

Date: 13 December 2021

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Jeremy Miles MS  
Minister for Education & the Welsh  
Language  
Welsh Government  
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General Secretary/Ysgrifennydd Cyffredinol: **Dr Patrick Roach**

Dear Jeremy,

### **January 2022 Reopening**

The NASUWT notes with the utmost concern the statement by the First Minister on 12 December that Omicron “is a fast-moving form of Coronavirus, which has the potential to cause a large wave of infections in Wales.”

In light of the evidence emerging daily regarding the impact of the Omicron variant, the latest modelling which suggests that case numbers, hospitalisations and deaths will continue to increase throughout January, and the raising of the Covid threat level to Level 4, I must urge you now to consider the immediate introduction of additional education measures to help slow the spread of Covid-19 and to minimise further disruption to education.

In addition to wider community-level measures, we believe that additional measures will be required within schools and colleges now and as they return after the Christmas break.

The forecast scientific trajectory for the Omicron variant has worsened significantly since the end of November, and available evidence strongly points to the need for additional control measures to be in place now and through the start of next term.

The NASUWT urges the Welsh Government to act immediately and to not delay critical decisions until the commencement of the school and college holiday period. We ask you to avoid a repeat of the confusion and chaos which last year impacted negatively on public and parental confidence and hampered the hard work of teachers and school and college leaders in their preparations at the start of 2021. An immediate announcement from the Welsh Government on additional measures for schools and colleges is, we believe, essential before the majority of schools and colleges close for the Christmas break.

Such additional measures we would ask you to consider would include:

- Staggering the return of pupils to all schools and colleges at the start of January 2022;

- Providing additional onsite testing facilities and resources for pupils throughout the period between January and the February half-term 2022;
- Publishing further guidance advising schools and colleges to update risk assessments in light of Omicron, in consultation with staff and trade unions, ready for wider reopening in January;
- Publishing further guidance advising schools and colleges to cancel or postpone non-essential activities or events, to move to online staff and parental meetings, and to mandate staff working from home where appropriate, during this period.

The NASUWT believes that these measures, together with wider Welsh Government measures including on vaccinations, are proportionate and responsible, and will contribute to our shared aim of minimising further disruption to children's education.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Roach', written in a cursive style.

Dr Patrick Roach  
**General Secretary**