio and/or video communication explored as an alternative.

External visitors to the school will be admitted by pre-arranged appointment only and should wear a face covering.

## **9. Are school buildings being maintained?**

Routine maintenance and statutory testing is undertaken at all times, including holiday and closure periods.



## **THE SCHOOL DAY**

### **10. What are the contact group sizes?**

At times when the schools are fully operational, in secondary schools, particularly in the older age groups at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5, the contact groups are usually the size of a year group to enable schools to deliver the full range of curriculum subjects and for students to receive specialist teaching or interventions. If this can be achieved with small groups, they are recommended.

At primary school, and in the younger years at secondary (Key Stage 3), schools may be able to implement smaller groups the size of a full class. Where this proves to be challenging in Key Stage 3, larger sized contact groups of half-year or full year size become necessary. Where class sized groups can be achieved, it is recommended, as this helps to reduce the number of people who could be asked to isolate should someone in a group become ill with COVID-19.

Whatever the size of the group, they should be kept apart from other groups where possible and older learners should be encouraged to keep their distance within groups.

### **11. What are the arrangements for pupils using the toilet?**

Hand sanitiser and hand soap is in plentiful supply and where possible schools provide separate toilets for different contact groups.

Where it is not possible to provide separate toilets for different contact groups, the plentiful supply of hand sanitiser and hand soap and encouragement of good hand hygiene practices before and after entering the toilet area, helps. Toilets are also cleaned frequently throughout the day.

### **12. Is my child with the same group at all times?**

Consistent groups help reduce the risk of transmission by limiting the number of pupils and staff in contact with each other to only those within the group. It is accepted that pupils and especially the youngest pupils, cannot socially distance from staff or from each other and consistent groups provide an additional protective measure. Maintaining distinct contact groups that do not mix makes it quicker and easier, in the event of a positive case, to identify those who may need to self-isolate and to keep that number as low as possible.

### **13. What are the requirements for the wearing of face coverings?**

The Welsh Government has updated its guidance on the use of face coverings in schools. The guidance now states that face coverings should be worn:



- by staff at primary and secondary schools anywhere on the school site (**including classrooms**) where social distancing cannot be maintained
- by pupils in secondary schools anywhere on the school site (**including classrooms**) where social distancing cannot be maintained (see below)
- on dedicated **school transport** for learners in year 7 and above
- by visitors to **all schools**
- by parents and carers who are dropping off and collecting children from **all school sites**

Please note that this is guidance and is not a mandatory requirement. (This requirement does not apply to individuals with relevant medical conditions which constitute an exemption).

If social distancing cannot be maintained, face coverings should be worn in the classroom by learners and staff **in secondary schools**. Face coverings should also continue to be worn by adults and learners in all areas of the secondary school outside of the classroom. The exception is at mealtimes and when they are outside, unless the school risk assessment indicates that additional measures are needed, for example on a school yard where there are a large number of learners in a relatively small space without separation of contact groups (such as when waiting to enter school). Frequent putting on and taking off of face coverings is not recommended as this can risk contaminating hands and face; if learners are outside for a short period it may be easier to keep face coverings on. Learners should not wear face coverings when running round, playing football or other active games.

Learners must not touch the front of their face covering during use or when removing them. They must wash their hands immediately on arrival at school or home, dispose of temporary face coverings in a covered bin or place re-usable face coverings in a plastic bag for washing.

The requirement to wear a face covering does **not** apply to PE lessons or to pupils with additional learning needs or relevant medical conditions which constitute an exemption.

Schools have been provided with supplies of face coverings for staff within all schools and for all secondary school learners.

**Primary school** staff should also wear a face covering where social distancing cannot be maintained. The requirement to wear a face covering does **not** apply to primary school-age pupils, unless of course you wish for your child to wear a face covering and they are able to do so safely.

To reduce the risk of transmission amongst parents/carers and relatives, face coverings should ideally be worn when dropping off and collecting child(ren) from **school settings** and at any pre-arranged appointments at the school. Please also continue to maintain



social distancing at the school gates. It is recommended that only one adult should drop off and pick up a child(ren) from school.

