Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT
BY
THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Return to school and college arrangements**

DATE **04 January 2021**

BY **Kirsty Williams MS, Minister for Education**

The situation in Wales and across the UK remains very serious. Today, the four UK Chief Medical Officers have agreed that the UK is now at the highest level of risk, Joint Biosecurity Council level 5.

In the light of that decision the Welsh Government, in consultation with the WLGA and Colegau Cymru, has agreed that all schools, colleges and independent schools should move to online learning until January 18th.

As a government we will use the next two weeks to continue to work with local authorities, schools and colleges to plan for the rest of term.

This is the best way to ensure that parents, staff and learners can be confident in the return to face to face learning, based on the latest evidence and information.

Schools and colleges will remain open for children of critical workers and vulnerable learners, as well as for learners who need to complete essential exams or assessments. On this basis Special Schools and PRU's should remain open if possible.

We had initially given schools flexibility in the first two weeks of term to decide when to reopen based on local circumstances.

But it is now clear that a national approach of online learning for the first fortnight of term is the best way forward.

We know that schools and colleges have been safe and secure environments throughout the pandemic.

However, we also know that education settings being open can contribute to wider social mixing outside the school and college environment.