

Dear Governor

Welcome back to a very different new academic year. I hope that you are safe and well.

I would like to update governors on the following:

- Arrangements for governing body meetings during the autumn term
- Arrangements for governor training during the autumn term
- Guidance on for the safe re-opening of schools – September 2020 & Frequently Asked Questions
- Accelerated Learning Plans (Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards)
- Changes to the Categorisation of Schools for 2020/2021
- Changes to school improvement working – Challenge Advisers
- Parents Evenings

Arrangements for governing body meeting during the autumn term

On the 24th of August 2020 Welsh Government updated the Information for governing bodies: Coronavirus - <https://gov.wales/information-school-governing-bodies-coronavirus>

Please note that the Welsh Government advised: “The current advice is to work from home, if possible, and avoid gathering indoors if possible. We therefore advise governing bodies to adopt alternative arrangements such as meeting by remote access where possible”.

In light of this guidance RCT will be promoting virtual governing body meetings for the autumn term. Governor Support will provide support during September to enable governors to access virtual meetings. Governors who do not have access to IT can be provided with the option of dialing in to a meeting via telephone. Governor Support will also provide advice and support relating to this function.

Once governors are confident in using this method of communication, autumn term governing body meeting will be arranged during October, November and December.

The agenda and relevant information will be e-mailed to governors 10 days prior to the meeting date, enabling governors to have the time to read documents and prepare questions for the meeting.

Governors will still be required to produce an annual report to parents. Welsh Government have suspended The School Performance and Absence Targets (Wales) Regulations 2011. This means that the school will not be required to report on targets in relation to performance or absence for the 2019/20 academic year, or

set them for the 2020 to 2021 academic year (and local authorities will not be required to authorise targets). Other existing targets, such as those that were provisionally set in previous years, will not need to be published in any new school based plans or reports (e.g. School Development Plans or Governor Reports). A pro-forma will be sent to the Headteacher for governors to complete.

Arrangements for governor training during the autumn term

In line with the Welsh Government advice there will be no face-to-face training available during the autumn term. Training facilitators have established virtual training via Microsoft Teams. Governor Support will provide advice and guidance to support any governor who would like to apply for any of the virtual training included in the Training Brochure, which will be circulated to governors next week.

On-line mandatory governor training continues to be available and if you would like to undertake any mandatory training please contact Adrien Woodland.

Guidance on for the safe re-opening of schools – September 2020 & Frequently Asked Questions

This guidance outlines the proposed phased approach to all schools opening on the 1st of September 2020, as outlined by the Education Minister Kirsty Williams, on the 9th of July 2020.

Further information is provided at

<https://gov.wales/technical-advisory-group-advice-return-school>

This technical and scientific evidence suggests ‘that the risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from coronavirus (COVID–19) is very low’ and that the ‘balance of risk is now overwhelmingly in favour of children returning to school. Being out of school is detrimental for children’s cognitive and academic development and their health and wellbeing, particularly for disadvantaged children; and, can have an impact both in the short and longer term’.

Further information is provided at

<https://gov.wales/operational-guidance-schools-and-settings-autumn-term-covid-19>

This information aims to support schools to develop and maintain ‘reasonable measures’ to keep learners safe, and this information is provided as a framework to help school leaders to plan for the safe return of children to their local schools in September 2020.

Underpinning this guidance is the expectation that schools work in partnership with the local authority and parents and carers to ensure that approaches are adopted to ensure the safe return of all learners to school. This will build on the robust risk assessment planning and control measures put in place during the check in, catch up and prepare phase. These risk assessments will need to be reviewed in light of this new guidance, and revised risk assessment and business continuity plans shared with staff ideally prior to the end of the summer term and submitted to the local authority by the **31st of August 2020** at the very latest. Risk assessments should also include containment measures to be adopted in the event of a local

lockdown and how continuity of education would be maintained in these circumstances.

Schools who were in a position to submit these risk assessments prior to this date were encouraged to do so.

There is an expectation that schools operate within the parameters of the guidance documents provided by the local authority, although there is recognition that headteachers, in partnership with their governing bodies, need to make strategic and operational judgements based on their individual contexts and the presenting challenges faced on a daily basis.

The safety of children and staff is of utmost importance and this advice seeks to support staff working in schools to deliver education in the safest way possible.

The Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions are available on the website: <https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/EmergenciesSafetyandCrime/InformationforResidentsCoronavirus/NEWCoronavirusCOVID19latestinformation/Schoolreturn/ReturntoSchoolSeptember2020-FAQs.aspx>

Please note that the Guidance is continually updated.

Accelerated Learning Plans (Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards)

The expectation of the funding is to help schools meet the demands of the **Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards: Accelerating Learning Programme** as announced by the Minister for Education on the 9 July 2020. This funding enables investment in schools to allow them to recruit and deploy additional human capacity to support learners in addressing their needs following the initial COVID-19 crisis and period of school closure.

The primary purpose of the funding is therefore to enable investment in schools to allow them to recruit and deploy additional human capacity to support learners in addressing their needs following the initial COVID-19 crisis and period of school closure.

Schools are required to provide a simple and clear plan indicating the number of pupils included and outlining the curriculum and staffing solutions proposed.

The governing body and Challenge Advisor (where required) should agree and sign off plans to confirm that the plan meets the needs.

Further information is available at: <https://gov.wales/recruit-recover-raise-standards-accelerating-learning-programme>

Framework for School Improvement

The Central South Consortium (CSC) works in partnership with the five local authorities (Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan) to provide a school improvement service that challenges and supports schools in their work to raise standards. This service enables the local authorities to deliver their statutory responsibilities with regard to schools' standards.

The consortium is committed to the development of a school self improving system. Excellence from within schools, together with research outcomes, is used effectively to help all schools improve.

Please see the updated document:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/SchoolsandLearning/SchoolGovernors/InformationforGovernors.aspx>

Parents Evenings

Welsh Government advice is that “due to the current social distancing measures, we recommend that traditional parents’ evenings (that is where parents come into school to meet their child’s teachers and discuss progress, with or without the child present) do not take place for the time being.

Schools should still ensure they are available to discuss any concerns parents may have, and engage with parents via other means, such as by email, on the telephone or through school apps, where appropriate.

Where a discussion with a parent cannot take place via these routes and face to face contact is considered necessary then appropriate measures would need to be put in place, including social distancing of 2m”.

If governors have any queries or concerns please contact the relevant Governor Support Officer:

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