Face coverings are not a replacement for far more effective measures such as social (physical) distancing and hand hygiene. The wearing of face coverings must not be used as an alternative to any of these other precautions.

Secondary age learners travelling on dedicated school transport will have to wear a face covering but again, they are not a substitute for good hygiene. Not only will this measure help reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 but also common colds and flu, which will also be a benefit.

Learners who travel to school or college on **public** transport must wear a three-layer face covering as mandated by the Welsh Government. Further information can be found here <https://trc.cymru/school-transport>.

**Parental support is essential in ensuring that your child wears a face covering on school transport. It is essential that all secondary school age pupils wear a face covering on dedicated school transport (unless there are medical or health reasons), unless your child has a physical or mental disability, illness or impairment.**

Please see the Transport section - questions 28 to 37 for more information on Home to School Transport.

#### **14. Does my child have to have their temperature taken on arrival at school?**

All schools have been provided with temperature checking devices (infrared forehead thermometers). This is being managed at a local level at each school, although it is not a mandatory requirement to screen for a temperature.

#### **15. Can my child bring a pencil case/rucksack to school?**

Children can bring a pencil case/rucksack to school as required. This should be solely for their personal use and equipment/stationery must not be shared. However, please note that fabric pencil cases can be difficult to clean. It is recommended that learners limit the amount of equipment they bring into school each day, to essential items only. Transfer of items to and from the home should be minimised where possible.

#### **16. How are break/lunch times managed and monitored?**

Pupils eat lunch in identified dining areas in their contact groups. Dining may also be undertaken outdoors (weather permitting) again, with pupils remaining in their contact groups wherever possible.



Break times and lunch times will be staggered so that the numbers of children at break/lunch at the same time will be the lowest number possible.

### **17. How can social distancing be maintained in relation to pupils with Additional Learning Needs or pupils who require physical assistance?**

In circumstances where social distancing is difficult (such as attending to the needs of a pupil with additional learning needs or physical needs) additional PPE is provided for staff if a risk assessment deems that this is appropriate. The local authority has provided all schools with supplies of PPE.

Schools have also been provided with mobile screens enabling them to provide 1:1 educational/pastoral/emotional support to pupils who require it without the need to wear PPE.

Staff whose role is to provide intimate personal care for some of our most vulnerable children with complex medical needs were included as part of the priority list for vaccination and were offered their first dose by mid-February.

### **18. How is the Foundation Phase delivered safely?**

Foundation Phase pupils still have the opportunity to learn through play. Additional use is made of available outdoor areas and classroom spaces can be zoned to create safe areas for writing activities; creative activities; building activities; play activities, etc.

The evidence shows that youngest learners are in the least at risk group. Early years' educational practitioners are experienced in caring for the needs of young children and will apply professional judgement.

We recognise that provision and learning experiences may not be exactly the same as they were before the pandemic, however, early years' educational practitioners are experienced in caring for the needs of young children. Continuing with a child centred approach means a high-quality delivery of the Foundation Phase and the same learning outcomes of social and personal development and well-being can still be achieved with safe modification and adaptation of learning spaces and resources.

Resources used will be easily cleanable and cleaned frequently.

### **19. Can children mix with their friends after school?**

Outside school it is important that all staff, children and their families continue to follow Welsh Government coronavirus guidance and limit their contact with others.

**Only organised / supervised outdoor activities** for the development and well-being of children and young people (who were aged under 18 on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020) are allowed and should be undertaken in accordance with Welsh Government guidance:



<https://gov.wales/organised-childrens-outdoor-activity-frequently-asked-questions>

Indoor activities and residential activities are **not** allowed.

## **20. How is school pick up and drop off managed?**

School start and end times are staggered.

Parents/carers dropping off children must maintain a 2 metre distance from other families wherever possible and wear face coverings. Markers will be in place on the ground to help parents/carers queue and remain 2 metres apart. Parents/carers are not permitted to enter the school building and must leave the school site immediately and not congregate.

