

Secondary schools and colleges in Wales will move to online learning from Monday as part of 'national effort to reduce coronavirus transmission'

Secondary schools and colleges in Wales will move to online learning from Monday, December 14 as part of a 'national effort to reduce transmission of coronavirus' Education Minister Kirsty Williams confirmed today.

The Minister made it clear that, thanks to the efforts of education staff across the country, schools and colleges are safe and secure environments, with almost half of all Welsh schools having had zero covid cases since September.

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

By making this decision, the Minister felt it was important to make a 'clear, national direction' to take pressure off individual schools, colleges, local authorities, parents and carers.

The Minister said her decision followed expert advice from Wales's Chief Medical Officer showing that the public health situation in Wales was deteriorating.

The latest TTP data shows that rates of Covid-19 have further increased across Wales and have now exceeded 370/100k with a test positivity of 17%.

The R rate in Wales has increased to 1.27 with a doubling time of just 11.7 days.

As during the firebreak, local authorities and schools will be expected to consider what provision is suitable for vulnerable learners and this could include 'on-premises' learning.

Education Minister Kirsty Williams said: "Every day, we are seeing more and more people admitted to hospital with coronavirus symptoms.

"The virus is putting our health service under significant and sustained pressure and it is important we all make a contribution to reduce its transmission.

"In his advice to me today, the CMO recommends that a move to online learning should be implemented for secondary school pupils as soon as is practicable.

"I can therefore confirm that a move to online learning should be implemented for secondary school pupils and college students from Monday next week.

"We recognise, as we did during the firebreak, that it is more difficult for primary and special school age children to undertake self-directed learning.

"That is why we are encouraging primary and special schools to continue to stay open.

“Having spoken to local education leaders, I am confident that schools and colleges have online learning provision in place.

“This will also be important in ensuring that students are at home during this time, learning and staying safe.

“Critically, and this is very important, children should be at home.

“This is not an early Christmas holiday, please do everything you can to minimise your contact with others.”

“The education family in Wales has pulled together so many times this year to make a real difference to the course of this virus and ultimately to save lives and I know we can do the same again.

“Together we will keep Wales safe.”

ENDS