



Guide for all school settings in Wales

**GMB / NEU / UNISON / Unite
Commentary and Checklist**

**Coronavirus crisis
Workplace checklist**

Current proposals announced on the 3 June 2020 to expand school opening from 29 June present significant risks which were identified in the Technical Advisory Cell report dated and released that same day. We want to ensure that school staff are adequately protected by social distancing rules and will be offered appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

Very young children in a class will be extremely difficult to socially distant so classrooms of four- and five-year olds could become sources of Covid-19 transmission and spread. While we know that children generally have mild symptoms, we do not know enough about whether they can transmit the disease to adults. However, the TAC report referred to above says that “it is probable that opening of schools will increase transmission in these groups (staff and parents).”

The Welsh Government needs to step back from 29 June and work with the education unions to create the conditions for a safe return to schools in September based on the principles and tests set out below:

- Safety and welfare of pupils and staff as the paramount principle.
- No increase in pupil numbers until full, actual, proven Track, Trace and Protect performance data confirming level of risk is provided.
- Consideration of the specific needs of vulnerable students and families facing economic disadvantage.
- Additional resources for enhanced school cleaning, PPE and risk assessments.
- Local autonomy to close schools where testing indicates clusters of new Covid-19 cases.

On 10 June the Welsh Government published its Operational Guidance for Schools and Settings: Keep Education Safe (COVID-19) which is aimed at helping headteachers to prepare for wider reopening of their school. Discussions on this document are ongoing with the Welsh Government.

Implementing the steps as suggested is likely to be a huge and wholly unrealistic task for school leaders, who are under massive pressure, and extremely difficult to accomplish in a way which will reassure staff that their health and safety, and that of the children, will be protected.

Our intention is not to make life more difficult but rather to provide material which will assist in putting forward measures and issues to be addressed with headteachers and local authorities to ensure the safest return for pupils and staff.

This joint commentary and checklist will assist reps in scrutinising what is being expected of school leaders. The guide sets out that school leaders should work closely with unions, staff and parents when developing their plans.

Questions for reps to ask are suggested. If satisfactory answers are not forthcoming in all areas, then it may not be feasible or safe to extend opening until concerns are met. There is a checklist of these questions for you to use – but please read all the supplementary advice and questions in the rest of the document before you decide whether to answer Yes or No to each of them.



Also note that every school is unique and, whilst there will be many common features, each will need to consider any additional relevant risk factors beyond what is set out in this joint commentary and checklist. This will include when a high incidence of infections develops in a particular area.

What the Welsh Government says about the role of local authorities in respect of wider schools opening

The document sets out that head teachers should confirm their extended opening plans with relevant bodies particularly their risk assessment. It is also important to consult with the governing body.

Additional Week

On 3 June the Minister proposed that the summer term be extended until 27 July. In doing so she indicated that the additional week would be offset by providing a two-week half term break during the Autumn term.

There are significant logistical and contractual matters that have not been considered and which we consider renders this proposal extremely challenging.

The Minister does not have the power to alter terms and conditions of employment to force staff to work the additional week which has been conveyed to her and raised with the Welsh Local Government Association.

On 18 June the Welsh Government announced that schools and councils will have the final say on whether the summer term is extended for an extra week. However, neither schools nor the local authorities have the power to amend terms and conditions of employment at such short notice. Neither schools nor the local authorities can force any member of staff to work the additional week, although individuals are free to volunteer should they so desire.

Any instances whereby colleagues are being coerced or required to work the additional week against their will should be referred to the Wales office of your union.

Our advice to reps

Before schools can open wider, the LA, as employer, must provide a union-agreed risk assessment template and training for school leaders on how to adapt it to the circumstances of the individual school.

School and health and safety reps have the legal right to be consulted on the risk assessment and future amendments. Also required is a reporting system to be in place to allow staff to urgently alert school leaders to any shortcomings in arrangements or where systems are not functioning as they should.