Afternoon pick up arrangements will vary depending on the school site layout. Schools will make appropriate arrangements to ensure 2 metre social distancing is maintained wherever possible. Face coverings should be worn and parents/carers/pupils must leave the school site immediately and not congregate.

It is recommended that only one adult should drop off and pick up a child(ren) from school.

## **CATERING**

### **21. Are breakfast clubs operating?**

From the 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021, the number of places for breakfast club continues to be limited to ensure that social distancing and effective hygiene and preventative measures can be maintained. Therefore, only parents/children that have successfully applied and secured a placement for breakfast club will be able to access this provision.

Places cannot be guaranteed and are subject to availability. All children will have to remain in their allocated year groups in breakfast clubs.

### **22. What are the arrangements for lunch time?**

Kitchens are fully open and food is available to all pupils who want it, including those eligible for free school meals. Pupils eat lunch in identified dining areas in their contact groups, with surfaces used for dining being cleaned between groups/uses. Dining may also be undertaken outdoors (weather permitting), again, with pupils remaining in their contact groups wherever possible. It might be required in a small number of cases for learners to have their lunch in their classroom to enhance social distancing.

### **23. Are older students able to leave school to have lunch in the community?**



No children will be permitted to leave the school site during the school day.

## **24. Will BACS payments continue instead of Free School Meals being provided?**

### **Week 29th March to 2nd April (Easter Holiday)**

For this holiday week, a direct payment into bank accounts will be made on or around Monday the **29<sup>th</sup> March** at £3.90 per day (£19.50 for the week) to **all** eligible free school meal learners.

### **Week 5th to 9th April (Easter Holiday)**

For this holiday week, a direct payment into bank accounts will be made on or around Tuesday the **6<sup>th</sup> April** at £3.90 per day (£19.50 for the week) to **all** eligible free school meal learners.

**If you receive a payment to which you are no longer eligible, you will be required to repay it to the Council.**

All learners will have returned to the school setting from the 12<sup>th</sup> April, hence BACS payments for learners eligible for free school meal provision will cease, as meals will be provided at the school setting. BACS payments will only be made for eligible learners who are self-isolating due to COVID-19.

School registers will be used to identify eligible learners who are required to self-isolate, and a Free School Meal support payment of £3.90 per day will be paid into the bank accounts of those eligible.

## **25. Is water available during the day?**

All pupils should bring filled water bottles to school that can be refilled during the day. The refilling of water bottles will be managed and supervised by the school to ensure that the safe refilling of water bottles is available to pupils who need/or request it.

## **ILLNESSES AND POSITIVE TESTS FOR COVID-19**

## **26. What happens if there is a suspected or confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in my child's school or childcare setting?**

If a child, young person or staff member develops symptoms compatible with coronavirus (COVID-19) they will be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 10 days and arrange to



be tested. Further detail on how to apply for a test is provided at <https://gov.wales/apply-coronavirus-covid-19-test> or simply call the free number 119 between the hours of 7am to 11pm.

Their fellow household members should self-isolate for 10 days. If the result of the test is negative the case and the other members of the household can end their self-isolation.

All staff, children and young people and members of their households will have access to testing if they display symptoms of coronavirus and are strongly encouraged to be tested in this scenario. Where the child, young person or staff member tests negative, they can return to their setting and the fellow household members can end their self-isolation.

