



1 April 2020

#Diolch

Dear colleague

Today should have been the last Wednesday before schools in Wales closed for their Easter break. This year, as you know, that is not the case.

However, as I would normally do at the end of term I'm writing to you to highlight what we have achieved so far and looking ahead to what happens after Easter.

But more than ever before I want to thank you, your staff, and your wider school community. Education and childcare professionals are stepping up to this challenge with passion and commitment - teachers, childcare practitioners, lecturers, support staff, heads, staff here in my government department, and our friends and partners in local authorities and education agencies throughout Wales.

Thanks to the tremendous efforts of our teachers, school staff and childcare providers, more than 800 schools were open in the first week, allowing parents in key roles to continue doing critical jobs.

Last week I asked the education profession to rise to the challenge of working flexibly over Easter to support the government's work in addressing the current challenge.

I am delighted to say that head teachers, teachers and support staff across Wales, along with other public sector workers, are ensuring there will be provision for critical workers and vulnerable children in schools and settings.

Through this period, it has been more important than ever to be clear, honest and confident in our actions as a Government, and as an education system which puts the interests of learners and those who support them first.

- We have repurposed schools so they help support the children of critical workers and the most vulnerable children;

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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 have provided certainty on this year's GCSE and A Level grades;
- We have stopped school inspections;
- And we're the only UK nation to guarantee free school meals over the Easter period, providing £7million of new funding. A further announcement will be made about a national scheme for the rest of the school year in the near future.

It is clear that schools will not re-open after Easter. Schools and parents will be concerned about the impact of school closures on teaching and learning, and also the emotional, physical and mental well-being of our children and young people.

We are fortunate in Wales that we have a unique world-class online learning platform for schools, Hwb, which is ensuring that teachers can continue teaching remotely and provides thousands of bilingual educational resources to students. If you are not fully utilising Hwb for your school, contact your Consortia who can support you to use the platform.

My officials have been working with the Consortia and a range of partners including BBC and S4C to develop a continuity of learning plan and I hope to provide more details after Easter.

So once again - to everybody working in education, a huge thank you, Diolch yn fawr. We are truly all in this together, and to use another truism, we are stronger together.

Yours



Kirsty Williams AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education