

Addysg / Education



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22 June 2020

TO: PARENTS/CARERS OF GWYNEDD SCHOOL CHILDREN

Dear Parent/Carer

I wrote to you on 15 June outlining our plans in Gwynedd in relation to the Welsh Government's announcement concerning schools partially reopening on a 'check in, catch up and prepare' basis.

The original announcement stipulated that this would be for a period of four weeks from 29th June. The Council is grateful for all the hard work being done in schools to prepare for the 29th.

However, we understand that the Welsh Government and the trade unions cannot reach a common national position on the fourth week (20-24 July) despite protracted discussions. Accordingly, schools in Gwynedd will close for the summer holidays on 17 July.

This is for the following reasons:

- Attempting to make preparations for the fourth week would effectively put the onus on head teachers and individual staff members which would, in the Council's opinion, be unfair, especially at a time when schools face more than enough challenges. A consistent approach is deemed essential and the Council would have much preferred to have seen these issues resolved on a national basis at the outset, prior to the original announcement.
- As time marches on, it is the view of the Council that absolute and immediate clarity is required for schools, parents and young people: schools, so that they can plan on a fixed basis to receive as many pupils as possible during this period; parents and young people in order that they can approach the next weeks with confidence; and for parents to have the opportunity to make alternative childcare arrangements as required in the fourth week. This is not something that can be left to the last minute and the Council is very mindful of its statutory responsibilities both as an employer and in the context of the safeguarding of children and young people.
- In the absence of such clarity, schools also risk engaging in potentially abortive planning, as does the Council and its external partners (e.g. the NHS who are charged with organising the

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testing resume for school staff).

With some of the changes being introduced as early as next week, the Council has concluded that we must make timely and firm decisions that inform schools' and parent/carer's planning and operation. Thus it has been decided that the original term dates will be adhered to.

We will be confirming the arrangements for the care provision over the summer holiday for children of key workers as soon as possible.

We believe that there are sound educational and medical reasons for reopening schools on 29 June, but as parents/carers you require, and deserve, clarity concerning this period. Under such circumstances, decisive actions are needed.

I trust that you will appreciate the reasons for this announcement that will allow you to plan for your children to return to school gradually from 29 June with complete clarity.

Yours sincerely



Gareth Jackson
Head of Education



Councillor Cemlyn Rees Williams
Cabinet Member – Education