



Jeremy Miles MS
Minister for Education and the Welsh Language
Welsh Government
5th Floor
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

24 August 2021

Dear Minister

TAKE URGENT ACTION ON VENTILATION IN OUR SCHOOLS

We are writing to you today, to urge you to ensure that every school in Wales has CO2 monitors, and access to funding to address any issues with ventilation which any such monitor identifies. We are concerned that when children return to school in September very few mitigations to slow the spread of Covid-19 will be in place.

For example, according to the latest Operational Guidance for schools published on Friday (August 20th), it won't be necessary to keep children in consistent groups. We understand that only very limited numbers of children will be contact traced by the TTP and in general, face coverings are 'not advised' for pupils, staff, or even visitors, anywhere on school premises.

We have seen the latest version of the schools' framework, which will supersede the operational guidance when published in the next few

days. We remain deeply concerned that the framework does not address the issue of ventilation, raised repeatedly by the trade unions.

Whilst we acknowledge that the situation in schools has changed because of the vaccine programme, we believe there is still the possibility of steeply increasing Covid-19 cases in the Autumn.

Covid-19 infections in the wider community are higher than this time last year, and the vaccine has not yet been offered to many pupils. We believe therefore that effective safety measures remain important, particularly ventilation, in order both to reduce the extent to which the virus is spread within education settings and within the wider community, and to reduce the extent that staff and students are absent due to Covid or suffer its ill-effects, including those of Long Covid.

Whilst the framework states that core interventions like good ventilation must remain, we do not feel this issue is being addressed. If other mitigation measures are being removed, we must continue to maintain those still in place to ensure the September return to school is successful and sustainable. We believe everyone wants this school year to be as free from disruption as possible, so it is critical that we focus on mitigations from the start of term.

We understand that the following has been included in a FE operational protocol for Covid to address concerns relating to ventilation:

Regular air exchange is crucial to ensure a safe working environment. Where the competent person identifies a teaching or work space where there may be a lack of fresh air because it is an enclosed space and not suitably ventilated, a risk assessment should be undertaken to establish protocols such as ensuring time to change the air in those spaces before, during and after teaching as appropriate. For such spaces portable carbon dioxide monitors could be used to assess the level of fresh air.

We the undersigned urge the Welsh Government to install carbon dioxide detectors in all schools in Wales to identify areas of poor ventilation, and supply sufficient funding to ensure that any area of poor ventilation can be promptly addressed. If areas are identified then urgent action must be taken to ensure increased ventilation.

Yours sincerely

Eithne Hughes, Director, ASCL Cymru

Laura Doel, Director, NAHT Cymru

David Evans, Wales Secretary, NEU Cymru

Rosie Lewis, Regional Organiser, UNISON Cymru

Urtha Felda, Senior Professional Officer, Voice

Nicola Savage, Regional Organiser, GMB Education Lead, Wales

Neil Butler, National Official for Wales, NASUWT Cymru

Dilwyn Roberts-Young, Ysgrifennydd Cyffredinol, UCAC

Dave Gunter, Regional Officer, UNITE

Jamie Insole, Policy Officer, UCU