



Developing integrated approaches to support blended learning for the phased opening of schools

June 2020

Introduction

On June 3 the Welsh Government (WG) announced that there would be a phased opening of schools from 29th June, 2020 to give all pupils the opportunity to “check in, catch up and prepare.” Welsh Government have published their Learning Guidance [<https://gov.wales/keep-education-safe-guidance-learning-over-summer-term>] to provide advice on learning and teaching taking place in schools and settings for the remainder of the summer term and to support practitioners as they prepare for the autumn term.

The WG guidance provided gives schools considerable flexibility to exercise their professional judgement in how they will plan their offer to their pupils. Schools now have an outline framework for planning teaching and learning for the autumn term 2020. Welsh Government will be publishing more detailed guidance and expectations for learning in the autumn term in due course.

The guidance support schools as they re-evaluate learning for the foreseeable future in response to a range of challenges:

- Supporting learners to return to ‘learning fitness’.
- Developing learning which allows learners to continue to progress.
- Ensuring coherence for learners between in school and remote learning.
- Develop appropriate learning while current curriculum requirements have been *disapplied.
- Use the ethos, principles and guidance of the new Curriculum for Wales as support to the current challenges, rather than this being an additional burden.
- To encourage practitioners to use and develop their professional judgment to best benefit learners.

**Welsh Government has confirmed that the Basic Curriculum has been temporarily disapplied [<https://gov.wales/written-statement-creating-flexibility-schools-settings-disapplication-basic-curriculum>]. This notice will initially apply for a period of one month from 22 June to 21 July. The Minister for Education will keep this under review, in light of the public health advice and the operating arrangements for schools and settings, during the remainder of the summer term. Welsh Government will clarify expectations for the autumn term in due course.*

Phased opening of schools

The overall effect of WG guidance is to require schools to plan to reopen in three stages:

1. Summer Term 2020

Schools will have reopened from 29th June to give all pupils the opportunity to “check in, catch up and prepare.” The basis for planning was clear and focused on:

- Supporting the health and wellbeing of learners and staff
- Check in with learners and ensure their learning fitness and preparedness for next step. Ensuring smooth transition will be key
- Establishing and testing arrangements for partial reopening
- Building the confidence of families
- Preparing for autumn term, partial reopening arrangements and teaching and learning

2. Autumn Term 2020

- An effective blended learning approach as part of the new normal.

- 3 At some stage during the next academic year, schools may return to being fully open to all pupils.

Aim

Building on the learning guidance published by Welsh Government [<https://gov.wales/keep-education-safe-guidance-learning-over-summer-term>], this guidance sets out best practice and approaches to blended learning to support practitioners. Settings and schools should build upon their distance learning strategies, and they will have access to support from regional consortia and local authorities as they further develop their approaches to blended learning.

Underlying principles

Settings and schools will be at different stages in developing their support for blending in-school and distance learning and their approach will vary according to their context and capacity. Every setting and school will respond to the requirements on the basis of its risk assessment, site capacity, staff availability and number of learners and frequency that they can safely attend the establishment. Planning should be based on research informed guidance on what works best within blended learning.

The following underlying principles and advice does not seek to replace existing effective practice but may help to refine and develop it further:

- Promoting learner and staff well-being to remain as a key priority.
- There should be a focus on learners becoming 'learning fit' and on supporting their progression and next steps not on level attainment or catch-up activity.
- All experiences should be planned on the basis of learners' needs rather than attempting to carry on with business as usual. This flexible approach is enabled by the disapplication of the National Curriculum.
- Provision for KS4 and KS5 learners will need to be planned and delivered around subject specific input. Arrangements for learners in Year 10 to Year 13 may be different to those for other pupils at the school to respond to the challenges of preparing them for examinations in 2020-2021. The key advice from Qualifications Wales on any changes to award GCSEs and A levels to inform planning for the summer 2021 examination series is not yet available and schools will need to respond accordingly when this is made available.
- The blend of in-school and distance learning should be driven by a single curriculum, i.e., the two elements need to be mutually supportive rather than work in parallel.
- The purposes and principles of the new Curriculum for Wales should be used to support learning. The greater flexibility currently available to schools in allowing them to determine the learning priorities for the cohorts of learners offers a real opportunity. School leaders and teachers may wish to consider the Four Purposes of the new Curriculum for Wales and the guidance '*Designing your Curriculum*' could be a useful starting point.
- To support teachers collaborating within teams and departments to consider the holistic offer to learners including the wider learning experiences. There may be opportunity to build on the learning of new skills that staff have developed over the past two months, including working more creatively and developing digital skills.
- The aim should be a high level of equity and equality of access to across the range of year groups. However, it should be considered how best to prioritise supporting pupils who have not engaged on a regular basis to date and those learners with ALN, so as to ensure that the gap does not widen further. Schools should also be mindful of how they support learners with transition between key stages.