Where a child, young person or staff member tests **positive**, the rest of their class or group within their childcare or education setting (i.e. **potential close contacts**) will be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 24 hours. The other household members (including other children in the household) of that wider class or group/potential close contact do not need to self-isolate unless the child, young person or staff member they live with in that group subsequently develops symptoms but should follow the general social distancing guidance during the isolation period:

<https://gov.wales/self-isolation-stay-home-guidance-households-possible-coronavirus>

Any child, young person or member of staff identified within the abovementioned 24-hour period by the school/contact tracing process as being a **close contact** of a confirmed case will be contacted and provided with further advice and guidance relating to self-isolation. Any child, young person or member of staff identified as a close contact **must** self-isolate for a minimum period of 10 days since the last contact with the confirmed case. **The full 10 day self-isolation period applies even if the close contact themselves has had a negative test during this time, this is because it can take time for the symptoms to develop.**

A **close contact** is:

- someone within 1 metre of you with whom you have had a face-to-face conversation, had skin-to-skin physical contact, you have coughed on or have been in other forms of contact within 1 metre for 1 minute or longer;
- someone within 2 metres of you for more than 15 minutes;
- someone you have travelled in a vehicle with, or seated near you in public transport.

Family household members of the close contacts (including other children in the close contact's household) are not required to self-isolate, unless the child or young person they live with in that group subsequently develops symptoms, but should follow the general social distancing guidance during the isolation period.



However, if anyone in your household develops any of the COVID-19 symptoms, however mild, they need to stay at home (10 days for the person with symptoms and 10 days for the rest of the household), seek a test as soon as possible and follow the guidance.

**A negative test result does not mean that a return to school is appropriate. Direct/close contacts with a confirmed case will still need to isolate for the full 10 day period, even if they themselves receive a negative test result during the 10 day self-isolation period, this is because it can take time for the symptoms to develop.**

Where schools and childcare settings are observing guidance on infection prevention and control, which will reduce risk of transmission, closure of the whole setting will not generally be necessary.

As a further prevention/control measure, rapid-result coronavirus (COVID-19) tests (lateral flow tests) are available to all staff working in schools. These quickly detect asymptomatic individuals. Test at home kits are offered to all schools in order for staff to take twice weekly tests at their home.

Learners in Year 10 and above also have the opportunity to undertake twice weekly lateral flow testing at home (subject to consent forms having been completed). These tests are only for the use of the individual to whom they are allocated and are **not** to be used by other family members.

This testing offer will enable schools to safeguard against the transmission of COVID-19 by individuals who show no symptoms.

## **27. When should I not send my child to school? For example, if they have a fever?**

- Children should stay home if they feel unwell in **any way**.
- If they have any of the three symptoms of COVID-19 (new continuous cough, fever or high temperature, loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste) then they should also get tested.

Under no circumstances should learners or staff attend schools/setting if they:

- they have tested positive to COVID-19 in the past 10 days; or
- they live in a household or are part of an extended household with someone who has symptoms of COVID-19 or has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 10 days; or
- they have been identified as a close contact of a case by Test, Trace and Protect and advised to self-isolate; **(Anyone identified as a close contact must self-isolate for a minimum period of 10 days since the last contact with the confirmed case. The full 10 day self-isolation period applies even if the close**



**contact themselves has had a negative test during this time, this is because it can take time for the symptoms to develop.)**

- they have returned from a country specified by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as being subject to quarantine.

## **TRANSPORT**

### **28. Is school transport operating?**

Dedicated school transport services are running for all entitled learners, in line with the latest Welsh Government guidance - <https://gov.wales/operational-guidance-schools-and-settings-12-april-html>

We are continuing to encourage parents or carers to take their children to school by walking, cycling, scooting or wheeling, or alternatively by private car, in order to reduce the capacity constraints. We understand that this will not be possible for some people.

While parents or carers may feel apprehensive about the risks in using school transport during the COVID-19 pandemic, they should decide whether to do so, or, if they prefer, they should make their own arrangements to transport their child to and from school.

### **29. Is my child's usual school transport route running?**

For most learners who were in receipt of free school transport last academic year or for whom new arrangements have been put in place for the 2020/21 academic year, school transport routes will continue to operate as they did before the COVID-19 pandemic.

You will have been notified by letter if your child's transport has changed.

Details of the timetable, including the school bus operator for your child's journey to school, along with additional information relating to the Mainstream School Transport Service can be found at:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ParkingRoadsandTravel/Travel/SchoolandCollegeTransport/Schoolbusroutes.aspx> (*nb. timetables are subject to change*).

