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Black and Welsh history must
be part of new curriculum.

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educateinwales

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‘We cannot afford to get this wrong again’

THE cancellation of this summer’s exams must not come at the cost of extra work for students and their teachers, says NEU Cymru secretary David Evans.

While welcoming the Welsh Government’s decision in November to cancel GCSE, AS and A-level exams, he said the wellbeing of everyone in the system must be kept in mind.

“It is critical that we don’t have a repeat of what happened [last] summer, which was exceptionally difficult for those who should have been taking exams,” he said.

“We must ensure that young people have a consistent assessment process in place which means their abilities are recognised for their next steps. But this must not mean extra work for everyone involved – both staff and students alike. The education system is already struggling.”

Announcing the cancellation of the exams, Education Minister Kirsty Williams said they would be replaced by teacher-managed assessments. These would include assessments which were “externally set and marked but delivered within a classroom environment under teacher supervision”.

She said the main reason for her decision to cancel the exams was one of fairness: “The time learners will spend in schools and colleges will vary hugely and, in this situation, it is impossible to guarantee a level playing field for exams to take place.”

David said it was important there is a plan in place which trusts teachers to know their students. “We cannot afford to get this wrong again, we need to make the grades young people receive as fair as people,” he said.

■ A petition organised by NEU Cymru calling for fairness for students taking exams had collected 2,022 signatures.



The opening of Ysgol Abersoch’s nursery group last February PHOTO by Dewi Wyn

A GWYNEDD community is fighting to keep its village school open in the face of moves by the council to close it. Ysgol Abersoch on the Llŷn Peninsula has just ten pupils, which campaigners say gives the children an unrivalled education. “The children are getting individual attention,” said Margot Jones, chair of the school governors who are leading the fight against the proposed closure. Parents have launched a petition and a crowdfunding appeal as part of the campaign to save the school.

The council has agreed to start a statutory public consultation on its proposal to close it on 31 August this year, a decision made because of the reduction in the number of pupils. But Margot said the school had already been taking steps to ensure numbers could be sustained and even increased. It currently takes children up to year 3 and has suggested they could continue until year 4, and a new Cylch Meithrin (nursery group) has opened in the building.

The governors are also concerned proper consultation would be difficult during the coronavirus pandemic as public meetings cannot be held. “We just feel we need some time post-Covid to reap the benefits of the things we have put in place,” said Margot, whose great-grandfather was on the first board of governors in 1924.

■ Sign the petition at bit.ly/2UZty09 and donate at justgiving.com/crowdfunding/ysgolabersoch

'History must speak to everyone'

THE Education Minister has given assurances that the new curriculum for Wales will reflect the experiences and histories of the people who live here.

Kirsty Williams was speaking at a Senedd meeting where two petitions relating to the teaching of history were debated.

While one called on the Welsh Government to create "a common body of knowledge" about Welsh history, the other said it should be compulsory for the histories of Black people to be taught in schools.

'Rounded and nuanced view'

Janet Finch-Saunders, chair of the petitions committee, said the histories raised by both petitions were equally part of the story of Wales and its people.

"A full teaching of our history, good and bad, and what it means for today's Wales, must seek to speak to everyone, and to develop in our young people a rounded and nuanced view of what came before them. That is no small challenge," she said.

The development of the new curriculum, due to be introduced from 2022, was an opportune moment to hold this discussion, she added.

Ms Williams responded that she was confident that the resources and guidance being developed for the curriculum would empower schools to teach the histories of Wales and its diverse communities "in every area of learning" and not just in history lessons.

"The whole purpose is to encourage learners to explore themes across the curriculum," she said.

"The diverse histories of the people of Wales can be taught not only in the areas of humanities, but also in languages, literature and communication, and in science and technology."

Funding to deliver new curriculum

NEU Cymru has emphasised the importance of providing sufficient funding and training to ensure education professionals are properly equipped to deliver the new curriculum.

The union believes the timetable for its introduction in 2022 is very ambitious, particularly in light of the Covid pandemic.

Supporting the principles behind the Curriculum and Assessment Bill, NEU Cymru believes it is "a once in a generation opportunity to ensure children and young people can become future citizens of Wales".