- It is at the discretion of the Head teacher and school staff whether to use 'live streaming' within blended provision. Should a school include live streaming within its blended learning model, it should be ensured that provision conforms to national guidance and any other local requirements.
- The current distance learning model should evolve to ensure that face to face contact [and any live streaming, if appropriate] reinforces and enriches the work learners complete at home, so that seamless provision is available.
- Settings and schools should take the opportunity to reflect on the distance learning to date, noting what was worked well, what learning has taken place and what the future role of parents/carers have in supporting.
- Communication with parents and carers is vital. There should be regular and effective communication with parents and governors so as to ensure expectations are clear to school partners, and specifically, that the curriculum has been *disapplied.
- Settings and schools should be sensitive in situations whereby parents/carers choose not to send their children back to school, and it should be ensured that the blended learning model takes this into account.

This document provides practical suggestions to support schools with their integrated approach to blended learning and covers the following areas:

- Supporting health and wellbeing
- Supporting learning fitness
- Blended learning approach
- Organising the learning
- Establishing routines and protocols
- Engagement with learners
- Supporting parents and carers
- Supporting equity for Welsh-medium learners
- Supporting the learning through collaboration
- Professional learning

Supporting health and wellbeing

Supporting the health and wellbeing of learners and staff remains a key priority. It is a key enabler of learning and the experiences of lockdown, social distancing, phased return and potential bereavement will have raised significant challenges. Designing provision for all with access to specialist support is crucial. Beyond general planning for how wellbeing can be supported and embedded in learning there is the opportunity to provide early specific interventions for learners with pre-existing issues or new needs and to raise safeguarding concerns.

In making the transition back to school some groups of learners are likely to require more support than others such as those who have spent lockdown in challenging circumstances or who have found it hard to manage. Mental and emotional wellbeing is a key focus. Learners will need opportunities to talk with a trusted adult, encouragement to communicate their feelings and the opportunity to spend time with friends.

Relationships and social wellbeing will require peer relationships and those between staff and learners to be nurtured. This will help to develop a sense of community and ensure learners feel valued and listened to. Opportunities to work collaboratively will be valuable.

Physical wellbeing requires a range of physical activities. This forms part of the need to maximise the time learners spend outdoors.

Well-being is an integrated approach to teaching and learning. It is not seen as a separate area, but rather built into everyday practical experience, e.g., building positive relationships between children and children, children and adults to address well-being through natural play based/experiential learning.

Some areas to be considered:

- Set the emotional climate – the adults set the emotional climate within the learning environment, with a previously agreed consistent approach.
- Provide learners with plenty of opportunity to safely share experiences, talk and interact during play, formal learning sessions and break/lunchtimes.
- Empathise and validate feelings of pupils. Recognise pupils' experiences are unique to them.
- Place quality and reliable relationships front and centre. Form positive relationships, especially with those who struggle to form an emotional bond. Allow time for the emotional connection. Adults to be present and respond with simple connections, e.g. smile, nod, eye contact, positive body language, *etc.*
- Some pupils will have developed emotional vocabulary already and be able to regulate their emotions, others will not. Some will have had help to develop their emotional resilience, whilst some may have absorbed negative/stressful messages/thoughts. Teach pupils to name the emotions they felt and feel. Pupils who can name and describe their emotions well are less likely to be verbally or physically upset.
- Practitioners to practise active listening. Give pupils time and opportunities to express and explore their emotions, verbally and nonverbally.
- Make time to talk in natural play, as part of learning and as part of everyday routines, especially for younger learners.
- Provide plenty of reassurance from a wellbeing and learning aspect praising resilience and effort.
- Provide routine and structure for all learners especially those with specific needs.
- Review behaviour policy and adapt as required.
- Some schools may feel that consideration of the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE) may be appropriate as a fundamental principle which recognises that good health and well-being are important to enable successful learning

Supporting learning fitness

Settings and schools will need to support learners in developing their motivation and readiness to learn. There is initial evidence that the period of lockdown has increased the disadvantaged gap.

In the autumn term when learners come back into school, there needs to be a clear focus on preparing them for the next steps in their educational experience. The following should be considered:

- Plan engaging assessment opportunities to enable teachers to assess key skills and respond accordingly.
- Develop effective questioning to ascertain pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Revisit key topics as a foundation for progress and to rebuild learner confidence and self-esteem.
- Focus on verbal feedback and dialogue to reassure and guide pupils. Frequent verbal feedback will be particularly effective in building pupils' confidence and fostering positive attitudes to learning.
- Adapt the provision to meet the pupils' needs.
- Identify and address any immediate additional support for literacy, numeracy and digital skills.
- Reinforce pupils knowledge regarding how to stay safe online, including appropriate behaviour whilst online and communicating with staff and peers

Blended learning approach

Settings and schools will need to consider how to evolve their current distance learning models to include in-school face to face contact and where applicable, live streaming or recording of lessons. We will refer to this approach as '*Blended Learning*'. Adopting a single and seamless 'curriculum' approach is essential where practitioners can develop a more integrated approach to learning and learners can build connections across learning as per the principles of the Curriculum for Wales.

Schools should use aspects of the new curriculum guidance to support them in developing their blended learning approaches.

They may consider:

- Using the 4 purposes as the basis to support them to plan their learning activities.
- As teachers get more comfortable with developing blended learning encourage them to plan creatively and experiment with designing blended learning and their own curriculum.
- Use important language from the curriculum guidance with staff for example progression, descriptions of learning.

