

Gwynedd Education Department

Frequently Asked Questions

The following is a list of frequently asked questions and answers for parents/guardians when preparing to send their children back to school from 29 June.

If I decide not to send my child to school, will I be penalised or fined?

Parents/guardians will not be fined or penalised for not sending their child to school during the final four weeks of term.

It is possible that some families are shielding and others may not be ready to return to school. Children are invited to return to school on a part-time basis should parents wish to take that up.

We respect the decision of each individual family during the period from 29 June to 24 July.

If you have decided that your child will not be attending school but then decide later that you want your child to attend school, what do you need to do?

You will have to give the school a week's notice that your child wishes to return to school.

Do I have to be invited to send my child to school?

Yes. During this period, no child can go to school without the school's advance agreement.

Is there provision for every school year?

No. The local authority does not expect schools to offer provision for nursery-aged children, or Year 11 and 13 pupils.

What will the situation be in September?

It is not yet clear what the situation will be in September. The school will update you.

What will my child need to bring with them to school?

Your child will need to bring the following:

- Their own packed lunch;
- Their own water bottle;
- Their own pencil case.

They will not be able to share their resources with other children or the staff.

What should I do if my child has received a shielding letter?

The child should not attend school.

What should I do if my child lives with a member of the family who has received a shielding letter?

Your child can attend school but it is crucial that you discuss the matter with the school in order for them to consider measures to mitigate risk.

What should I do if my child has a medical condition which makes them vulnerable?

Your child can attend school but it is crucial that you discuss the matter with the school in order for them to consider measures to mitigate risk.

What should I do if my child lives with someone who has a medical condition which makes them vulnerable?

Your child can attend school but it is crucial that you discuss the matter with the school in order for them to consider measures to mitigate risk.

Will my child require personal protective equipment (PPE) to attend school?

It is important to remember that physical distancing, hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene (catching a cough or sneeze in a tissue or covering the mouth and nose with an elbow or sleeve) remain strongly evidenced to be the most effective ways to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

Hand hygiene is critical before and after all direct contact with a child or young person, and after cleaning equipment and the environment.

There is therefore no need to use personal protective equipment (PPE) when undertaking routine educational activities in classroom/school settings.

Education

What sort of education will primary, special and secondary schools be offering?

The local authority understands that schools will be required to offer different experiences to learners returning to school.

The summer term should be used to give learners and staff an opportunity to readjust and familiarise themselves with being in the company of their peers once more and being in the school environment.

The main focus should be on promoting the well-being of learners and staff. The local authority strongly recommends that schools should focus on emotional health and well-being for the remainder of the summer term. The ALN&I Service has provided advice on this, which is available on the Service website. The Service has also arranged training by 'Trauma Informed Schools' to prepare for re-integration.

Will the school continue to educate children in the year groups that are meant to return to school but are being kept at home by their parents on health/safety grounds?

Yes. The teachers will prepare work for children who are not returning to school.

Will pupils who are moving to another school in September be able to take part in bridging activities?

The authority has asked every school to consider planning relevant bridging support to assist the learners who are about to move to the next phase of their education.

Cleaning

How will the school be cleaned once it is re-opened?

The school will be cleaned during the day by cleaners who will have been purposefully trained. The cleaners will give particular attention to places where the children and staff touch regularly while always following the cleaning protocols.

Cleaning staff will recommence their cleaning duties during the week commencing 15 June.

The authority will provide additional resources to the schools in response to the additional cleaning requirements.

Do we expect pupils to clean their workspace?

Pupils are expected to take reasonable steps to ensure that the work environment is kept as clean as possible. When appropriate (and according to their age/development), pupils may be encouraged to clean their personal spaces themselves, for example, by giving them wipes to use in their part of the room.

The wipes/suitable cleaning equipment will be provided to the classrooms along with brief guidelines.

Toilets

How often will the school toilets be cleaned?

The toilets will be cleaned after break time and lunchtime and at the end of every day.

How should the use of toilets be managed?

The local authority recommends that schools adhere to the following protocols, if possible:

- The pupils should use the toilets one at a time.
- The school will ensure that water and liquid soap are readily available, in every toilet/bathroom for pupils and staff.

