

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

Cameos and ideas from schools and PRUs on continuing with school business

This report is also available in Welsh.



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 schools and PRUs that supplied cameos and the following organisations for their contribution to the development of this publication:

- Estyn
- Association of Directors of Education in Wales
- Regional school improvement consortia
- Church diocesan authorities

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.



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Ideas from schools regarding continuing with meetings and routines

Keeping in touch with staff and continuing with school business



Schools must find a system that works for them and their staff

School 1

One secondary school uses regular email briefings to keep staff updated on the constantly evolving situation. Staff in this school like having regular briefings. The school has used its line management structure to ensure that all members of staff have a point of contact during the Covid-19 lockdown period. All line managers contact those they line manage at regular intervals, either by phone or remote conferencing. The initial contact focused primarily on staff wellbeing, their personal circumstances and how the current situation was impacting on them. Subsequent contact was also used as an opportunity to check on staff wellbeing, but also focused on what each member of staff was doing in terms of their school work. As the lockdown has progressed, line managers have also arranged virtual meetings for groups such as the pastoral team or the humanities AOLE. These opportunities



are used to provide collective support to staff, to plan work for the immediate and longer term and to share responsibilities for work. The school uses its usual system for recording the key points and main actions from these meetings and these are accessible to all relevant parties.

School 2

Senior leaders at another secondary school are holding regular remote meetings with middle leaders. These middle leaders then liaise with members of their teams. These meetings focus on staff wellbeing and are used to monitor workload and convey expectations. In larger teams, one person is responsible for planning and organising the work for all pupils in a particular year group. This has helped to reduce workload. This school also uses email briefings and documents to keep staff abreast of developments.

School 3

One secondary school is limiting whole-staff briefings to one or two a week as staff were feeling overwhelmed by the amount of information they were receiving. These briefings are fairly lengthy and contain all the links that they need to additional information. Staff in this school liked having fewer but lengthier briefings because they could save them and did not have to trawl through numerous briefings to find links and information that they needed.

Example 4

A few primary schools are using different platforms for social contact and school business to keep these separate. Staff feel that they can express some of their fears and anxieties better in the less formal context and this is supporting their wellbeing.

School 5

The headteacher has set up a group for communicating with teachers and teaching assistants and a separate group for communicating with the primary headteachers in the local authority. The staff group is used for short messages to staff, longer messages are sent by e-mail and all staff have been told that they need to check e-mails at least daily. The school uses a suite of apps as well as using Hwb for governance, professional learning and pupils' learning.

Supporting staff wellbeing



School 1

One school has prepared a wellbeing pack for staff. Staff were feeling overwhelmed by the amount of information they were receiving regarding wellbeing, therefore the school created one resource which was more manageable for staff.



School 2

One school has produced an annex to their safeguarding and child protection policy. This includes extensive guidance and safeguarding protocols for remote teaching and learning, for example to prevent sharing a private or personal file by accident, and to advise contact only through their school email address and communication platforms approved by school.

Keeping in touch with pupils



School 1

One headteacher sends out a weekly email bulletin to pupils and plans to create a video bulletin in the future. The aim of the bulletin is to maintain a sense of school community, to make the pupils aware that the school is a source of support for them and to enable them to read/hear a friendly and familiar voice.

School 2

In order to support the wellbeing of pupils, one secondary school has set up virtual classrooms for form groups, as well as for subject classes. This means that all pupils can contact their form teacher and keep in touch with their form class. The school prepares wellbeing resources for form classes and these are shared weekly with staff.

School 3

One primary school has assigned specific members of staff to keep in touch with vulnerable families. Leaders and members of staff agree how often they should contact families. This depends on the individual circumstances of the family. Staff keep records of their contact with vulnerable families and share any concerns with the designated school leader.

School 4

One school has an evolving approach to pastoral support for example through regular tutorials. The counselling service remains available via telephone or online platforms. Pastoral staff continue to meet regularly online to ensure that pupils have the right support in place and are being signposted to relevant resources and sources of help that may be needed.

Example 5

A few schools have issued guidelines to staff regarding which apps they should use and which they should not and around how they should communicate with pupils – for example through school email only. They have also issued safeguarding guidelines about the use of any videos or remote learning platforms with pupils.

School 6

A special school, catering for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties has recognised the difficulty that parents/carers may face trying to get their child to engage in some form of continued learning. They have established a reward system and regular tutor check in. Pupils build up points if they check in daily and complete one activity. Parents/carers and pupils have responded positively to this support.

School 7

One special school for pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties is using themed activities to encourage parents/carers to talk and interact with their child in a range of practical situations. The theme for this half term was changed to "Healthy Humans" to help pupils understand the current world they are living in and to promote health and wellbeing which is crucially important for families at this time.



Pupil referral units (PRUs)

Due to the different needs of pupils attending PRUs, there is no 'one size fits all' approach to supporting learners during this time. It is important that activities are planned to continue to meet the needs of the individual. From the outset the message has been 'wellbeing first'. Several PRUs have assessed or risk rated their pupils, looking at vulnerabilities including social needs, mental health, general wellbeing, special educational need and learning styles. A few PRUs cannot rely on a purely digital platform to reach the majority of their pupils and did not want to cause additional stress or pressure on them or their parents and carers.

PRU 1 has tried to maintain established routines where possible. Each day teachers upload a power point with the timetable of the daily activities, trying to keep to established activities where possible. Visual cues have been included to support readers who are less able. The intention is to encourage pupils to engage in Google Classroom and become more familiar with it as it is a new learning platform for the PRU.

In **PRU 2**, learning activities have been set up using Hwb. Each subject area has established a Hwb room where work is uploaded. Pupils then email the work back. So far, learning has been delivered through worksheets and activities and where possible pupils have been continuing with coursework tasks. Going forward, staff will be producing virtual lessons created with Adobe Spark. Each staff member will be creating lesson videos and setting work around the content of these lessons.

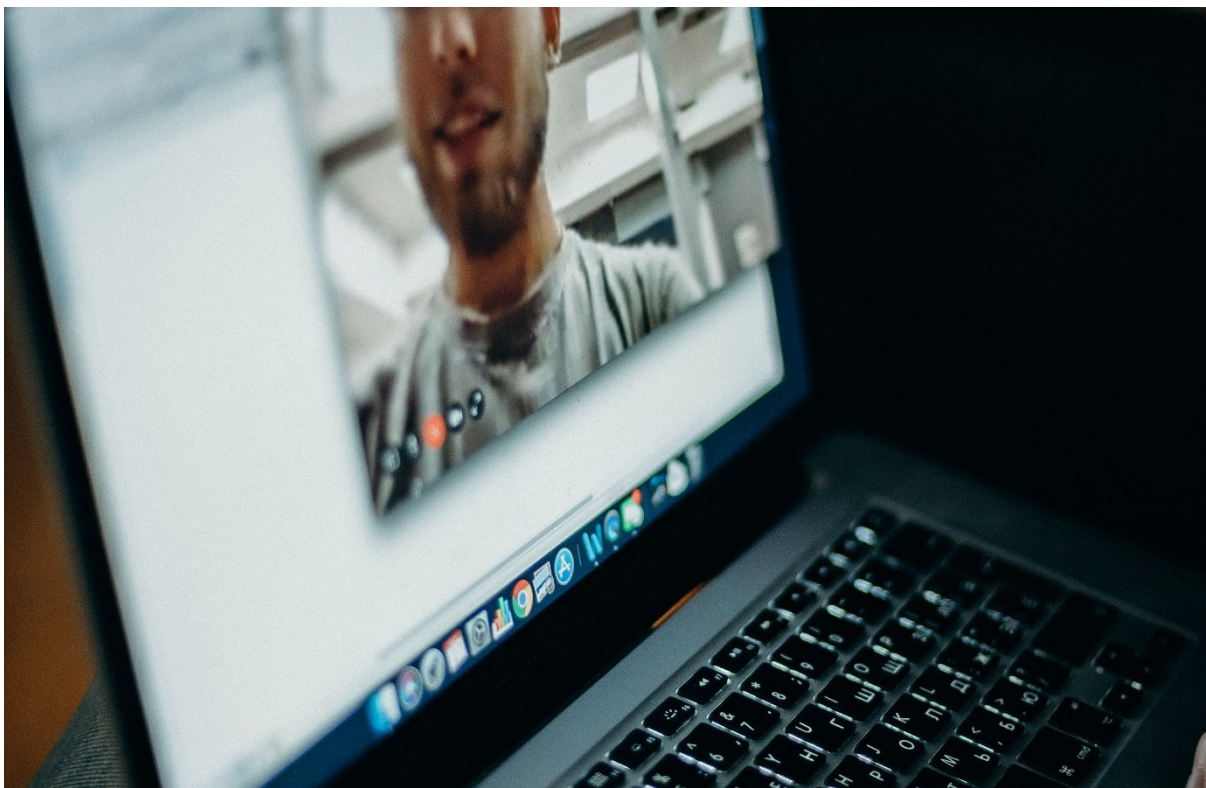
PRU 3 is used as a hub for key stage 3 and 4 pupils who are normally in education other than at school provision or alternative provision across the local authority or are involved with youth offending service. It is recognised that these pupils would benefit from face-to-

face support for learning and their wellbeing. Pupils are risk assessed regarding their vulnerability and offered a place at the hub depending on circumstances. At the hub they have access to a tuition package and mentoring from youth support service staff and tutors.