The basics of good teaching and learning still apply. However, in the practical task of planning blended learning there are a number of factors for teachers to consider. It is also worth considering that some pupils will particularly benefit from more face to face support such as disadvantaged pupils or pupils who have so far not been engaging well in distance learning.

Settings and schools should consider the '*12 Pedagogical Principles*' that underpin the new curriculum. They may also want to consider the following, especially for foundation phase through to key stage 3:

- Plan to maximise interaction/safe socialising whilst learners are at school, e.g., review learning, distanced talk partner discussion, verbal feedback - class and peer.
- Set engaging enjoyable challenges.
- Provide regular outdoor learning experiences to develop a range of skills e.g. literacy, numeracy, creative, physical, personal and social/well-being.
- Provide learning packs for individual learners based on their learning and developmental needs, e.g., multi-use resources, craft and malleable materials, paper, exercise books, writing materials, chrome books, etc. In addition, personal whiteboards and felt pen to share ideas practice skills, show and share their work with the teacher or teaching assistant (formative assessment purposes). Teacher or teaching assistant should address any misconceptions.

- Plan practical opportunities for children to practise and consolidate those skills taught at school as part of the 'home element' of blended learning. This will ensure that over a period of time, children will have had direct and independent learning opportunities through a practical, play based/real life experiences. Consider activities that can be completed with resources that can easily found in most homes.
- Use classroom walls to facilitate / share learning / promote wellbeing, e.g., photos of learners at work/play, messages from friends, develop a working wall for learners to refer to whilst working on a piece of writing or maths or numeracy work. All pupils need to see them clearly from their seats.
- Provide plenty of opportunities for activities to promote wellbeing and address pupil's needs as appropriate.
- Provide regular outdoor learning experiences to develop a range of skills, e.g., literacy, numeracy, creative, physical, personal and social/well-being.
- Provide effective lesson starts to ensure engagement and review prior knowledge. Ensure effective questioning to provide plenty of learner to teacher feedback.
- Discuss models of work/modelling of a skill as a class to produce Success Criteria and discuss 'What Makes good' in preparation for carrying out tasks. This is also a basis for peer and self-assessment.
- Revisiting prior learning, review and re-teach - provide time and support to do this according to learner needs.
- Provide regular practice and recall opportunities to reaffirm prior learning and to consolidate new learning.
- Teach any new learning in small manageable steps; refrain from introducing too much content at once.
- Model good feedback/self-assessment/peer assessment, scaffolding where necessary when learners need reminding.
- Provide opportunities for independent practice and application of skills learnt - both in school and at home.
- Consider the opportunities and challenges for specific groups of learners.

Time in school should be used to support the activities that learners can complete at home at their own pace. These include guided investigations and extended opportunities to apply new skills, knowledge and concepts. In a 'flipped' learning approach, planning could include opportunities for learners to research, prepare and think before using contact time with teachers in school to explore and consolidate.

Blended learning will consist of a range of approaches that can be broadly categorised as:

1. Face-to-face time with learners
2. Online learning
 - Activities delivered online, e.g., through HWB
 - Recorded lessons
 - 'Flipped learning' (pupils work on tasks at home before discussions in class)
 - Live-streaming
3. Use of textbooks and other physical resources to work at home

Within a blended learning model, face to face classroom time in school is best used to:

- Maximise the use of direct teaching time;

- Introduce new ideas and skills including independent learning skills.
- Guide learners through new content and skills linking to previous learning where possible.
- Assess and continue to ensure pupil progress in skills and knowledge.
- Provide real time, particularly verbal, feedback to address initial misunderstandings.
- Use a range of models to show the learning destination.
- Closely guide and teach the new route through the learning.
- Within social distancing guidelines, enable pupils to engage with each other – collaborative tasks, discuss and plan learning, see each other’s work.
- Improve engagement and ensure task completion through celebration and rewards as well as sanctions.
- Maintain positive relationships with teachers and staff.

To facilitate the ‘online’ aspect of Blended Learning, ensure all learners have access to their online learning platform (Hwb) and have a clear understanding of the following:

- How to access material provided by the teacher
- How to use the most appropriate online tools to complete any task set, including providing evidence of work completed away from a device, e.g. photograph or video of physical and practical activities, where appropriate
- How to submit any digital material to their teacher
- How to access and respond to any feedback provided by their teacher

Settings and schools will need to consider whether live-streaming can be used hand in hand with face-to-face contact to reinforce and enrich the work learners complete at home. Settings and schools must conform to the WG guidance ‘*Live-streaming safeguarding principles and practice for education practitioners*’.

<https://hwb.gov.wales/zones/online-safety/live-streaming-safeguarding-principles-and-practice-for-education-practitioners>

Within a blended learning model, live-streaming is best used to:

- Support learner engagement and their wellbeing.
- Allow access to teacher guidance and support on specific aspects or areas of set tasks.
- Allow access to subject specific lessons, especially in KS4 and KS5.
- Provide instant and interactive feedback and assessment for learning.

Schools may want to consider how live-streaming could be used to share lessons with those attending ‘face to face’ in the classroom and those studying at home. Schools may also consider how to make best use of the technology for using recorded teaching materials.

Schools and settings should keep things simple regarding the tasks, assessments and feedback shared with learners. It is important to balance the need to ensure the continuation of their education and their health and wellbeing.