Secondary learners need to carry their bus pass or where issued their temporary travel slip. They must show the driver their pass or slip in order to travel on the vehicle. Replacements for lost passes can be ordered and paid for by completing the on-line form or by contacting the Council on 01443 425001.

Primary learners will have received an authorisation letter confirming their entitlement. Parents or carers must show the driver the letter in order to allow travel on the vehicle. If you have lost your authorisation letter, please contact the Council on 01443 425001.



**If transport was not already provided or you have not received confirmation that your child has been allocated a free seat on school transport, you must make your own way into school.**

### **30. My child has additional learning needs. What transport arrangements are in place to Learning Support Classes, Pupil Referral Units and Special Schools?**

All taxis and minibuses to Learning Support Classes, Pupil Referral Units and Special Schools continue to operate as they did before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Every summer, it is necessary to make some changes to accommodate new learners onto school transport. You will have been notified by letter if your child's transport has changed.

Whilst social distancing is not required on additional learning needs school transport, we are working with schools and operators to provide proportionate safeguards to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 on school transport to ensure learners can attend school or college. These include:

- drivers and passenger assistants will wear face coverings or visors and personal protective equipment (PPE) as appropriate;
- vehicles will be cleaned regularly, including anti-bacterial wipe down of handrails, door handles and all surfaces that passengers may touch;
- anti-bac wipes and hand sanitiser will be available;
- on larger vehicles (minibuses), children will be directed to sit in the same seat (where possible) with the same child or children on every journey;
- windows will be open whilst moving to ensure the vehicle is well ventilated.

### **31. My child is not entitled to free school transport, can I pay for a seat?**

In previous academic years the Council has offered parents or carers whose children are not entitled to free school transport the chance to purchase spare seats on dedicated school transport. However, due to the exceptional challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council has been forced to reduce the discretionary provision of sale of seats for the foreseeable future in order to ensure that entitled students receive the transport in line with the latest Welsh Government guidance.

The number of spare seats available has been reduced by half because of the need for social distancing on the vehicle between the driver/passenger assistant and the learners. It is likely that there will be some schools where there are no seats available to be purchased.



Applications opened from 28 September 2020. You can apply to purchase a seat by completing an on-line application on the Council's website or by contacting Customer Services on 01443 425001.

Some additional public transport journeys at school times are being funded by the Welsh Government but seating capacities remain reduced and, in view of these potential constraints impacting on a learner's ability to attend school, all sustainable and active travel modes should be considered.

### **32. Does my child need to social distance on school transport?**

#### **Dedicated School or College Transport**

Most learners travel on dedicated buses, coaches or taxis, which exclusively carry learners travelling to and from school or college.

The Welsh Government [guidance](#) acknowledges that it is not always possible to allow social distancing between learners accessing dedicated school or college transport. Therefore learners on most dedicated school transport will not be able to social distance but are expected to board and alight one at a time and socially distanced.

Proportionate safeguards will be taken to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 on dedicated school transport to ensure learners can attend school/settings on the basis that:

- the overall risk to children and young people from COVID-19 is low;
- dedicated school transport carries the same group of learners on a regular basis, and those learners may also be together in school;
- learners will sit together in year groups where possible;
- siblings can sit together;
- there will be no face to face seating;
- there will be no contact between learners and other passengers;
- windows and roof vents will be kept open where possible;
- contact will be minimised with individuals who are unwell;
- all passengers, including the drivers and passenger assistants should wash their hands or use hand sanitiser before boarding transport and when arriving at school or home;
- if there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, then it will be easy to identify who was travelling on which vehicle, helping to test, trace and protect;
- there will be a rigorous cleaning and sanitising regime between before or after each journey.



## Public Transport

Some learners use public transport as part of their home to school or college journey. For further information travelling to school/college by public transport can be found here <https://trc.cymru/school-transport>.

To also help reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19, learners should:

- minimise contact with individuals who are unwell;
- clean hands thoroughly and more often than usual;
- ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it kill it' approach.

