



17 December 2020

Dear colleague

It has certainly been a long term – and we have faced situations we could never have imagined this time in 2019.

However, what has been constant is my respect and admiration for you, as an education profession and a teaching community, which has grown by countless tales of kindness, dedication and concern for our young people. I mean this sincerely, I genuinely appreciate the tremendous pressure you have been under and how you have supported pupils and families.

The increased transmission of COVID-19 is almost likely to mean that that we will face a challenging start to 2021. But there is light at the end of the tunnel with our roll out of the vaccination already underway.

We will continue to work to make schools safe spaces. As part of the arrangements for testing in schools from January, special school staff will be offered weekly testing and all close contacts (pupils and staff) of a confirmed positive test will be offered serial testing as an alternative to self-isolation. We continue to work through the detail with your local authority and will be in touch in the New Year.

On Monday we published our [updated COVID control plan](#), which gave clarity on what will be open and closed under the different 4 levels. We will do all we can to keep schools open because of the harm caused by closing them. I know that many of you are concerned about returning to school in January and we continue to have discussions with local authorities and Unions about the arrangements. As you will appreciate things can change quickly in response to the virus but we will make sure that you are kept informed of any developments as quickly as possible via your local authorities.

Although the following information may not directly affect your school, I would like all headteachers to be aware of the announcement I made yesterday, regarding the assessment arrangements replacing exams in summer 2021.

My intention is for general qualifications to be supported by a three pillar approach made up of:

- non-examination assessments,
- internal assessments, 22 February to 23 April

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

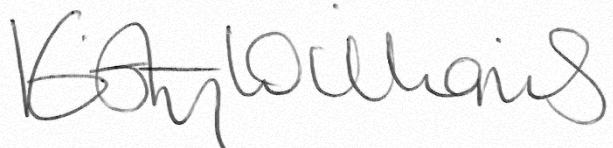
We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and responding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

- assessments that are externally set and marked, 17 May to 29 June

There will be more detailed information from the WJEC in the New Year including details of training that will be made available to teachers.

I hope you and your team are able to relax during the holiday break and have a safe Christmas. Thank you once again for all you have done to make a positive difference in pupil's lives.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams'.

Kirsty Williams AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education