Within a blended learning model, effective assessment and feedback should:

- Focus on the formative element so that learners are supported to move forward in an unfamiliar context;
- Focus on helping to identify next steps and building confidence both to enable them to be ready to learn and to make progress in their learning;
- Not be about testing learners at this stage. It is not appropriate at this time for schools to use summative assessment for the tracking of individual pupil progress against targets.

The purpose of feedback within the context of blended learning:

- Keep in touch during the 'home' element of blended learning and maintain positivity;
- Acknowledge and appreciate learners' efforts, to celebrate their work and offer encouragement;
- Support the learners to ensure that they understand the tasks and respond to any misconceptions or misunderstanding that they may have;
- Provide the teacher with as much information as possible of the learners' current knowledge and understanding and the ways in which they can be supported in the next steps of their learning; and
- Help parents to support their children's learning.

The nature of the feedback given:

- Clearly present and explain the tasks set for the day or week giving clear expectations;
- Be guided by the teacher's professional judgement following their evaluation of the learning needs of pupils and the nature of the activity being undertaken, how any feedback, including marking, is given;
- Communicate clearly, simply and concisely when providing individual or whole group verbal or written feedback;
- Correct common misconceptions and misunderstandings; and
- Provide learners with opportunities to keep in touch and communicate with their peers, and to see and celebrate each other's work so that they learn from one another.

Organising the learning

In deciding the organisation and content of the learning for the autumn term there are crucial factors to consider:

- The capacity of the site – classrooms, dining spaces etc. – in light of Welsh Government guidance on social distancing. Schools can bring in up to a third of pupils on any day under current social distancing guidance. However, this may change over the coming months and schools should be prepared to adapt accordingly.
- The availability of staff. Schools need to be clear on this whilst being aware of some key HR issues, e.g., child care, *etc.*
- The number of pupils in school. This will depend on the social distancing guidance that is in place during the autumn and to some extent on shielding and transport. Another crucial factor will also be parental support. Attendance of vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers is an additional factor.

In deciding the curriculum offer and in constructing revised individual staff and pupil time tables a number of other decisions need to be made based on the current available guidance regarding staff and learner safety:

- Are learners to return in year groups? Groups of pupils could have this time as a single block but blended learning will work better with regular weekly contact. Learners could come in for two half rather than full days but this may work less well where transport is an issue.
- Decide the school day – stagger start and finish, break and lunchtimes?
- In which parts of the school will learners be based? Hygiene, cleaning and toilets will be factors here.
- How will learners be grouped? At this stage the requirements of social distancing point to bubbles with a single class base and staff moving. Use of large indoor and outdoor spaces?
- What will learners be taught? The guidance is clear that wellbeing is the focus but there is clearly a need to develop the independent learning skills and resilience needed to support distance learning. Opportunities to use and develop literacy and numeracy skills will be valuable.
- The balance of in-school and distance learning commitments in terms of teacher workload. Collaborative planning and team teaching approaches are worth emphasising. Building upon this theme of collaboration, there is an opportunity for teams within and across schools to develop confidence in creative approaches in designing learning experiences as per the principles and Four Purposes of the new Curriculum for Wales.
- Decide the allocation of support staff.
- Agree with LA arrangements to discuss options if there are staff or space shortages.

Establishing routines and protocols

Settings and schools will need to establish clear routines and protocols:

- Communication with parents/carers is vital. Schools will need to clearly communicate their adopted approaches to blended learning.
- To ensure a consistent approach make sure that staff have time to discuss new guidance and procedures including interactions with pupils before learners return to school
- Establish / re-establish learner / teacher relationship especially if the class is taught by a different teacher.
- Create a calm ethos within the school both in terms of environment the interactions between everyone.
- Spend time introducing and reviewing safety measures (in a practical manner with younger pupils) - rules, routines and boundaries, ensuring that learners feel safe and comfortable. This should be done regularly. Many will be aware of the importance of handwashing but it may be necessary to re-teach the routine several times to ensure everyone's safety.
- Communicate rules positively and clearly checking that everybody has understood.
- Consider the best use of teaching assistants.

Engagement with learners

Schools and settings will need to reflect on their approaches to engaging with learners during the phased opening of schools and evaluate its impact and identify actions to address key barriers to effective engagement within their blended learning approach and strategy.

Ongoing focus should be on:

- Identification of learners– which learners / groups of learners have not engaged in distance learning? What are the main barriers?
- Accountability and leadership - Is there a whole school approach to keeping in touch with learners? Is there regular contact with parents / families? Are there clear guidance for staff?
- Is there sufficient resources to target learner engagement?
- Is there an effective systems to monitor and evaluate impact of level of engagement?
- What is working well with learners who engage and can this be adapted for learners who not engaging?
- Is the school working with LA staff to offer a tiered approach to contacting learners who are not engaging?

Evidence suggest that regular contact opportunities with learners and their families, regular discussions by teaching staff around learners' engagement and clear guidance on expectations from teachers by school leadership impacted positively on engagement by the learner and their families.

