



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

Dyddiad/ Date 18th June 2020
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Dear Colleagues,

As you will be well aware, the Welsh Government announced on 3rd June that schools are to partially reopen on a 'check in, catch up and prepare' basis. The original announcement stipulated that this would be for a period of four weeks from 29th June. The Council is grateful for all the hard work being done in schools to prepare for the 29th.

However, we understand that the Welsh Government and the trade unions cannot reach a common position on the fourth week as a voluntary exercise despite protracted discussions. For its part, the Council does not propose to ask teaching and other school staff to volunteer and NPT schools will close for the summer holidays on 17th July.

This is for the following reasons:

- There is no contractual obligation on staff to work the extra week and this effectively puts the onus on head teachers and individual staff members which would, in our opinion, be unfair and potentially divisive at a time when schools face more than enough challenges. A consistent approach is deemed essential and the Council would have much preferred to have seen these issues resolved on a national basis at the outset, prior to the original announcement.

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Croesewir gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a byddwn yn ymdrin â gohebiaeth Gymraeg a Saesneg i'r un safonau ac amserlenni.
We welcome correspondence in Welsh and will deal with Welsh and English correspondence to the same standards and timescales.

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- There is no guarantee that all schools will be in a position to adequately staff provision in the fourth week on a voluntary basis. As time marches on, it is the view of the Council that absolute and immediate clarity is required for schools, parents and young people; schools, so that they can plan on a fixed basis to receive as many pupils as possible during this period; parents and young people in order that they can approach the next weeks with confidence; and for parents to have the opportunity to make alternative childcare arrangements as required in the fourth week. This is not something that can be left to the last minute and the Council is very mindful of its statutory responsibilities both as an employer and in the context of the safeguarding of children and young people.

- In the absence of such clarity, schools also risk engaging in potentially abortive planning, as does the Council and its external partners (e.g. the NHS who are charged with organising the testing regime for school staff).

There will be no detriment to members of staff by following this course of action; the additional week of leave that is proposed for the Autumn Term will be a universal entitlement for all school based staff.

With some of the consequential changes being introduced as early as next week (e.g. the end of the previous hub arrangements), the Council has concluded that we can wait no longer to make firm decisions that inform your planning and operation. Thus it has been decided that the original term dates will be adhered to.

Whilst we believe that there are sound educational and medical reasons for opening schools for the 'fourth week', these have been completely lost in the argument. Under such circumstances, decisive actions are needed.

I trust that you will appreciate and welcome this announcement that allows you to plan and reopen your schools with complete clarity.

Yours sincerely,



Steven Phillips
Chief Executive



Aled Evans
Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning