BRIEFING

NASUWT CYMRU
Undeb yr Athrawon The Teachers' Union

COVID-19 and Schools Update
12 February 2021

Introduction

1. The NASUWT - The Teachers' Union, in addition to the support we are providing to our members across the UK, is committed to ensuring that Senedd Members remain informed of developing challenges in schools and colleges as the country responds to the COVID-19 crisis.

School and college reopening during the pandemic

2. Over the last 11 months, NASUWT members have worked tirelessly to provide education and support to children and young people during the Coronavirus pandemic. Nevertheless, we are acutely aware and concerned about the continuing impact of school closures and disruption to provision that has been caused because of efforts to control and minimise virus transmission in schools and in the wider community.

3. The NASUWT is committed to ensuring the safe reopening of schools and colleges at the earliest opportunity when it is safe to do so. We know that the best place for children and young people to be educated is in school/college. This is vital not only for educational progress but also for children's health and wellbeing.

4. We are also aware of the impact of workload pressures on the education workforce and the vital need to move to a position in which teachers, headteachers, together with the wider workforce, parents and the public can be confident that further disruption to children's education is minimised

and where the further widespread closure of education provision can be avoided. We believe that the safety of the workforce and pupils must continue to remain paramount.

5. We recognise that from 22 February schools will begin opening for Foundation Phase learners but we would be grateful for the opportunity to meet with you and your officials to discuss our priorities for the wider safe reopening of schools and colleges. Whilst we welcome a number of commitments you have made to date, we also believe that securing the wider reopening of all provision will require a clear and shared understanding of what is expected, rigorous and consistent application of measures to ensure safe return to face to face teaching and learning, and a credible plan that garners the confidence of the workforce, parents and the general public. We believe that this can only be achieved where there is continued effort to work constructively with the NASUWT and other education workforce representatives and employers to ensure that the requisite conditions and assurances are established to effect the safe and sustainable reopening of schools and colleges as national restrictions are lifted.

6. Our priorities for the safe full reopening of schools and colleges focus on the need for clarity of expectation, consistency of application and measures to secure the confidence of the workforce, parents and the public. Taken together, we believe that the following measures will enable the safe and sustainable reopening of schools and colleges when national restrictions are lifted.

7. We believe the Government must now:

   (i) Demonstrate that decisions are led by the scientific evidence and advice

   - Provide evidence of significant and sustained reductions to the R rate – nationally, regionally and locally. Wider reopening must be managed and safe to those in schools and should not compromise wider public health.

- Publish conclusive scientific evidence on the risks of in-school virus transmission.
- Provide transparency regarding data sharing on COVID transmission rates amongst pupils and staff at individual school/college level and at local authority/area level.

(ii) Ensure effective and consistent action against the spread of the virus

- Give good notice to enable schools to prepare to reopen fully. There must be no last-minute decisions and no surprises, and all guidance should be published in good time.
- Implement a staggered plan for reopening to give time for local and national public health teams to monitor the impacts of reopening in a cautious and measured way and to reduce the risk of a further surge in community-level virus transmission.
- Put in place measures to ensure the readiness and compliance of schools/colleges for reopening, including stronger advice on essential safety measures.
- Ensure that schools/colleges are given sufficient time to undertake the essential implementation of COVID-safety training of staff during normal working time to ensure the effective and consistent implementation of risk control measures.
- Provide additional funding to meet the additional COVID-safety costs incurred by schools and colleges (including for cleaning, materials and additional staffing) and to ensure that safety measures remain paramount at all times. NASUWT The Teachers' Union School and college reopening during the pandemic (continued overleaf)

(iii) Ensure the same protections for teachers and support staff as for workers in other occupations

- Publish further national guidance, jointly developed with school and college workforce representatives, taking into account any

planned phasing for the return of pupils and providing clarity over the teaching and learning activities that will be undertaken.

- Put in place clear, accessible and responsive systems to enable teachers and parents to report to an appropriate independent body their concerns over COVID-safety.
- Provide for effective inspection and enforcement arrangements to address non-compliance with Government guidance.
- Ensure that clinically extremely vulnerable staff continue to stay at home, pending any further changes to general shielding guidance.

(iv) Ensure effective controls are in place to minimise the spread and impact of COVID-19

- Ensure stronger adherence with essential non-pharmaceutical interventions (such as handwashing, cleaning, and two-metre social distancing between adults).
- In view of uncertainty around new variants, put in place stronger mitigations and control measures, such as: ventilation monitoring; enhanced use of face coverings in schools by adults in all settings and by secondary age pupils; optional use of face coverings by pupils in primary schools; two-metre social distancing between secondary age pupils; and use of rotas or other measures to limit occupancy levels, provide enhanced physical distancing and prevent overcrowding.
- Ensure stringent adherence to essential mitigations (such as social distancing, face masks) to ensure that home-school/college transport is COVID-secure.
- Establish effective and competent mass asymptomatic testing arrangements for staff and pupils, in addition to maintaining an effective test and trace system.
- Give priority access to COVID-19 vaccines for teachers and education staff, phasing the roll-out of vaccinations in settings

that are the first to open fully, and to reduce the risk of further school/college closures when schools reopen fully.

(v) Ensure that appropriate risk assessments and controls are in place

- Require schools and colleges to update their risk assessments prior to wider reopening, in consultation with the workforce and trade unions.
- Build confidence for return by requiring the publication of school/college risk assessments and control measures on school/college websites.
- For vulnerable teachers and those in higher risk groups (such as pregnant and BAME staff) or with underlying health conditions, provide a clear and well-publicised right to individual risk assessments that appropriately reflect the risks for these groups.

The NASUWT remains committed to working with the Government and MSs in the interests of children and young people and the workforce who continue to support their education, wellbeing and progress.

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Ail agor ysgolion a cholegau yn ystod y pandemig COVID-19

2. Dros yr 11 mis diwethaf, mae aelodau NASUWT wedi bod yn gweithio'n ddiflino i ddarparu addysg a chefnogaeth i blant a phobl ifanc yn ystod pandemig y Coronafeirws. Serch hynny, rydym yn hynod o ymwybodol a phryderus am effaith barhaus y cau ysgolion a'r tarfu ar y ddarpariaeth addysg sydd wedi digwydd oherwydd yr ymdrech i reoli a lleihau trosglwyddiad y firws mewn ysgolion ac yn y gymuned ehangach.

3. Mae NASUWT wedi ei ymrwymo i sicrhau bod ysgolion a cholegau'n gallu ail agor gynted ag y bo modd, pan fydd hi'n ddiogel iddynt wneud hynny. Gwyddom mai'r lle gorau i addysgu plant a phobl ifanc yw mewn ysgolion a cholegau. Mae hyn yn hanfodol, nid yn unig er mwyn datblygiad addysgiadol y plant ond hefyd er budd eu hiechyd a'u lles.

4. Rydym yn ymwybodol hefyd o'r effaith a gaiff y pwysau gwaith ar y gweithlu addysg a'r angen hanfodol i symud i sefyllfa lle gall yr athrawon, y prifathrawon, ynghyd â'r gweithlu ehangach, y rhieni a'r cyhoedd deimlo'n hyderus bod unrhyw darfu pellach ar addysg y plant wedi ei gadw i lefel mor isel ag sy'n bosib a lle gellir osgoi unrhyw achosion pellach o gau'r ddarpariaeth addysg ar raddfa eang. Hyderwn y byddwch yn cytuno bod yn rhaid parhau i roi'r pwyslais mwyaf o hyd ar ddiogelwch y gweithlu a'r disgyblion.

5. Rydym yn cydnabod y bydd ysgolion yn dechrau agor i ddysgwyr yn y Cyfnod Sylfaen o 22 Chwefror, ond byddem yn ddiolchgar am gyfle i gwrdd â chi a'ch swyddogion i drafod ein blaenoriaethau ar gyfer ail agor ysgolion a cholegau'n ehangach ac yn ddiogel. Er ein bod yn croesawu nifer o'r ymrwymiadau yr ydych wedi eu gwneud hyd yn hyn i sicrhau bod modd ail agor yr holl ddarpariaeth yn ehangach, credwn y bydd angen cyd-ddealltwriaeth glir o'r hyn a ddisgwylir, gweithrediad trwyadl a chadarn y trefnau i sicrhau dychweliad diogel i ddysgu ac addysgu wyneb yn wyneb, a chynllun credadwy sy'n ennyn hyder y gweithlu, y rhieni a'r cyhoedd. Yn ein barn ni, yr unig ffordd o gyflawni hynny yw drwy i bawb wneud ymdrech barhaus i weithio mewn ffordd adeiladol gyda NASUWT a chynrychiolwyr

eraill y gweithlu addysg a'r cyflogwyr i sicrhau bod yr amodau a'r sicrwydd angenrheidiol yn eu lle i alluogi i ysgolion a cholegau ail agor yn ddiogel ac yn gynaliadwy pan ddaw'r cyfyngiadau clo lleol i ben.

6. Mae ein blaenoriaethau ar gyfer ail agor ysgolion a cholegau'n llawn ac yn ddiogel yn canolbwyntio ar yr angen am gael disgwyliadau eglur, gweithredu cyson a mesurau i sicrhau hyder y gweithlu, y rhieni a'r cyhoedd. O ystyried y rhain ar y cyd, credwn y bydd y mesurau a ganlyn yn galluogi i ysgolion a cholegau ail agor yn ddiogel ac yn gynaliadwy pan ddaw'r cyfyngiadau clo lleol i ben.

7. Dyma'r camau y mae'n rhaid i'r Llywodraeth eu cymryd:

   (i) Dangos bod penderfyniadau wedi'u tywys gan y dystiolaeth wyddonol a'r cyngor gwyddonol
      - Darparu tystiolaeth o ostyngiadau sylweddol a pharhaus yn y gyfradd 'R' – ar lefelau lleol, rhanbarthol a cenedlaethol. Mae'n rhaid rheoli'r broses o ail agor yn ehangach a'i gwneud hi'n ddiogel i'r rheiny sydd mewn ysgolion ac ni ddylai gyfaddawdu iechyd y cyhoedd ehangach.
      - Cyhoeddi tystiolaeth wyddonol ddigonol sy'n dangos y risgiau o drosglwyddo'r firws yn yr ysgol.
      - Sicrhau gonestrwydd agored wrth rannu data am gyfraddau trosglwyddiad y firws ymhlith disgyblion a staff fesul ysgol/coleg a fesul ardal/awdurdod lleol.

   (ii) Sicrhau bod camau effeithiol a chyson yn cael eu cymryd yn erbyn lledaenu'r firws
      - Rhoi rhybudd digonol i alluogi ysgolion i baratoi ar gyfer ail agor yn llawn. Ni ddylid gwneud unrhyw benderfyniadau funud olaf neu ddatblygiadau annisgwyl, a dylid cyhoeddi pob canllaw mewn da bryd.

- Gweithredu cynllun ar gyfer ail agor yn raddol er mwyn caniatáu amser i dimau iechyd cyhoeddus ar lefelau lleol a chenedlaethol fonitro effeithiau ail agor mewn ffordd ofalus a phwyllog ac i ostwng y perygl o ymchwydd pellach yng nghyfraddau trosglwyddiad y firws yn y gymuned.
- Rhoi trefnau ar waith i sicrhau bod ysgolion/colegau yn barod ac yn cadw at y gofynion ar gyfer ail agor, gan gynnwys cyngor cryfach ar drefnau diogelu hanfodol.
- Sicrhau bod ysgolion/colegau yn derbyn digon o amser i gynnal hyfforddiant diogelwch rhag COVID-19 hanfodol i'w staff yn ystod oriau gwaith arferol er mwyn sicrhau bod trefnau rheoli risgiau'n cael eu gweithredu'n effeithiol ac yn gyson.
- Darparu arian ychwanegol ar gyfer y costau ychwanegol y mae'n rhaid i ysgolion a cholegau eu talu er mwyn diogelu rhag COVID-19 (gan gynnwys costau glanhau, prynu defnyddiau a staffio ychwanegol) ac i sicrhau bod y trefnau diogelu'n parhau'n hollbwysig bob amser. Ail agor ysgolion a cholegau yn ystod y pandemig COVID-19 (parhad drosodd) NASUWT CYMRU Undeb yr Athrawon The Teachers' Union

(iii) Sicrhau yr un diogelwch i athrawon a staff cymorth ag y mae gweithwyr yn ei gael mewn galwedigaethau eraill