Further Information

<https://gov.wales/keep-education-safe-operational-guidance-schools-and-settings-covid-19>

<https://gov.wales/keep-education-safe-guidance-learning-over-summer-term>

<https://gov.wales/our-latest-understanding-covid-19-respect-children-and-education>

Summary of checklist questions for reps to answer

Overall

Have you been consulted on the risk assessment for extended opening of your school? Yes No

Are you satisfied that it addresses all key issues?

Yes No

Step 1

Preparing the Site

Health and Safety Check of the Building

Are you satisfied that these checks will be complied with in time for extended opening?

Yes No

Cleaning and hygiene

Are you satisfied with the cleaning and hygiene arrangements that will operate from when extended opening begins?

Yes No

Movement around the school to reduce contact

Are you satisfied that staff and children will be able to move safely through the corridors and up and down stairs from the date when the school opens more widely?

Yes No

Site Examination

Are you satisfied that these arrangements will be in place in time for extended opening and that they will work on a practical level?

Yes No

Step 2

Reviewing staff for availability in school

Audit of staff

Are you satisfied that safe staffing levels will be in place from when the school starts to open more widely?

Yes No

If there is no head/deputy, DSP, ALNCO, caretaker/cleaning staff available

Will the school close if any of these key staff are unavailable? If not, are you satisfied that a safe environment can be maintained from when the school starts to open more widely?

Yes No

Step 3

Familiarise yourself with the maximum safe group size

Are you satisfied that adequate arrangements for group sizes, social distancing and PPE where necessary will be in place when extended opening begins?

Yes No

Step 4

Creating and staffing your temporary teaching groups

Are you satisfied that the arrangements to operate from when the school opens more widely are safe and fair and will be acceptable to both teachers and teaching assistants/LSAs?

Yes No

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Step 5

Practical steps to reduce risk

Are you satisfied that these issues have been resolved to your satisfaction in time for the start of extended opening?

Yes No

Step 6

External support for ALN pupils and behaviour

Are you satisfied that these issues have been considered and that measures covering these areas will be in place in time for extended opening?

Yes No

Step 7

Changes to routines for staff and pupils

Are you satisfied that these issues have been adequately addressed before extended opening begins?

Yes No

Step 8

Communicating with staff

Are you satisfied that this issue has been adequately addressed before extended opening begins?

Yes No

Step 9

Communicating with parents

Are you satisfied that parents are aware of what is expected of them?

Yes No

Step 10

Managing pupil and staff wellbeing and mental health

Are you satisfied that appropriate measures will be in place when the school begins to open more widely?

Yes No

Step 11

Planning what to teach and how

Are you satisfied that these issues will be adequately addressed by the time extended opening begins?

Yes No

Step 12

Remote education during wider opening

Are you satisfied that the school will be able to operate on both levels with the staffing available and without increasing the pressure on staff, when extended opening begins?

Yes No

Questions for reps to ask

Step 1 Preparing the Site

Questions for reps to ask:

Have you been consulted by management and confirmation given to you that each of the following points will be addressed in advance of reopening for schools that have been entirely closed, and that assurances will be given in writing about the safety of the following areas?

- hot and cold-water systems
- gas safety
- fire safety
- kitchen equipment
- Specialist equipment used by pupils (e.g. for access/mobility/changing)
- security including access control and intruder alarm systems
- ventilation

Are you satisfied that these checks will be complied with in time for extended opening?

Yes No

Cleaning and hygiene

- Regular handwashing to be undertaken on arrival at and when leaving the school or setting; before and after handling food; before and after handling objects and equipment that may have been handled by others; where there has been any physical contact; after people blow their nose, sneeze or cough.
- Hand sanitisers with at least 60% alcohol may need to be installed if handwashing is not practical. For instance, at entrances to the school or setting.

