



29 November 2021

To all Head Teachers and College Leaders

The emergence of this new Covid 19 variant is a serious development requiring decisions to be made quickly. Which is why I issued a Written Ministerial Statement on Monday evening after the Cabinet met, to inform Members of the Senedd of actions we are taking.

We have already taken swift action on international travel, alongside the other UK governments. We are now introducing an additional measure, while we learn more about this new strain.

All staff and learners in our secondary schools and colleges should now wear face coverings while indoors including in classrooms where physical distancing cannot be maintained.

Many of you are already operating on this basis, guided by your local risk assessment, but this will now become a national approach.

This is a temporary, precautionary measure that will be in place for the remaining weeks of term at which point the position will be reviewed. This should come into effect as soon as possible.

Alongside this national approach to face coverings, you should continue to operate with the Local Infection Control Decision Framework and the toolkit which allows you to take measures that best suit your local circumstances.

There will be some learners and staff who are exempt from wearing face-coverings and we do not expect this to change that position as the well-being of individuals is critical to any considerations around whether staff or learners should wear face coverings.

I will be meeting a group of heads from special schools and colleges this week as part of my regular monthly roundtables; keeping our most vulnerable learners safe will be top of the agenda.

Throughout the pandemic the Welsh Government's priority has been to maximise learning and to minimise disruption for our young people. With three weeks left of term, I'm sure you

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

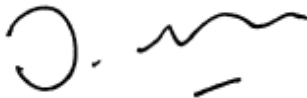
will agree with me that it is vital that we ensure that learning can continue for as many learners as possible.

The JCVI today published their latest advice and, in line with the other nations of the UK, we will begin operationalising this advice as quickly and as safely as possible. Staff and children and young people in schools and colleges should also make full use of the offer of LFT testing and follow the latest public health advice.

There remains a lot we don't know about this new variant. With this high level of uncertainty, it is right that we remain cautious while prioritising the continuation of education. It reinforces the need for everyone in Wales to get their vaccine or booster when offered, wear face coverings when necessary, and book a test if they develop symptoms.

Many thanks for all you are doing to keep our schools and colleges safe. I will keep you updated and where possible, I will always try and let you know first about developments affecting schools and colleges during the pandemic.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a circular mark followed by a series of wavy lines and a short horizontal stroke.

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language