- Cyhoeddi rhagor o ganllawiau cenedlaethol, a ddatblygir ar y cyd â chynrychiolwyr y gweithlu mewn ysgolion a cholegau, gan roi ystyriaeth i unrhyw ddychweliad disgyblion graddol sydd wedi ei gynllunio a sicrhau bod gan bobl ddealltwriaeth hollol eglur am y gweithgareddau dysgu ac addysgu a fydd yn cael eu gwneud.
- Rhoi systemau ar waith sy'n glir, yn hygyrch ac yn ymatebol er mwyn sicrhau bod athrawon a rhieni'n gallu rhoi gwybod am eu pryderon ynglyn â diogelwch rhag COVID-19 i gorff annibynnol priodol.

- Sicrhau bod modd gwneud trefniadau arolygu a gorfodi effeithiol i ymdrin ag achosion o ddiffyg cydymffurfio â chanllawiau'r llywodraethau.
- Sicrhau bod aelodau o'r staff sy'n eithriadol agored i niwed yn glinigol yn parhau i aros gartref, yn dibynnu ar unrhyw newidiadau pellach i'r canllawiau cyffredinol ar warchod.

(iv) Sicrhau bod trefnau rheoli effeithiol ar waith i leihau'r risg o ledaenu'r firws a'i effaith

- Sicrhau yr ymlynir yn gryfach at ymyriadau anfferyllol hanfodol (megis golchi dwylo, glanhau, a chadw pellter cymdeithasol o 2 fetr rhwng oedolion).
- O ystyried yr holl ansicrwydd am yr amrywiolion newydd, rhoi trefnau cryfach yn eu lle i reoli a lleihau risgiau, megis: monitro awyriad; gwell defnydd o orchuddion wyneb mewn ysgolion gan oedolion ymhob lleoliad addysgol a gan ddisgyblion uwchradd; defnydd dewisol o orchuddion wyneb gan ddisgyblion mewn ysgolion cynradd; cadw pellter cymdeithasol o 2 fetr rhwng disgyblion uwchradd; a defnyddio rotâu neu fesurau eraill i gyfyngu ar lefelau defnydd, i sicrhau bod pellter corfforol yn cael ei gadw'n well ac i rwystro gormod o bobl rhag hel mewn un lle.
- Sicrhau y cedwir at y trefniadau lliniaru yn llym iawn (megis cadw pellter cymdeithasol, gwisgo masgiau wyneb) er mwyn sicrhau bod cludiant rhwng y cartref a'r ysgol/coleg yn ddiogel rhag COVID-19.
- Sefydlu trefniadau effeithiol a digonol ar gyfer profi'r holl staff a'r holl ddisgyblion nad ydynt yn dangos symptomau, yn ogystal â chynnal system brofi ac olrhain sy'n effeithiol.
- Rhoi blaenoriaeth i athrawon a gweithwyr addysg wrth gynnig y brechlynnau rhag y coronafeirws, gan drefnu hyn fel bod y lleoliadau addysgol sy'n agor yn llawn gyntaf yn cael y cynnig

yn gyntaf, ac er mwyn gostwng y risg y bydd ysgolion/colegau yn gorfod cau eto pan fydd ysgolion yn ail agor yn llawn.

(v) Sicrhau bod trefnau priodol ar waith ar gyfer asesu a rheoli risgiau

- Gofyn i ysgolion a cholegau ddiweddaru eu hasesiadau risg cyn iddynt gael eu hail agor yn ehangach, mewn ymgynghoriad â'r gweithwyr a'u hundebau llafur.
- Datblygu hyder ynglyn â dychwelyd drwy ofyn i ysgolion/colegau gyhoeddi eu hasesiadau risg a'u trefnau rheoli risgiau ar eu gwefannau eu hunain.
- O ran yr athrawon hynny sy'n agored i niwed a'r rheiny sy'n perthyn i grwpiau sydd dan risg uwch (megis staff sy'n feichiog neu sydd o gefndir du, Asiaidd neu leiafrifoedd ethnig) neu'r rheiny sydd â chyflyrau meddygol sy'n bodoli eisoes, rhoi gwybod yn glir iddynt bod hawl ganddynt i gael asesiadau risg unigol sy'n adlewyrchu'r risgiau i'r grwpiau hyn yn briodol.

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