- Ensuring effective supply of hygiene and cleaning products.
- Regular cleaning. Hard surfaces to be cleaned with warm soapy water. To be cleaned at least once a day and more frequently in high use areas including bathrooms, railings, tables, toys, equipment door handles, push pads, taps, and hand sanitisers.
- Rooms to be cleaned when different groups use a room.
- Tissues should be placed in a separate waste bin and disposed of safely.
- Rubbish should be removed daily.

Questions for reps to ask:

Reps need assurances about the systems that the head teacher will be able to implement. Without these assurances there can be no expectations on either staff or parents.

- Will soap and, preferably warm, water be available at all times, with systems in place to ensure continuity of supply of soap and sanitiser?
- How will the school ensure that children and staff arriving can safely queue up, at 2-metre distance from each other, to access the sanitiser on arrival?
- Will staffing levels (and PPE) allow for enough staff to support those pupils in special schools to do this who are unable to do it independently?
- Are separate bins available in every classroom? Unless operated by pedal, the lids will need to be regularly sanitised throughout the day. How will this happen? Who will empty them during the day?
- What arrangements are in place to keep every classroom supplied with the necessary hygiene products?
- Will staff and children wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with water and soap on arrival, before departure and regularly throughout the day, including before and after every break and lunchtime, and how will this be supervised and monitored?

- Will pupils be regularly reminded to catch coughs and sneezes with a tissue or elbow?
- Will appropriate PPE be provided in schools where pupils are unable, or less able to catch their sneezes and coughs?
- Will hand dryers be disconnected and replaced with paper towels and bins?
- Will drinking fountains be taken out of use?
- Will only rooms with windows that can be kept open be used?
- Will doors be kept open where possible to aid ventilation?
- Will separate risk assessments take place in classes where leaving a door open will expose children to additional risks?
- Will the use of air conditioning systems be ceased unless it can be confirmed that there is no additional risk?
- Will all areas of the premises be thoroughly cleaned on a daily basis with particular focus on surfaces that are touched by multiple people such as photocopiers, door handles, table/counter tops, computers including mouse and keyboard, light switches, telephones, chairs, bannisters, shared learning resources or toys, specialist equipment for ALN pupils, toilets and toilet handles, sinks, taps and other areas touched regularly, with additional cleaning during the day as necessary?
- Is cleaning with soapy water enough to maintain adequate hygiene levels?
- Will each classroom be provided with gloves and disinfectant spray in case a pupil coughs or sneezes on a piece of equipment?
- Is there capacity amongst the cleaning staff to meet these requirements?

Are you satisfied with the cleaning and hygiene arrangements that will operate from when extended opening begins?

Yes No

Movement around the school

Questions for reps to ask:

- Will a one-way system be introduced? If not, why is it not needed?
- What arrangements are proposed for safe movement on staircases?
- What arrangements are in place for use of lifts – can social distancing be achieved if a staff member travels in the lift with a child?
- How will staff and children be made aware of the new arrangements, with particular reference to very young children and those with special needs?
- Who will monitor that the systems are being complied with? Will a member of staff be on duty at all times?
- Are other measures needed in corridors, for example floor markings or removal of furniture or students walking in single file without holding hands?
- Is there provision for the movement of pupils around the school who may need additional assistance from an adult?
- How will pupils and staff keep 2 metres apart, even with these arrangements?
- What arrangements are proposed around access to pupil toilets to ensure no overcrowding during lesson and break time?
- What signage will be displayed to support these new systems?

Are you satisfied that staff and children will be able to move safely through the corridors and up and down stairs from the date when the school opens more widely?

Yes No

Site Examination

Head teachers are advised to examine the classrooms available and any other rooms that can be used as temporary classrooms.

Questions for reps:

- Given that classes could be split, how in practical terms can resources be split between two or more classrooms?
- Will additional resources be needed to ensure that all classes have what they need?
- How will young children be taught (reception especially and nursery) without physical resource?

Are you satisfied that these arrangements will be in place in time for schools to open more widely and that they work on a practical level?

Yes No

Step 2

Reviewing staff for availability in school

Audit of staff

 Note: Teaching staff are contracted on fixed terms that cannot be amended without consultation. School support staff operate on a term time only basis and so are not contractually obliged to be available for the additional week added to the end of the summer term. School support staff availability will be down to individual agreement and support staff must receive additional pay for this period if it is worked.

Questions for reps to ask:

- Are you satisfied with the proposed rota arrangements?
- Have you been given an assurance that there will always be a head/deputy, first aider, Designated Senior Person (DSP), ALNCO, caretaker and sufficient cleaning staff on duty at all times?
- Are you satisfied that consistency can be ensured to minimise staff movement between classes?
- Will sufficient cleaning staff be engaged to allow for the enhanced cleaning levels required?
- Have you been given an assurance that non cleaning staff will not be expected to undertake cleaning work?
- Has the site been measured to ascertain the maximum capacity and proportion of pupils that can be accommodated to allow safe distancing? (This needs a cautious approach in relation to staff availability, taking into account those who must work from home because they are vulnerable or may need to self-isolate and likely future levels of absence.)

- Is it clear to all staff and parents that only healthy staff and pupils who are not exhibiting symptoms, and who do not need to self-isolate, may attend school?
- Is it clear that pregnant staff and those with underlying health conditions that make them vulnerable, or who live with or care for vulnerable or shielding household members or those over age of 70 are permitted to continue to work from home? If staff or learners do attend, extra care must be taken to ensure vulnerable individuals, and those around them adhere to strict social distancing guidelines.
- Have the risks to Black staff been assessed when planning rotas? Evidence from the Office for National Statistics shows a greater impact of Covid-19 on Black communities with a disproportionate number of deaths being recorded.
- Will parents be advised that the school cannot guarantee to be able to keep their children socially distant, with support for parents to assess the risks to themselves and other family members of sending their child to school?
- What arrangements are in place for safe induction of new staff during this period?
- Have catering staff been involved in discussions about how meals will be served and are there sufficient catering and lunchtime supervision staff to ensure that children can safely eat their lunch?
- Is there a procedure to close the school or college at short notice if staffing levels fall to levels where safety cannot be assured?

Are you satisfied that safe staffing levels will be in place from when the school starts to open wider?

Yes No

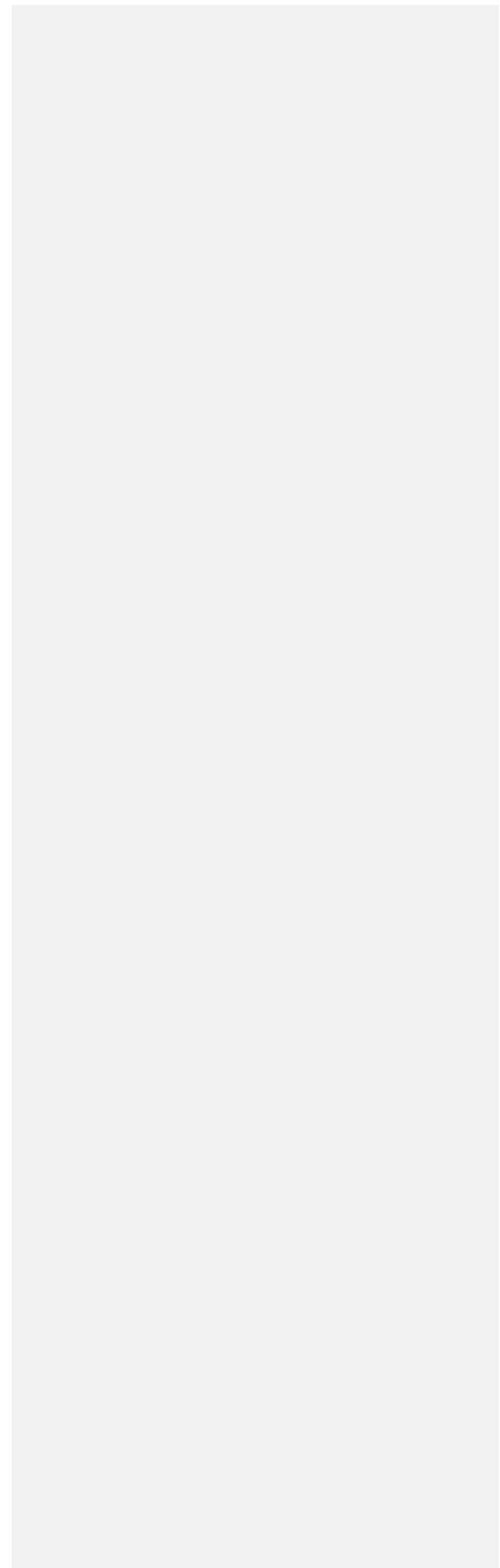
If there is no head teacher/deputy head teacher, DSP, ALNCO, caretaker/adequate numbers of cleaning staff available

Questions for reps to ask:

- Will the school close if any of these key staff are unavailable?

If not, are you satisfied that a safe environment can be maintained from when the school starts to open more widely?

Yes No



Step 3

Familiarise yourself with the maximum safe group size

Questions for reps to ask:

- Given that social distancing is expected in all other areas of society, it is unacceptable that Welsh Government expects schools to open without the protections that are recommended for other environments, e.g. shops and public transport. What is proposed to address this issue?
- Where there is a risk of airborne contamination, because social distancing cannot easily be adhered to, particularly where staff are at risk from spitting or biting and where pupils are unable to catch or control coughs and sneezes, the joint unions believe that PPE must be provided and training given on its use and disposal. Will this happen?
- Will PPE be available for emergency situations, for example when a pupil develops symptoms during the school day and is awaiting collection?
- What assurances can be given about secure arrangements for sourcing PPE?
- Can confirmation be given that, if any member of staff wishes to wear a face covering, they will not be prevented from doing so?

Are you satisfied that adequate arrangements for group sizes, social distancing and PPE where necessary will be in place when extended opening begins?

Yes No

Step 4

Creating and staffing your temporary teaching groups

The next step is to work out how to accommodate the eligible pupils, should they all come to school, calculating for a maximum group size of a third of the school in mainstream and assuming that all children will attend on their allocated days.

Questions for reps to ask:

- How many pupils can each individual classroom safely accommodate to ensure that they and staff remain 2-metres apart on entry and departure and during the lesson? This needs to take account of the additional staff numbers in classes with ALN pupils who have individual adult support. How many people altogether will be in a classroom should be the measure.
- What areas are safe to use for different purposes than usual to aid social distancing?
- What is the maximum size class proposed under these arrangements? Can staff be expected to safely supervise this size class whilst ensuring that pupils are socially distant?
- Has account been taken of the fact that some staff, in particular support staff, normally work at close proximity to individual pupils and how this work can continue in a safe manner?
- In special schools, given the level of adult support required for pupils, what is a safe number of people to have in a classroom and how is this determined?
- In special schools, where social distancing will be impossible, what measures are in place to protect staff and pupils?
- To what extent can parents of ALN children be reassured that their child will still be working with, or have access to, their key worker/learning support assistant?
- Can an assurance be given that teaching assistants, unless it is part of their normal role such as for higher level teaching assistant, will not be expected to lead classes?
- Will supply teachers be brought in as necessary?
- Will senior leaders be available to cover classes if needed?
- Will parents be told not to bring their children to school if there is a shortage of staff for a particular class?

Are you satisfied that the arrangements to operate from when the school opens more widely are safe and fair and will be acceptable to both teachers, teaching assistants and learning support assistants?