Social Distancing

How will the school make sure that everybody adheres to social distancing measures of two metres in the classroom, communal areas, toilets, schoolyard and similar places?

Every individual school will give particular attention to social distancing. The authority has prepared a general risk assessment framework for schools to adapt according to their own circumstances, recognising that every school is different.

As part of the risk assessment process, the school will need to decide how many pupils can be accommodated on the site safely, considering how much room is available to educate the children and to allow them to move in the corridors, and how much room there is in the toilets etc.

Every individual school will need to decide what is appropriate, based on the advice of the local authority, and giving appropriate attention to the detailed guidelines by Welsh Government.

Every school's situation will be different due to their unique circumstances.

What measures will be in place to safeguard my child?

There are many measures in place to safeguard you child. Some of the measures are as follows:

- Every school will have a specified isolating room, should a child or member of staff start to feel ill during the day.
- Every school has calculated the maximum number of pupils that can be accommodated in a classroom at any one time, if social distancing of 2 metres is adhered to.
- The maximum number of children a school can admit on any specific day is a third of the school's capacity i.e. if a school has a capacity of 60, no more than 20 children can attend the school on any day.
- Everyone may not have break and lunch times at the same time.
- Classrooms and communal areas will be cleaned regularly.
- Schools will be cleaned thoroughly every night.
- There will be clear signs around the school emphasising the importance of hand washing, hygiene and social distancing.

Bear in mind that every school site is different and every school will be implementing different measures e.g. the drop-off location will vary from school to school / some schools will have one-way systems etc.

Every school will have its own gradual re-opening scheme; every school will have held site meetings and they will be recognised by the Local Authority. In addition, every school will have its own Risk Assessment.

How many pupils should be in one classroom?

It is difficult for the local authority to give definite guidelines as classrooms vary so much in terms of size and shape.

The schools themselves should decide, using the social distancing guide of 2m.

Who ensures that risk assessments are suitable and up to standard?

Gwynedd Council's Corporate Health and Safety Team and Education Department will check the quality of the risk assessments.

If I am not a key worker, will my child be able to attend before/after school clubs?

No. The local authority recommends that before/after school clubs be suspended for the time being.

General

Do pupils have to wear a school uniform?

This will vary from school to school, but generally pupils are encouraged to wear appropriate clothing and shoes that are easy to wash/clean. This may be a school uniform.

Will there be different arrangements at the start and end of the day when children enter the school building?

Yes. The school will have clearly marked out the waiting areas (e.g. by using signs, bollards or tape) to safeguard pupils who are waiting to enter the building.

The marks will indicate how the pupils and their parents/carers can maintain safe social distancing.

Is there any restriction regarding who can accompany a child to school / collect a child from school?

Yes, only one parent/guardian.

If I wanted to discuss a specific matter with the school could I have a face to face meeting with school staff?

No. The local authority recommends that you should contact the school initially by telephone. If you wish to have a further meeting we suggest for now that this should be a virtual meeting.

How should schools manage break times?

Staff will be available to supervise your child every break and lunchtime. Children will be expected to social distance.

Hand sanitiser will be available at each entrance to ensure that pupils can sanitise their hands when they exit and re-enter the school building.

Equipment on the schoolyard will be cleaned before different groups use it.

Will teachers mark my child's books?

The local authority advises staff not to mark pupils' books during this period.

However, we realise that it is important to give pupils meaningful feedback. Therefore, schools are encouraged to use various methods (e.g. ask pupils to mark their own work, give oral feedback, and digital/on-line comments) to give feedback about pupils' work.

What if my child requires first aid during the day?

School staff will provide first aid in the usual way. However, they will wear specific protective equipment.

Specific guidance regarding First Aid has already been shared with each school.

School Lunch

Will school meals be available?

No. Every child is required to bring a packed lunch to school for the rest of this educational term.

Are there rules regarding what should be placed in a packed lunch?

Yes. A packed lunch should be prepared for which a member of staff will not be required to assist children to open it or to help them to open its contents. Plastic packets should be avoided that children, especially young children, cannot open.

In accordance with general school guidance a nutritious packed lunch should be prepared avoiding items that my lead to children choking, such as grapes.