Supporting parents and carers

As we move towards a blended learning approach a new dialogue with parents/carers is needed to reassure and manage expectations. Schools will need to ensure that parents/carers gain an understanding of the rationale behind the approaches and what is the role of parents/carers in supporting a blended approach to learning.

Setting and schools will need to consider the following:

- Communication with parents/carers is vital to reassure, e.g., showing them changes to their classroom via photos or videos, a guide on the expectations on pupils when in school.
- When learners are completing work at home it is vital that schools continue to reinforce the message that parents/carers are not expected to be their children's school teacher.
- Provide guidance to parents/carers to support their children's learning, e.g., suggest possible structure to the day and week that offers flexibility to families.
- Ensure that parents/carers are aware of their point of contact in school for well-being, subject specific issues, ALN, digital issues, etc.
- Practitioners to model the learning and share clear step by step guidance for learners and parents/carers, to ensure skill development and progression of learning, e.g., through the use of video recordings, voice over explanations, live-streaming, signpost to the parents/carers' support that is available on [Hwb](#).
- When schools are offering contact and learning opportunities via live-streaming, schools will need to share expectations and protocols with parents/carers and learners. It is good practice to ensure that there is a home-school agreement signed by learners, parents/carers and school.

Supporting equity for Welsh-medium learners

Schools and settings should ensure equity and fairness for all Welsh-medium learners in the provision offered through blended learning models and especially for those from non-Welsh-speaking backgrounds.

Whilst mindful of the fact that Welsh-medium and bilingual schools/settings have well-established and effective processes for providing support for non-Welsh speaking parents and carers under 'normal' circumstances, additional guidance and assistance might be required by these families so that they can be more productive in supporting their child within a 'blended learning' model.

Schools and settings should also consider how best to maximise face to face contact to reinforce and develop the Welsh language skills of those learners whose main contact with the language is through their experiences at school. They should also consider how best to plan practical opportunities for learners to continue to develop and use their Welsh language skills within the 'home element' of the blended learning model.

For schools with specific linguistic immersion programmes, further consideration will be required by school leaders as how best to support these learners.

For Welsh medium settings where parents/carers do not speak Welsh, schools should:

- Prioritise development of pupils' listening and speaking skills.
- Focus on developing important vocabulary and provide key terms in written form to support asynchronous learning.
- Immerse pupils in Welsh at every opportunity.
- Provide clear guidance and support for parents/carers.
- Signpost useful resources for developing Welsh at home at an appropriate level to the learner.
- Deliver Welsh language activities in the classroom that focus on the skills that families can consolidate and discuss at home.
- Create contexts for learning where learners can apply and expand their use/understanding of existing skills and knowledge in meaningful contexts/activities at home through the medium of Welsh.
- Schools could place an emphasis on introducing and reinforcing dialogue and vocabulary. There could be a clear link between the classroom and home-based learning. For example, teachers may reinforce a specific sentence pattern through a discreet teaching session. Then pupils may work in pairs to act out those sentence patterns (taking into account social distancing measures). Then, the pupils could practise the dialogue at home with family.
- In order to facilitate participation in speaking and listening activities at home, staff could consider sending prompt sheets with translations, or providing access to video clips that model the correct pronunciation.
- Make use of [e-books](#) and [e-magazines](#), for example by providing digital presentations based on a class book.
- Provide safe methods for real life communication between pupils and others, for example via digital video means or by writing letters.

Supporting the learning through collaboration

During this period, the importance of collaboration and co-working cannot be underestimated. Collaboration has taken many different forms. These include:

- Formation of 'Hub schools' during the initial period of lockdown
- Cluster meetings for school leaders
- Peer to peer collaboration
- Professional Learning opportunities

Opportunities for collaboration between schools and peers can lead to a number of positive aspects. These include:

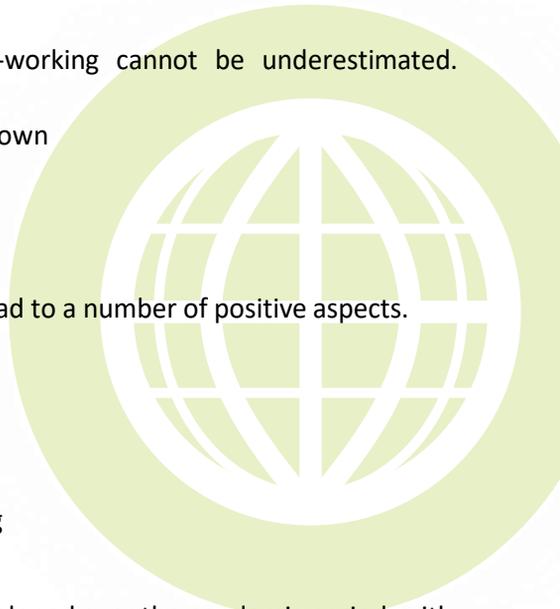
- Staff wellbeing
- Support and sharing of good practice
- Consistency of approach
- Dissemination of information and a common understanding
- Professional Learning

New opportunities to collaborate through digital means have developed over the pandemic period, with schools using virtual methods such as Skype, Microsoft Teams or Zoom. This will be the means of communication and collaboration for the foreseeable future. The opportunity to screen share, take turns, record and note written responses provide an effective means to collaborate. The four transversal themes of Schools as Learning Organisations identify technology, time, thinking together and trust; during this time of Covid-19, schools' new use of technology has enabled the time, thinking together and trust to develop further.

