



Kirsty Williams MS
Minister for Education
Welsh Government
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Voice Cymru
PO Box 2539
Cardiff
CF23 0HJ

4 June 2020

Our Ref: DL.lag

Dear Cabinet Minister

Increase of operations of schools in Wales

Further to your announcement, I am writing to express the deep concern of Voice members regarding both the extension to the summer term and the proposal for all year groups to be in school during the extended term.

While we wish to continue to work co-operatively with the Welsh Government, it is necessary to point out that both proposals appear to disregard the points raised in our statement sent to your officials on Monday, and indeed, run contrary to your own five principles for increasing the operations of schools.

Firstly, as the first of your principles emphasises, the safety of students and staff must be paramount, and we have real concerns that the scientific evidence provided does not justify the Welsh Government's proposals.

Secondly, our further concerns regarding each of these proposals are as follows.

Extension to the Summer Term

- How the contractual issues regarding the extension of the current school year will be resolved, particularly regarding support staff who work term times, and whether the additional week's work will be paid and/or optional.
- How the issues regarding members of the workforce who planned holidays at the beginning of the Summer term, or children whose family planned holidays at the start of the Summer term, will be addressed, given it may be possible for certain types of holiday to be taken by 20 July.
- Whether members of the workforce who were due to retire at the end of the Summer term, both teachers and support staff, will be required to work an additional week, whether the week will be paid and/or whether the additional week's work will be optional.
- The availability of childcare and nursery places for the proposed additional week, and the difficulties for members of the workforce in arranging childcare and or wrap-around care for that week.
- An appropriate equality impact assessment must be undertaken.

- The real educational benefits to all learners in an additional week's education, when compared with the logistical problems and potential harm to the additional workload and workforce's wellbeing in extending the summer term.
- The fact that announcement was not accompanied by guidance reduces the planning and preparation time

All Year Groups to Return to School

It has proved difficult for schools in England to extend their opening only to certain year groups; we consider that it will be a logistical nightmare for all schools in Wales – particularly small rural or large secondary schools – to try and arrange this for all learners, *'in much smaller classes'*, even with cohorts and staggered times.

We believe that our own preference for years 6, 10 and 12 to return, if safe to do so, during the normal summer term, in order to target resources on those groups that need additional support at this time, was also supported by most of the unions.

We would be grateful for further clarification regarding the evidence used to determine that the additional workload of the education workforce will justify the benefit to learners, and further, why the Welsh Government proposed that all years should return without further consultation.

We would also like to request to know if an equality impact assessment has been undertaken and what the findings and recommendations of it are.

I look forward to receiving your response as a matter of urgency in order that Voice can continue to work constructively with the Welsh Government and support Voice members across all phases of education and childcare.

Yours sincerely



Deborah Lawson
General Secretary
deborahlawson@voicetheunion.org.uk