

## Reopening of Bridgend schools from September 2020

*Guidance provided by the Local Authority which has been amended by us to focus on relevant questions for the parents and carers of pupils in our school.*

### Frequently asked questions (FAQ)

#### Will learning and teaching continue to be affected by COVID-19?

Yes.

Learning and teaching will continue to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2020-2021 school year. The approaches taken by schools and settings will continue to evolve to provide learning both in school and elsewhere if the need arises. The balance between learning in schools and settings, and time spent learning elsewhere may well change at particular points in response to the pandemic.

### Early Help Services

#### Will parents be issued with fixed penalty notices if their children do not attend school?

All learners will return to their school or setting in the autumn term unless they have a medical/health reason not to. The Welsh Government's view is that it would be difficult for a local authority/school to justify issuing a fixed penalty notice (FPN) or commencing proceedings for non-school attendance. The Welsh Government will monitor the situation over the first half term.

It is critical that all learners, their families and staff follow Public Health Wales advice in respect of the virus and under no circumstances should learners or staff attend schools/settings if they:

- feel unwell, have any of the three identified COVID-19 symptoms (a new continuous cough, or a high temperature or loss of or change to their sense of taste or smell) or they have tested positive to COVID-19 in the past 7 days; or
- 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 14 days.

Learners who have received a shielding letter must not be asked to attend schools or settings but should be supported to work or learn from home.

If a learner or staff member lives in a household with someone who is at increased risk or is 'shielding', they should only attend a school or setting where they are able to adhere to the social/physical distancing measures and the learner is able to understand and follow those instructions.

#### As a parent, I'm really worried about my child returning to school and contracting the virus. What should I do? Will I get in trouble?

If parents/carers of learners are concerned about their children returning to school, we recommend parents should discuss this with their child's school/setting.

Schools and settings should be clear with parents/carers that learners of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies (eg the learner has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness or is absent for a necessary religious observance).

### **What additional support is available to children and families who have been affected by the pandemic?**

Early Help and Social Services continue to be available to children and families in need of support or safeguarding.

Early Help services can provide support linked to parenting, wellbeing, counselling, financial advice and employment/training, should families require it. Early Help services work closely with schools and other services including parents/carers, who can refer children and families for support via [earlyhelp@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:earlyhelp@bridgend.gov.uk)

If there are safeguarding concerns, contact must be made with Social Services via [mashcentra@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:mashcentra@bridgend.gov.uk)

### **Will school uniform have to be worn in September?**

The Welsh Government updated its guidance on the 11 August 2020 which can be found here:

<https://gov.wales/operational-guidance-schools-and-settings-autumn-term-covid-19>

Within that guidance it is explained that a school uniform is a governing body's decision. Welsh Government state that school uniform can play a valuable role in contributing to the ethos of a school and setting an appropriate tone.

However, if a governing body decides to relax its uniform policy, the local authority will be supportive of that decision.

### **How can I access a school uniform grant for my child?**

The Welsh Government Pupil Development Access Grant (PDG) provides assistance to families on low incomes. More information can be found under benefits and support, grants for pupils on Bridgend County Borough Council website.

Parents/carers can contact individual schools for details of how and when the grant will be issued.

## **Health and safety**

### **Will the local authority provide a Coronavirus (COVID-19) risk assessment framework for schools?**

The local authority is currently reviewing the revised Welsh Government guidance for schools opening for the autumn term. A revised risk assessments framework, building on the available

guidance, feedback received from schools and other stakeholders from previous assessments, and from the advice and support that has been requested by schools to date, is currently under development.

### **What support will be available to headteachers and schools to complete the risk assessment process?**

As previously provided, prior to opening for the summer term, the local authority will work with schools to finalise risk assessments and establish appropriate arrangements based on national guidance before schools return in September 2020. The assessments will identify the controls that schools will put in place to manage the risk of COVID-19 within the school environment.

### **Have schools been provided with personal protective equipment (PPE) for undertaking tasks within the school such as personal care or first aid?**

All schools and settings have been provided with COVID-19 related PPE supplies and guidance on where it should be used appropriately (eg working in very close proximity to individuals for personal care, first aid, or possibly when supporting an individual displaying symptoms who is awaiting collection to return home).

### **Will schools have procedures for dealing with anyone becoming unwell with COVID-19-related symptoms within the school?**

All parents will receive letters advising them not to send their child to school if they are displaying COVID-19 symptoms and similar arrangements are in place for staff. Schools will have guidance on how to deal with anyone who becomes unwell while at school displaying COVID-19 symptoms including isolation, supervision and additional cleaning requirements.