When waiting for the school bus it is a parent or carer's responsibility to ensure their child behaves responsibly while waiting for the vehicle. This includes social distancing.

### 33. Is my child expected to wear a face covering on school transport?

Clear evidence remains that the most effective way to protect your child and others from infection is to follow social distancing rules, avoid touching surfaces and your face, and wash your hands regularly. The wearing of face coverings must not be used as an alternative to any of these other precautions but are recommended where social distancing cannot be maintained.

Primary age learners and those with special educational needs or who rely on lip reading to communicate may not be able to safely wear a face covering.

Secondary age learners travelling on dedicated school transport **must** wear a face covering as learners cannot sit together in their year groups, but they are not a substitute for good hygiene. Not only will this measure help reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 but also common colds and flu, which will also be a benefit.

Learners who travel to school or college on public transport must wear a three layer face covering as mandated by the Welsh Government. Further information can be found here <https://trc.cymru/school-transport>.

Learners must not touch the front of their face covering during use or when removing them. They must wash their hands immediately on arrival at school or home, dispose of temporary face coverings in a covered bin or place re-usable face coverings in a plastic bag for washing.

**Please note that a refusal to comply with this requirement will result in your child's place on school transport being compromised. Your support in reinforcing this message with your child would be greatly appreciated. If your child has a medical or health condition, impairment or disability that would make it difficult to wear a face covering please advise school staff at the earliest opportunity.**



### 34. What further precautions must my child take when travelling?

We ask that parents or carers help communicate to their children the importance of following good hygiene and social distancing, as this will play a key role in keeping everyone safe.

This means taking the following precautions:

- **do not travel** if your child or a member of their household has any of the four identified COVID-19 symptoms (a new continuous cough, a high temperature or loss of taste or smell);
- **do not travel** if anyone in the household is required to self-isolate as a contact of a case under Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) or is in quarantine having returned from a country specified by the Foreign Commonwealth Office;
- wash your hands for at least 20 seconds or sanitise your hands before leaving the house;
- use the hand sanitiser provided before accessing the vehicle;
- avoid physical contact with others;
- windows will be open for ventilation where possible;
- face away from other people when using school transport;
- minimise the number of surfaces you touch, and in particular avoid touching surfaces such as handrails and window ledges;
- do not touch your face;
- do not eat or drink whilst using transport;
- wash your hands for at least 20 seconds or sanitise your hands before leaving school.

**Please note that a refusal to comply with health and safety requirements, good hygiene and where possible social distancing could jeopardise your child's place on school transport. Your support in reinforcing this message with your child would be greatly appreciated.**

### 35. How will my child know where to sit?

Primary learners should try and sit in year groups. The youngest learners should sit at the front, with increasingly older learners sitting progressively toward the back in age order. For secondary school transport, learners should try to sit in the same seats each day and face coverings must be worn. Siblings can sit together. This will ensure that discrete contact groups sit together where at all possible.



Learners will also be encouraged to use hand sanitiser on boarding the vehicle where provided. It is expected that learners will have washed their hands before boarding the vehicle and upon arrival at school.

Learners travelling on coaches or larger vehicles may be asked to use the same seat each day.

Learners using dedicated home to school taxis or minibuses will be asked to sit in the same seat each day.

### **36. How will you ensure that transport services are not overcrowded?**

Only named passengers that have prior approval to travel, or those with secondary school bus passes for the route, are allowed to use transport. Drivers have lists of those primary school learners that will be allocated to their vehicle each day. No pass, no travel will be strictly enforced on secondary school vehicles, and those not eligible to travel will be turned away from the vehicle.

### **37. Will transport suppliers be following health and safety guidance?**

We are asking transport suppliers to follow the Welsh Government guidance <https://gov.wales/restarting-public-transport-guidance-operators>. This guidance includes actions such as regular sanitising, the thorough cleaning of vehicles and the use of PPE.