Will there be breakfast clubs?

No. At present, the local authority does not have any plans to recommence breakfast clubs.

The local authority will review the situation over the summer holidays and you will receive further information at that time.

Will children who are eligible for free school meals continue to receive direct payments between 29 June and 24 July?

Yes. They will be expected to bring a packed lunch with them to school, the same as every other child.

Will the local authority continue to provide lunch for pupils who receive childcare following 29 June?

No, this arrangement is ending. Children who attend childcare will need to bring a packed lunch with them.

Care of Key Workers' Children

When schools re-open, will the care provision for vulnerable children and the children of key workers continue?

Yes.

The provision will commence at 8am and end at 5pm

How will the schools know who will wish to receive childcare?

The schools will contact you.

Will school staff have to provide education and childcare?

Yes. They will initially prioritise childcare for the children of key workers and vulnerable children and following this they will provide education on the site and remote learning.

Will the care provision for vulnerable children and children of key workers be open over the summer?

Yes. However, school staff will not be expected to provide childcare for vulnerable children and the children of key workers over the summer holidays. Presently, there are no specific arrangements in place.

What if the number of key workers' children who require care is more than 1/3 of the school population?

If the number of key workers' children is greater than the number of children that can be accommodated safely then the school will offer childcare to every child but for a fewer number of days.

Transport

How will the learners travel to school when they return?

Parents are expected to transport/accompany their children to school in the first place; however, if this is not possible learners who are eligible to receive school transport will continue to get this service. If the demand for transport is higher than the capacity, priority will be given to pupils who cannot attend without it.

If transport has been arranged for a pupil, he/she will receive a specified seat number for transport.

The local authority will provide a specific question and answer sheet on transport for schools to send to parents/carers and learners.

What will be the arrangements for pupils waiting for buses to be transported to school?

Neither the local authority (nor the transport providers) will be able to mark the bus stops and they will not be able to monitor them.

The authority has adapted the code of conduct to reflect that we will expect pupils from different households to stay 2m apart near bus stops.

Will escorts travel with the pupils?

Generally, no, they will not.

However, escorts for pupils with additional learning needs will receive priority depending on the agreement between the school, parents and transport operators.

What if pupils do not adhere to the rules to maintain social distancing on school transport?

Every pupil will receive a specific seat on the transport; this will have been approved beforehand.

The parents of children who cannot adhere to the rules will receive a warning letter and if they continue not to comply with instructions, they will face exclusion from the transport. In these circumstances, it will be the responsibility of the parents to arrange how their child gets to school.

How many pupils will be able to travel on school transport?

At present, we anticipate that approximately:

- 12 pupils on a 52/54 seater bus;
- 7 pupils on a 32 seater bus;
- 6 pupils on a 28 seater bus;
- 1 pupil on an 8 seater bus.

Will the transport be regularly cleaned?

Transport to and from school will be cleaned prior to the collection of pupils.

Will pupils from the same household be required to sit together on the school bus?

No.

In order to assist us to plan for social distancing we have ensured that pupils sit on their own on the seat nearest to the window. On the return journey, pupils will be set apart (2m apart) and will fill the bus from the back forward.

Will other children continually pass my child when they get on the bus and when they leave?

No.

There will be a clear seating plan in place to ensure that the first pupil picked up in the morning will start filling the bus from the back. This will ensure that pupils do not pass each other and is an effort to ensure social distancing.

Will it be possible to have hand sanitisers on the bus for children to use when they arrive?

Yes. The bus operators will organise this.

Will it be the same driver on the bus each time?

Where practicable the same driver will be used on the same bus.

Will it be possible for children to continue to travel to school on a public bus?

Yes. We will ask operators to give priority to children at usual school transport times.

Will children continue to receive transport via the empty seat scheme?

We will not currently operate the empty seat scheme as only a small number of children can travel on our transport due to social distancing.

What if a child gets ill during the school day?

Parents will be expected to collect their child from school, we will not provide transport.

If a child has COVID-19 Symptoms, will they continue to be transported?

No.

It is essential that parents ensure that children do not travel if they have any COVID symptoms. If a transport operator is aware of a symptom prior to travel, then transport will be refused.