The requirements of the NHS Wales 'Test, Trace and Protect' Service will be followed in any case connected with the school or setting.

## **Home-to-school transport and admissions**

### **My child is brought into school in a taxi. Will that continue?**

For the time-being some children may be provided with an alternative vehicle eg minibus to ensure social distancing requirements are adhered to. However, taxis may be used on some contracts.

### **Should my child wear a face mask on school transport?**

The use of a face masks for school learners is optional. There is currently no requirement for learners to wear face masks on school transport, although if a child feels comfortable wearing one, they are able to do so.

### **Many school transport vehicles normally have an escort with them on the transport. Will this continue?**

For some children, where an escort has been provided previously, this may not be possible moving forward. There is no statutory requirement to provide escorts, although the local authority will assess the needs of learners and determine the appropriateness and availability of escorts in all cases.

### **Are all eligible children guaranteed home home-to-school transport from September 2020?**

School transport will continue to be prioritised for vulnerable learners. The local authority does not anticipate any significant issues with school transport availability for September. However, if the number and capacity of suitable vehicles is limited, the local authority may not be able to transport all eligible learners at the start of the autumn term. The local authority will make every effort to do so and as soon as possible and any changes will be communicated directly to parents/carers as soon as possible.

### **What are the start and finish times for the school day?**

The Welsh Government updated its guidance on the 11 August 2020 which can be found here:

<https://gov.wales/operational-guidance-schools-and-settings-autumn-term-covid-19>

The Welsh Government asks schools to consider introducing staggered starts or adjusting start and finish times to keep groups of learners apart as they arrive and leave school and to allow more journeys to take place outside of peak hours.

Each individual school will be able to advise on their start and finish times.

### **How do I apply for a school place?**

School admissions information and a timetable, which includes when the next round of applications open can be found under school admissions on Bridgend County Borough Council website.

Please contact Learner Support at [pupilservices@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:pupilservices@bridgend.gov.uk) if you require further information.

### **School meals**

### **My child normally attends breakfast club. Will there be free breakfast available for them when my child returns to school in September?**

It is unlikely that breakfast clubs will be available on 1 September.

However, each school will assess its current arrangements for free breakfast provision for learners with a view that the arrangements are reinstated as early in the autumn term as possible, but only where it is safe to do so. The future reopening of breakfast clubs will be communicated in due course.

### **My child is eligible for free school meals (eFSM). As they are unlikely to be able to attend school full-time until 7<sup>th</sup> September, will they get both a weekly food parcel as well as a free school meal until that time?**

Free school meals will be available on the days your child attends school. The local authority is also considering the ongoing provision of a weekly food parcel for eFSM pupils until 11 September. A decision on this will be communicated in due course.

### **Is my child eligible for free school meals?**

Please email [FSM@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:FSM@bridgend.gov.uk) or contact (01656) 643396 for information about free school meal eligibility criteria.

### **Will school meals be available to purchase when my child returns to school in September?**

Yes.

However, individual schools may need to limit the menu choices for a short period of time.

### **Can I provide my child with a home produced packed lunch for September?**

This is a decision that will be made by individual schools and you are therefore advised to contact your child's school directly.

### **My child normally has a medical specialist diet. Will this be available on the days my child attends school for September?**

Medical specialist diets will be available for your child, but parents would be expected to update the school on any changes to a previously provided specialist diet, to ensure that the Catering Service can be informed prior to your child attending.

### **Where will my child eat lunch?**

Individual schools will be following Welsh Government guidance and local risk assessments, and will therefore determine the suitability of pupils eating in dining halls or in their classrooms/designated desks.

### **Will the cashless catering system be functioning?**

Yes.

However, parents/carers will need to ensure there is sufficient balance on their child's account. If parents have not received a recent email with their child's account balance, they can contact the school administrator to ask for this information.

It is unlikely that cash revaluation machines in secondary schools will be accessible initially and parents/carers are therefore advised of the need to credit school meal accounts via the ['Pay it'](#) function on the Bridgend County Borough Council website.

**Are Special Needs Support Assistants (SNSAs) able to move between two school placements in any given day?**

Yes.

SNSAs are able to fulfil their contracted hours in two schools (but no more than two) in one day.

**Can statutory and school reviews take place in the autumn term?**

Yes.

Reviews have been undertaken successfully throughout lockdown remotely. These will continue remotely in the autumn term, where possible to reduce the risk of transmission and staff from outside school being introduced into contact groups unnecessarily.

**Will there be any changes to the statutory assessment process and timelines for statements?**

We are still awaiting further guidance from Welsh Government but currently the process and timelines remain unchanged. However, consideration is being given that direct assessments may not have been possible and further information may need to be gathered later when appropriate.