Testing the pulse

One school in is using short questionnaires for pupils and staff in order to take 'the wellbeing pulse of the community' and identify any individuals in need of additional support. Pupils were asked to rate their wellbeing on a scale of one to 10 and staff followed up on pupils reporting a score of four or less.

Keeping in touch with parents



Most schools have thought well about how parents can access support with their child's learning from teaching staff. When teachers are working in the hub or in individual schools they may not be available to respond to online queries or to speak to parents. One school has organised designated teachers for parents of pupils in year groups to contact. These could be combinations of year groups in smaller schools. Parents are asked, where possible, not to contact teachers outside the working day.

Pupil referral units (PRUs)

In one PRU the communication strategy has been to:

- Create a contact plan for each pupil, which includes mode of contact, frequency of contact, days of contact, recording and reporting systems
- Communicate with parents at stipulated times and frequency; parents were asked the best time to contact them without causing additional pressure

- Keep an up-to-date communication log for individual pupils so that other teaching staff are aware of the situation
- Explore and try to ascertain when communicating with parents if the family are fit and well, are there any mental health or well-being issues, whether their child is completing the work set, can any assistance be offered, can alternative work be provided
- Keep in contact to organise picking-up of work and distributing more work safely where digital platforms cannot be accessed

Routines and procedures in hub schools



A few hub schools have an online handbook for staff. This is a 'one stop shop' for essential information. It may contain advice about access to the internet in the hub school, fire escape routes or safeguarding. It also has risk assessments and protocols for communicating. It reinforces the advice on personal hygiene and social distancing. The handbook is available to all staff going into the hub school through Hwb.

School 1

The school uses online forms for documents such as fortnightly staffing rotas. The headteacher has provided guidance to staff on social distancing and hygiene procedures. The school has 60 staff members so not all staff have had their first session at the school. Therefore, the senior leader on duty each morning provides a briefing for staff as they enter the building. This includes providing a critical routines document which gives details such as how the school operates, advice to give to parents about not entering the building, how to keep children apart, how to ensure resources are clean and where the sanitary stations are.

Ideas from schools regarding governance

School 1



The governing body at one large urban primary school has been proactive in making arrangements to support school leaders and to continue with its business. The governing body has reviewed its Emergency Plan to cover this current situation.

The school has created a governing body leadership team that includes the chair and vice chair and the chairs of sub committees. This has helped create a distributed leadership structure within the governing body to address any potential illness or unavailability. It has used the individual expertise and professional knowledge of its members to help guide its work and decision-making. The group acts as a steering

group for the governing body and liaises regularly over school operational and strategic matters. The headteacher issues a regular communication to both the school's senior leadership team and this governing body group.

The chair of governors convened a virtual governing body meeting a few days after the school was closed to most pupils. The purpose of the meeting was to inform all governors of school operational matters and to sign off important documents such as the school's updated data protection policy. The governing body also discussed the ways that it would continue to keep in touch including arranging further virtual meetings and arrangements to receive updates from the headteacher. The chair of governors communicates regularly with the headteacher to support her wellbeing and the wellbeing of other staff and pupils and to assist with decision-making. He sees this as an important part of his role during these difficult times.

Ideas from a small, rural school



School 1

Before closing, a small, rural school audited parents and found that all but one pupil had access to devices and connection at home. The school provided the pupil with a Chromebook with work loaded on to its desktop to avoid the need for Wi-Fi. All pupils were given their exercise books to take home to enable them to vary their work and not to be too reliant on Microsoft Office. Teachers prepare enough work for a fortnight at a time. The school provides hard copies to families of pupils where required.

Staff have worked in a rota to enable children of key workers to attend and for pupils eligible for free school meals to collect their meals. Because of its geographical location, it has not been possible to coordinate work with other cluster schools and a hub would not be convenient for parents of key workers or for those requiring free school meals.

Staff absence through illness and self-isolation has been a challenge. The school has mechanisms in place to ensure that two members of staff are available each day if required. The headteacher maintains responsibility for the school even when working from home since communication with all staff is effective and practical through social media and e-mails.