Moving forward, it is extremely important that these opportunities to come together continue, both within school and across schools.

Cluster meetings: As we prepare for a 'new normal', regular opportunities to discuss with our peers will become an important aspect in the planning of how this looks. Each school and setting will have their own context, however many aspects will have common themes and approaches. These could be organisational matters or teaching and learning methods and approaches. This in turn benefits the learners and can lead to a positive impact on outcomes and experiences. Regular cluster meetings to discuss these matters will strengthen the work happening back in the individual schools and settings. These meetings can also be attended by individuals from the regional consortia and LA so as to inform, support and listen.

Peer to peer collaboration: Every opportunity should be taken to allow peers to collaborate, both within schools and across schools. Planning opportunities, establishing teaching and learning methods and providing feedback opportunities for learners are all aspects that can be strengthened through regular discussions between teaching staff. Peer to peer discussions around establishing effective distance and blended learning opportunities are vital in providing support for each other, developing and sharing practice and ensuring a consistent approach within a school and between schools.



Professional Learning opportunities: The profession has undergone rapid professional learning during the lockdown period. This has included crisis management, Information and Communication Technology and Distance Learning methodology. The pace of professional learning will continue to increase as we move to the new normal of working with live streaming needs, blended learning approaches and wellbeing strategies (see section below on *'Professional Learning'*). Regular collaboration opportunities will provide opportunity for professional learning at all levels within a school and across schools. These can be arranged through live discussions, recorded material sharing practice or through webinars. All are effective ways to collaborate and learn from one another.

Professional Learning

During this challenging time, it is important that all staff are supported through professional learning. Professional Learning should be provided to support schools to develop skills in planning and delivering blended learning and effective pedagogical practice, as well as integrating elements of the new Curriculum for Wales.

The blended learning approach may mean that the focus for professional learning will change. Such as prioritising the development of digital skills for preparing distance learning. Below is guidance that may support leaders and staff to maximise the impact of professional learning.

Professional learning should	Professional learning should not
Be tailored to both whole school and individual needs: for example, though auditing staff digital skills and online pedagogical skills to identify areas for development	Be just a list of mandatory courses with which staff engage.
Develop teachers' pedagogical knowledge to support the blended approach and encourage them, as the expert, to make decisions about how to plan and balance direct teaching with online activities to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding effectively.	Prevent staff from having enough time to focus on developing high quality blended learning.
Develop teachers' knowledge of meta-cognition to support them to plan opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills. Including self-motivation, self-questioning and their ability to develop and express their thoughts.	

Professional learning should	Professional learning should not
Establish what effective blended learning looks like and support staff to know how face-to-face and distance teaching and learning work together to support pupil progress and achievement	
Encourage collaboration and plan time for staff to work together to develop and evaluate effective blended learning for pupils	
Develop and share principles, for example, online synchronous and safe engagement with pupils online	
Where appropriate, be informed by research	

Appendix 1 – Blended learning considerations

The following table is by no means an exhaustive list but should begin to scaffold thinking and school level discussions around which mode for learning is best suited to each approach or strategy according to learner age and subject and the unique context of each school.

Classroom	Socially distant classroom	Distance online or digital	Distance offline
Sharing information, e.g., board/smartboard/TV	Sharing information on the board ensuring that learners are well spaced. <i>Need to consider need to repeat lessons as learners in small groups in classroom</i>	Sharing information through a website or blog. Recording of a teacher sharing information on the board or a voiced over presentation	Printed materials shared with learners. <i>Need to consider whether all learners have access to the materials</i>
Discussion through whole group and small group real time conversations	Discussions through real time conversations ensuring that learners can maintain social distancing	Asynchronous or synchronous written discussion in a class or group space. Video sharing of discussion contributions (e.g., flipgrid)	Discussions with family members. <i>Need to consider if this is a viable option for all learners and ensure that it is inclusive of all learners.</i>
Collaboration through small group work at tables	Collaboration through group work. <i>Need to consider how materials are not shared and how learners can maintain social distancing.</i>	Collaboration in google apps or office 365 <i>Need to consider groupings of learners for collaborative activities and set clear expectations for levels of participation.</i>	Collaboration with family members. <i>Need to consider if this is a viable option for all learners and ensure that it is inclusive of all learners.</i>
Creation using supplies available in the classroom (pens/paper/glue etc)	Creation using supplies available in the classroom <i>Need to consider how materials are not shared and how learners can maintain social distancing.</i>	Online applications and web tools to create: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presentations • videos • artwork • storybooks • infographics • websites 	Creation using supplies available from home and/or school <i>Need to consider what supplies will be available to learners and how effectively they can engage with them independently.</i>
Teacher direct teaching to explain concepts	Teacher direct teaching to explain concepts <i>Need to consider that a teacher would need to repeat this to each small group of learners</i>	Video and audio explanations from teachers or external sources <i>Can be accessed and worked through at own pace. Can also allow teachers to share expertise across classrooms and potentially schools.</i>	Instructions are written. Parent or carer explains concept. <i>Need to consider if learner can access the written instructions. Need to consider availability and willingness of parent to do this and time along with expertise needed.</i>