Learning dates for your diary

LEARNING is at the heart of NEU Cymru and we take pride in the local training that we provide for education professionals, local officers and workplace representatives. The union represents the largest group of education professionals in Wales and our belief in the power of learning for all is reflected in our provision of learning opportunities.

Training for reps

Due to the continuing health crisis, the union's one- and three-day training courses for all new and existing workplace reps have been temporarily replaced with interim virtual courses.

Running in each of the four regional consortia areas, they will be delivered over a period of six weeks with weekly two-hour sessions to run from 4-6pm. To attend, contact the NEU Cymru office.

Anyone interested in becoming a workplace rep and attending one of our courses can email cymru.wales@neu.org.uk

Find out more about national NEU courses at neu.org.uk/learning

More courses through WULF

Courses are also available through the Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF) project and a regularly updated list of

topics can be found at bit.ly/36PD1jP with information on how to register.

During the pandemic, the WULF project will continue to provide online courses for members. These have proved extremely popular and more courses will be organised over the coming months to meet demand.

Future online courses will include literacy, numeracy, wellbeing and digital competency - check your email inbox and our Facebook page (see below).

If you would like the union to consider organising a particular course, email either Lisa Williams at lisa.williams@neu.org.uk or Beth Roberts at beth.roberts@neu.org.uk

Courses must fall within our four main priority areas of essential skills; career progression and development; health and wellbeing; and Welsh language learning.

WULF funding for Covid-19 support

EXTRA training courses on providing support to children and families affected by the coronavirus pandemic will be available after NEU Cymru's successful bid for funding.

The union applied for a share of an additional £250,000 to the Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF) from the Welsh Government's Covid Commitment package.

Consequently, the WULF team will be working with the following organisations to provide courses in the spring term:

■ Child Poverty Action Group (cpag.org.uk) and Children North East (children-ne.org.uk) to organise and run six free training sessions on "the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on poverty levels in Wales and how schools can take pressure off families".

■ The Present Courses CIC (thepresentcourses.org) to organise and deliver two training courses on teaching mindfulness to children aged three to 12.

■ Unite's WULF project team to develop and pilot a virtual learning environment (VLE) to support individuals with their employability skills and other training needs.

Watch out for NEU Cymru's WULF training emails and follow us on Facebook and Eventbrite.

Facebook facebook.com/neucymrutraining and Twitter at [@neucymrutrain](https://twitter.com/neucymrutrain)

Virtual lectures for trainees

A PROGRAMME of informative lectures for trainee teachers at universities across Wales is being continued online during the pandemic.

Under normal circumstances, NEU Cymru would visit all the Initial Teacher Training universities during the academic year. As this has not been possible, lectures are being provided virtually, both live and pre-recorded. Topics include:

- dealing with unprofessional behaviour
- the perils of social networking sites
- education, the law, and you the teacher
- terms and conditions of service
- job applications: essential information
- interviews: essential information
- induction: roles, responsibilities and top tips.

If you would like to organise one of the above lectures for yourself and your fellow trainees, email Stuart Williams at the NEU Cymru office at cymru.wales@neu.org.uk

Join free as a trainee or for just £1 if you are newly qualified – visit neu.org.uk/join-now

NEU Cymru also offers a presentation to members on the career average pension scheme. To arrange this presentation for you or your branch, contact Stuart as above.



SECONDARY school pupils can get a taste of nature and the outdoors at 'wild camps' organised by Cambrian Wildwood on the edge of the mountains near Machynlleth, Powys. Places on the camps are offered to students who have difficulty accessing education, for example young carers or victims of bullying. Activities such as river trekking, food foraging and campfire cooking give them the opportunity to learn new skills and build self-esteem. There are also education programmes for primary schools.

For more information, email clarissa.richards@coetiranian.org

- Read our feature on outdoor learning on pages 26-29 inside Educate.

Agencies paying below minimum rate

SOME of the agencies included in the national supply teachers' framework are trying to get round paying the minimum amount demanded by the agreement.

NEU Cymru has been contacted by several supply teacher members with complaints about agencies paying less than they should.

The National Procurement Services Supply Teachers Framework for Wales was introduced in September 2019 and 27 agencies were awarded framework contracts on a geographical/local authority basis.

The aim was to protect supply teachers while ensuring minimum quality standards and statutory safeguarding obligations would be met by all the agencies.