Yes No

Step 5

Practical steps to reduce risk

Questions for reps to ask:

- How does the school propose to ensure social distancing at the start and end of each school day?
 - What measures are in place to protect staff and pupils who may at times need to use physical interventions (in alternative provision (AP) and mainstream) to protect pupils from harming themselves or others? (They will clearly not be able to socially distance when doing this)
 - In AP what measures are in place to ensure that enough appropriately trained staff are on site to support pupils with behavioural issues to keep safe? How and what PPE will be used in this situation?
 - Is it practical to stagger arrival times, if so how?
 - How will parents be informed and the system monitored?
 - Is there sufficient staffing to monitor the safe arrival and departure of children at varying times?
 - How will overcrowding at the school gates or in the playground be prevented?
 - What will be expected of parents/carers in terms of social distancing and how will they be informed of arrangements?
 - Will parents/carers be instructed that they may not enter the premises other than in an emergency situation?
 - Will there be clear guidelines on entry to school about the procedures in place for essential visitors to the school?
 - Will there be social distancing measures in place for visitors to the school?
 - Will visitors working closely with pupils be offered PPE where necessary?
 - How will other unauthorised visitors be kept away?
 - Will enough staff be available at the beginning of the day (and able to socially distance) to assist children in coming into school where needed (younger children/ children with ALN/anxiety etc)?
 - How will break times operate to ensure social distancing?
 - What will happen in wet weather at break and lunchtimes?
 - What arrangements are in place to ensure that meals can be safely prepared and served?
 - How many separate lunch sittings will be needed to ensure social distancing and is sufficient staffing in place to manage this, even where someone may be absent?
 - Have families been told to provide water bottles?
 - How will breaks for staff operate?
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- Have assemblies and the coming together of other large groups, both staff and pupils, been suspended?
- Is there a system in place for isolating children who develop symptoms during the day, while they wait to be picked up?
- Will all staff be sent home as soon as they report symptoms during the school day and will arrangements be in place to provide cover as necessary?
- Have off site visits been suspended?
- What are the plans for ensuring that staff can travel safely to and from school?

- For those who have no car and cannot walk or cycle, how can they safely travel to school, when use of public transport is discouraged? (note: car sharing other than between members of the same household should not happen). A safe travel plan for each individual member of staff will need to be agreed.
- Where school transport operates under normal circumstances, how will this operate at this time, ensuring social distancing and hygiene arrangements?

Are you satisfied that these issues have been resolved to your satisfaction in time for the start of extended opening?

Yes No

Step 6

External Support for ALN pupils and Behaviour

Welsh Government has used its powers under the Coronavirus Act 2020 so that ALN Cos must undertake "reasonable endeavours" to meet the deadlines for an 'annual review' of statements. But where meeting the deadline is not possible, the review should be completed as soon as practicable thereafter.

Currently all local authorities remain under obligation to comply with the law and regulations regarding special educational or additional learning needs. There is no immediate change to the duties on local authorities.

Questions for reps to ask:

- Will individual risk assessments and discussion with parents/carers have taken place and been agreed by the date when extended opening begins, to ensure that any provision required by a child in order to attend school is safely in place?
- Will local authority support for children, especially those in receipt of a 'statement', ensure that children with additional or special needs can attend school, alongside their peers.
- Will there be clear guidelines on entry to school about the procedures in place for essential visitors from external agencies visiting pupils at the school (e.g. educational psychologists, child and adult mental health services (CAMHS), behavioural support, advisory teachers etc)?

- When working with children with personal care needs, including those who may come to school in a nappy, has there been a full individual risk assessment, including appropriate PPE and safeguarding issues.
- Will there be social distancing measures in place for visitors from external support agencies visiting pupils at school?
- Will visitors working closely with pupils be offered PPE where necessary?
- If LAs cannot provide additional trauma support for pupils can another provider be quality assured and risk assessed in time for when the school begins to open more widely?

Are you satisfied that these issues have been considered and that measures covering these areas will be in place in time for extended opening?