## **VULNERABLE LEARNERS AND CRITICAL WORKERS**

### **38. Is provision for critical workers and vulnerable learners available?**

All learners return to school on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021, hence, vulnerable learners and the children of critical workers will be attending school along with all of their peers.

## **EDUCATIONAL VISITS**

### **39. Will off-site educational visits be taking place?**

In accordance with Welsh Government advice, there will be no educational visits during this time. This advice will be kept under review by Welsh Government.

## **EXAMINATIONS**

### **40. Are GCSE and AS/A-Level exams going ahead in the summer of 2021?**

As a result of the extended period of remote learning, Welsh Government have revisited proposals for qualifications, to reflect the impact of this on learner wellbeing and confidence.



The Design and Delivery Advisory Group (DDAG) (comprised of headteachers and college principals) have developed revised proposals which have been accepted by the Education Minister. In summary, these are:-

- Learners undertaking GCSE, AS and A levels approved by Qualifications Wales will have their qualifications awarded through a Centre-Determined Grade model – this means that grades will be determined by their school or college based on an assessment of the learner’s work. This will be an holistic approach underpinned by evidence of attainment in areas a learner has covered.

Schools and colleges will be able to use a range of evidence to determine the grades to be awarded to their learners, which could include Non-Examination Assessment elements, mock-exams, and classwork. In addition, the WJEC has offered a set of adapted past papers which will enable schools to continue to assess learning within their teaching plans, providing extra support for teachers and learners. All evidence used to identify grades must be the learners’ own work, but there will be no formal external assessments.

Qualifications Wales has worked with the WJEC, supported by the DDAG, to provide an assessment framework to support schools and colleges in developing their assessment plans, which should demonstrate sufficient coverage of key concepts to allow learners to progress, and detail for how the centre has determined a learner’s grade. These assessment plans will be quality assured by the WJEC.

- The deadlines and controls around non-exam assessment have been removed and will not be moderated by the WJEC. However where possible schools and colleges are encouraged to support learners to undertake some of their Non-Examination Assessment to continue to build learning and skills.

Qualifications Wales have published a **timeline** for learners which shows that a learner’s school or college will discuss the provisional Centre Determined Grades that have been decided for the learner in each of their subjects in June. The school or college needs to send these grades to WJEC by 2<sup>nd</sup> July. At this stage, grades are not confirmed as the WJEC will need to make final checks for all schools and colleges, to ensure clear processes have been followed. Grades will be final when learners receive them on results days. Results day for AS and A level learners is on 10<sup>th</sup> August and for GCSE learners, results day is on 12<sup>th</sup> August.

Information and letters to learners from Qualifications Wales which contain details about the abovementioned timeline and the **appeals process** are available here:

<https://www.qualificationswales.org/english/awarding-2021/information-for-learners/>

[https://www.qualificationswales.org/english/awarding-2021/Qualifications Wales / Frequently Asked Questions](https://www.qualificationswales.org/english/awarding-2021/Qualifications%20Wales%20-%20Frequently%20Asked%20Questions)



Further detail is available via the following links:

<https://qualificationswales.org/media/7235/summer-2021-assessment-guidance-v3.pdf>

<https://gov.wales/examination-and-assessment-guidance-2020-2021>

<https://www.qualificationswales.org>

<https://www.wjec.co.uk/>

### **Vocational Qualifications**

Ofqual and the UK Government Department for Education have undertaken a consultation on arrangements for awarding vocational qualifications in 2021 and the consultation outcomes are available here: <http://bit.ly/2XKTz8c>.

The awarding of vocational and technical qualifications in 2021 is proposed to differ depending on the type of qualification.

A summary document can be accessed at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/964614/Infographic -  
\\_how\\_vocational\\_and\\_technical\\_qualifications\\_will\\_be\\_awarded\\_in\\_2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964614/Infographic_-_how_vocational_and_technical_qualifications_will_be_awarded_in_2021.pdf)

## **UNIFORM**

### **41. Does my child need to wear school uniform?**

Your child's school will advise on their particular requirements, as this is a decision for individual schools and their governing bodies.