Use of shared texts or textbooks in the classroom	Use of texts or textbooks in the classroom <i>Need to consider how materials are safely used by learners in line with operational guidance</i>	Online book or multimedia resource either made by teacher or from a range of sites	Use of texts or textbooks at home <i>Need to ensure equity of access to texts for learners</i>
Use of workbooks in the classroom	Use of workbooks in the classroom <i>Need to consider how materials are safely used by learners in line with operational guidance</i>	Online space or website for skill building	Use of workbooks at home <i>Need to consider equity of access to workbooks for all learners</i>
Meeting, sharing and discussing learning – oral feedback	Meeting, sharing and discussing learning – oral feedback. Can be feedback to work completed in the classroom or at home. <i>Need to maintain social distancing but presents a real opportunity for quality dialogue with small groups of learners or individuals</i>	Oral feedback through voice/video recordings on pieces of work submitted	Oral feedback from parents/carers <i>Need to consider availability and willingness of parent to do this and time along with expertise needed.</i>
Teacher marking as written feedback to work	Teacher marking as written feedback to work <i>Need to maintain social distancing</i>	Online polls to check understanding Online tests or interactive quizzes to check understanding	Opportunity to reflect on and respond to any marking comments received from teacher
Self-assessment of work	Self-assessment of work <i>Need to consider whether this offers best use of limited classroom time for learners.</i>	Online self-assessment in learning spaces using comments or rubrics.	Offline self-assessment of work using set criteria <i>Need to consider how shared back to teacher to complete feedback loop</i>
Peer assessment of work	Peer assessment of work <i>More challenging to maintain operational guidance on sharing of resources and social distancing but can be completed orally</i>	Use of online spaces for peer assessment and feedback <i>Need to consider how learners are supported to make relevant comments and also needs to be monitored.</i>	More challenging to come up with offline solutions of how this can be completed meaningfully

<p>Building relationships and a sense of community</p>	<p>Building relationships and a sense of community whilst adhering to social distancing measures. <i>Consideration needs to be given to learner well-being as maintaining relationships has been a significant challenge for many learners and this provides an opportunity.</i></p>	<p>Blogging and discussions online Visible teacher/school presence online Class media accounts Team competitions Videoed assemblies</p>	<p>Opportunities to work independently for something that supports a group goal or experience could be beneficial <i>Clear communication to parents and carers about how the school is working to support this is needed</i></p>
<p>Engaging and motivating learners</p>	<p>Regular contact opportunities in a safe and supportive environment providing feedback and dialogue about learning</p>	<p>Regular contact opportunities in a safe and supportive online environment providing feedback and dialogue about learning</p>	<p>Engagement of learners along with parents/carers <i>Need to consider availability and willingness of parent to do this and time along with expertise needed.</i></p>

Appendix 2 – Advantages and disadvantages of distance learning approaches

Distance learning approaches bring advantages and disadvantages, including the following:

		Distance learning experience		
	Face to face teaching	Synchronous learning	Asynchronous learning	Distance learning work / tasks
Advantages	<p>Face to face interaction with teachers</p> <p>Face to face interaction with peers</p> <p>Access to the teacher as the 'expert'</p> <p>Social contact</p> <p>Easier for teachers to guide the first steps of learning and provide more direct instruction</p> <p>Easier for teachers to check understanding</p> <p>Easier for teachers to gauge progress and engagement of individual learners</p> <p>Access to a variety of resources e.g. textbooks and reading books, musical instruments, laboratories, specialist equipment such as communication aids</p> <p>Teachers able to respond 'in the moment' to pupils' learning and provide support</p>	<p>Can provide opportunities for interaction with peers</p> <p>Access to the teacher as the 'expert'</p> <p>Teachers able to respond to pupils' questions and provide support</p> <p>More pupils could be resent than in face-to-face teaching</p> <p>More staff may be available to plan and provide this</p>	<p>Can be run at a pupils own pace</p> <p>Pupils can revisit work they do not understand</p> <p>Pupils can develop independent learning skills</p> <p>More staff may be available to plan and provide this</p>	<p>Pupils can be more flexible in how they learn and when</p> <p>Can valuably reinforce the learning in school</p> <p>Support from parents/carers can be valuable and helpful</p> <p>An opportunity for pupils to develop important independent learning skills that they have been taught in school</p> <p>An opportunity for pupils and staff to develop skills in a new way of working and learning, using digital platforms</p> <p>An opportunity to develop a more creative and less prescriptive curriculum model</p>

Appendix 2 – Advantages and disadvantages of distance learning approaches

Distance learning approaches bring advantages and disadvantages, including the following:

Disadvantages	<p>Only a minority of pupils will be present at any one time</p> <p>Pupils' time in school will not be the same as they have been used to</p> <p>Pupils will only have a limited amount of time in school</p> <p>Not all staff may be able to attend the school.</p> <p>In secondary schools planning coverage of subjects may be an issue</p> <p>The challenge of cleaning resources and equipment when used by multiple users</p> <p>There will be limitations on the extent to which pupils can interact and work collaboratively due to the necessary spacing arrangements.</p>	<p>Too many pupils will limit interaction</p> <p>Pupils may find it more difficult to engage in discussion</p> <p>Management of sessions and behaviour could be more difficult</p>	<p>Teachers can't instantly assess learning and provide feedback</p> <p>Aspects of good quality face-to-face teaching, such as, questioning are lost</p>	<p>Difficult to gauge progress of all learners and for teachers to provide timely support</p> <p>Difficult to address issues of pupil disengagement and reluctance to work</p> <p>Problems with access to equipment and connectivity</p> <p>Wide variation in the nature and quality of support with work from parents/carers</p> <p>Many teachers lack experience of distance learning teaching</p> <p>Teachers' ability to use digital platforms and deliver online learning varies widely</p> <p>Less social interaction, which can be important to support learning</p> <p>Online safety</p> <p>Pupils spending too much time in front of a screen</p>
Considerations when designing blended learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit staff and pupils access to hardware and software and their ability to use it. • Audit staff skills in developing and delivering blended learning • Auditing pupils' independent learning skills to support them to engage effectively in distance learning • Providing support for staff to develop pupils' independent learning skills • Ensure staff are supported to improve their knowledge of distance and blended learning techniques and in using digital learning platforms. • Ensure all pupils and staff have access to equipment and resources required • Make use of online systems, such as Hwb, to share work and support blended approaches • Provide clear guidance and support to parents/carers on what is meant by a blended learning approach and how they can help at home • Ensure the practical aspects, for example in subjects such as DT, music and science, are planned into the school based provision • Consider how support staff and youth workers can support pupil engagement • Gather feedback from pupils and parents and use this to inform planning and adapt or change provision • Pay due regard to the government guidance on live-streaming 			

Appendix 3 – Further reading and reflection

- WG distance learning support:
<https://hwb.gov.wales/distance-learning/>
- EEF Distance Learning Rapid Evidence Assessment:
<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/evidence-reviews/distance-learning-rapid-evidence-assessment/>
- Distance learning blog post:
<https://blogbjmock.wordpress.com/2020/06/11/see-it-from-their-perspective/>
- Distance learning article:
<https://corwin-connect.com/2020/04/visible-learning-effect-sizes-when-schools-are-closed-what-matters-and-what-does-not/>
- EEF On attainment gap:
[https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/EEF_\(2020\)_-_Impact_of_School_Closures_on_the_Attainment_Gap.pdf](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/EEF_(2020)_-_Impact_of_School_Closures_on_the_Attainment_Gap.pdf)
- Remote Learning:
https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Covid-19_Resources/Remote_learning_evidence_review/Remote_Learning_Rapid_Evidence_Assessment.pdf
- OECD:
https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=133_133390-1rtuknc0hi&title=Schooling-disrupted-schooling-rethought-How-the-Covid-19-pandemic-is-changing-education
- UNESCO:
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/in/rest/annotationSVC/DownloadWatermarkedAttachment/at_tach_import_03f2b76b-8263-4c20-8e5f-89a3f14027da?_=373322eng.pdf&to=17&from=1#pdfjs.action=download
- UNICEF:
<https://www.unicef.org/documents/framework-reopening-schools>
- Blended learning website:
<https://www.blendedlearning.org/>
- Types of blended learning:
<https://elearningindustry.com/6-blended-learning-models-blended-learning-successful-students>



- Blended learning different models: <https://www.teachthought.com/learning/12-types-of-blended-learning/>
- Blended learning in general: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-52412171>
- BBC article on blended learning in Scotland: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/enriquedans/2020/04/13/the-coronavirus-pandemic-has-unleashed-a-revolution-in-education-from-now-on-blended-learning-will-be-the-benchmark/#56594e62536f>
- Rationale behind blended learning: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/documents/about/research/blendedlearning.pdf>
- Clear definitions of Blended Learning and interesting case studies from New Zealand including collaboration and sharing: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11528-019-00375-5>
- Flipped learning (could be a useful approach to blended learning): <https://www.tes.com/news/pedagogy-focus-flipped-learning>
<http://rtalbert.org/re-thinking-blooms-taxonomy-for-flipped-learning-design/>
<https://www.onlineuniversities.com/blog/2012/06/flipping-expanding-blooms-taxonomy/>
<https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2014/mar/30/flipped-learning-benefits-challenges-best-practice-live-chat>
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00313831.2016.1258662>
- OU course: Take your teaching online: <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/education/take-your-teaching-online/content-section-overview?active-tab=content-tab>
- The Learning Partnership 'Back to School': <https://bb-live-bucket.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/resourceFiles/9121592210926.pdf>
- ResearchEd Home, videos: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3uPEgDH3pAhQe06533Zebw/videos>
- Child development overview: <https://www.firstdiscoverers.co.uk/the-science-of-childcare-5-senses-to-stimulate/>
- Great Teaching toolkit: <https://www.greatteaching.com>
- Teachers vs tech: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Teachers-Tech-case-tech-revolution/dp/1382004125>



- Book: Blended Learning in Action: A Practical Guide Toward Sustainable Change, Caitlin Rice Tucker
- Book: Rosenshein's Principles in Action, Tom Sherrington
- Book: Understanding how we learn, Yana Weinstein