Yes No

Step 7

Changes to routines for staff and pupils

Questions for reps to ask:

- Will guidance and training be provided for staff to ensure they understand, and can enforce, the new routines. Will this guidance also help staff to support pupils in understanding them and be familiar with revised physical arrangements, well in advance of when wider opening begins?
- Will individual pupil risk assessments be in place for all pupils who exhibit anti-social behaviour, e.g. biting, before a decision is made about admitting them under the new arrangements?
- Will compassionate and proportionate behaviour policies that protect health and safety, while also supporting pupils who may exhibit problematic behaviours as a response to trauma they may have experienced during lockdown, be in place by the time wider opening begins?
- It will not be safe to mark children's books during this period. Will clear instruction be given that no marking should take place and the books should not be taken to and from home/school?
- Will staff be told to wash their hands before and after handling pupils' books?
- Will library books be regularly sanitised?
- Some teaching assistants will be used to working in very close proximity to individual pupils, so how can this work continue in a safe manner?
- Have parents been informed about new arrangements for drop off and pick up routines?
- Have other regular visitors to the school, e.g. parent volunteers, been informed that they should not attend at this time?
- Do essential contractors, including those who deliver food, understand how they may access the premises and what precautions are expected of them while they are onsite?
- Are catering staff aware of new safe working practices?

Are you satisfied that these issues have been adequately addressed before extended opening begins?

Yes No

Step 8 Communicating with staff

Clear support mechanisms should be in place, for example access to employee assistance programmes.

Questions for reps to ask:

- Will all staff receive training and support ahead of the re-opening of the school?
- Are staff clear about what is expected of them?
- Will senior staff be visibly present around school during the day?
- What arrangements will be put in place to ensure regular staff feedback on arrangements?

Are you satisfied with on-going communication arrangements?

Yes No

Step 9 Communicating with parents

Head teachers are advised to communicate with parents so that they know who will attend school, when and what measures will be in place to 'ensure parents and carers understand expectations'.

Are you satisfied that parents are aware of what is expected of them?

Yes No

Step 10

Managing pupil and staff wellbeing and mental health

It is recognised that school closure may have caused significant mental health difficulties for some children and some may have suffered a bereavement. Staff may be similarly affected.

Questions for reps to ask:

- What guidance will be given to staff on how to support children?
- What pastoral support services will be available?
- Does the school recognise its duties under health and safety law to protect the mental as well as physical health of staff?
- What plans are in place to ensure that this duty is applied?
- What counselling services are available for staff and pupils who may need support?
- How will the school monitor workload at this time to ensure a reasonable work/life balance for staff?

Are you satisfied that appropriate measures will be in place when the school begins to open more widely?

Yes No

Step 11

Planning what to teach and how

Questions for reps to ask:

- It recommended by others that children should be taught not to touch their faces – how can this realistically be taught or monitored?
- It is also recommended that high touch areas including toys be regularly cleaned – what additional staff resources will be allocated to these tasks, given that these materials are likely to be in constant use?
- How will staff ensure that children do not share resources?
- How will staff be supported to teach outside their usual year group/keystage responsibility?
- Has time been given for staff to work together to agree shared priorities for children's learning?
- Has time been identified for staff to work together to prepare teaching, particularly to adjust their teaching of practical lessons and of play-based curriculum without shared physical resources?
- Has support been given to teaching assistants to prepare for supporting pupils?
- How will staff maintain continuity of learning and support as pupils begin to return, but have additional periods of time away?

Are you satisfied that these issues will be adequately addressed by the time extended opening begins?

Yes No

Step 12

Remote education during wider opening

The Welsh Government guidance places an emphasis on a 'blended' approach to learning. More staff will be needed at school when opening is extended, so it may be more difficult to maintain the same level of remote learning provision for pupils. All pupils will still be required to continue learning from home.

Questions for reps to ask:

- What arrangements will be in place for year groups?
- What arrangements will be in place for pupils with underlying health conditions who cannot attend when the rest of their year group may be inschool?
- How will the senior leadership team (SLT) ensure that any change in opening arrangements does not increase workload for staff whether working at home or at school?

Are you satisfied that the school will be able to operate on both levels with the staffing available and without increasing the pressure on staff when extended opening begins?

Yes No