This included the introduction of a minimum daily pay rate for supply teachers in line with the current School Teachers' Pay

The NEU prefers schools to use local authority supply pools or to employ teachers directly.

and Conditions Document (STPCD), based on the minimum amount on the main pay scale in Wales – currently £27,018 annually or £138.55 per day.

The NEU still prefers schools to use supply pools, organised by local authorities, or to employ teachers directly to ensure full pay and pension rights.

But if schools do use agency staff, the union encourages them to use framework agencies that have to meet specific requirements to be awarded a contract.

However, complaints from members indicate that some agencies are not meeting their payment obligations. One of the most common explanations they give for not paying the minimum daily rate is that the school has not signed up to the framework so they cannot offer the minimum amount.

The union advises that this is completely incorrect – it is not the school that signs up to the framework, but the supply agency itself.

The National Procurement Service wants to hear of any examples of registered agencies trying to circumvent the regulations – email nationalprocurementservices@wales.gsi.gov.uk or call 0300 790 0170.

- A list of the awarded suppliers is available at bit.ly/3kJFeSC

Here to help

AS the largest education union, NEU Cymru can offer members an unrivalled service.

Our professional team is here to provide expertise to our network of workplace representatives and district and branch secretaries.

If you have a problem at work or want to know more about member services, contact:

- your workplace representative
- your branch secretary
- Adviceline
- NEU Cymru office.

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No fines for absenteeism

THE Welsh Government continues to follow a 'no fines' policy for school absenteeism during the pandemic.

The schools guidance says that there are many reasons why a learner, parent/carer or staff member may be anxious about returning to school, and it recommends schools discuss their concerns and find a way of ensuring continued learning can take place.

■ Read the guidance at bit.ly/2UAASTh

Green light for pay proposals

LAST September NEU Cymru responded to the Welsh Government's proposals for the 2020 teachers' pay award on the back of the Independent Welsh Pay Review Board's (IWPRB) recommendations. The seven main IWPRB recommendations were agreed and the union can now confirm that:

- the starting salary for new teachers has increased by 8.4 per cent to £27,018
- teachers currently on the main pay range have received a 3.75 per cent rise
- teachers on the upper pay scale have received a 2.75 per cent rise
- a new statutory five-point pay scale has been introduced
- school leadership pay ranges have been uplifted by 2.75 per cent
- teacher allowances and all other pay ranges have been uplifted by 2.75 per cent.

The Education Minister has also:

- scrapped performance-related pay
- re-introduced progression based on experience via a new five-point pay scale.

Free school meals in Wales

NEU Cymru was pleased to see the Welsh Government extend free school meals through the holidays for the rest of this Senedd term.

Wales secretary David Evans said: "In times like this, one less thing to worry about is going to be critical, especially as we know that Covid-19 especially hits deprived communities."

The announcement, made in time to provide funding for the winter half-term, was welcomed by food poverty campaigner and footballer Marcus Rashford. "Holiday provision is vital to stabilising households during the school closures, given the devastating effects of Covid-19," he said.



BLAENAU Gwent branch secretary Hannah O'Neill has been appointed as one of the NEU executive members for Wales. She joins Neil Foden and Máiréad Canavan who were elected in the previous executive election cycle in 2019.

Hannah takes over from Lesley Tipping, who has retired. NEU Cymru would like to congratulate Hannah and also thank Lesley for all her hard work as an executive member and wish her a long and happy retirement.

The Welsh Government was the first in the UK to announce the extension of free school meals through the holidays until Easter. It had also been first to guarantee funding for the 2020 summer holidays.

Covid reconstruction cash

PLANNED investment in young people by the Welsh Government has been welcomed by NEU Cymru.

Key priorities in the Covid-19 reconstruction package for Wales include 'catch-up' provision for students, more places in further education (FE) and increased provision of digital devices to help students learning online.

David Evans, Wales secretary for NEU Cymru, said: "These are difficult times, with Covid-19 having an impact on learning and wellbeing. Extra places at FE colleges will help ensure that young people can continue with their learning. We don't want an increase in the number of young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET), as we go through a challenging time for the economy."

He said the extra money for digital devices would be important if schools and colleges need to close again.