



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Wednesday, 1 April 2020

Please find below a summary of today's Welsh Government coronavirus daily briefing, which was delivered by Education Minister Kirsty Williams:

Press Conference: During the Welsh Government's daily Covid-19 briefing, Kirsty Williams [said](#) a statement on the provision of free school meals for the remainder of the academic year will be made in the near future. The Minister for Education commended the effort of certain schools that have remained open to cater for the children of essential key workers and vulnerable children. Ms Williams also praised teachers who have successfully utilised the Welsh Government's online Hwb resources to engage with their pupils and continue their education through remote learning. The minister also recognised the important role of universities and colleges, with medical students stepping up to join the NHS workforce during this trying time, as well as researchers joining the international effort to find a cure for Covid-19. Turning to university admissions, Ms Williams stated that she did endorse a position of blanket unconditional offers for prospective students, and that results day should be "*business as usual*" wherever possible. Asked when the Welsh Government expects the coronavirus outbreak to peak, Ms Williams said the chief medical officer has acknowledged that the actions the Welsh public are taking by adhering to self-isolation and social distancing are undoubtedly improving the situation and saving untold lives. She added that it is too early at this stage to make accurate predictions about what will happen next, and that it remains entirely possible that different regions of Wales will reach their Covid-19 peak at different times. The minister refuted criticism that there is too much variety in the free school meals provision offered by local authorities across Wales. She said the Welsh Government is the only government in the UK that is maintaining free school meals provision over the extended Easter school holidays. Ms Williams said every university in Wales is contributing to the national effort to combat the coronavirus outbreak, such as allowing their students to join and support the NHS workforce, providing accommodation to NHS workers and using their laboratories for research. Questioned on whether any universities are specifically helping in terms of providing ventilators and testing facilities, the minister pointed out that the clinical laboratories of Swansea University are working on PPE, with Cardiff University also making its laboratories and equipment available. Ms Williams also commended the University of South Wales for using virtual learning to rapidly upskill their nursing students so that they can join the NHS workforce quickly during this crisis. Turning to curriculum reform, Ms Williams clarified that the timetable for the implementation of the new curriculum has not been delayed by Covid-19 as of yet, but that the Welsh Government will be issuing guidance for educational professionals on this issue in the near future. Ms Williams also stated that the coronavirus outbreak will not affect the six-week school summer holidays, and the Welsh Government will be publishing a 'Continuity of Learning' program for the summer term. She also said that every child in Wales should have login details for the Hwb online platform, which will give them free access to Microsoft Office software on up to five devices. Answering a question on cancer treatments, Ms Williams stated that even though the NHS is under incredible pressure at this time, emergency and vital provision will remain in place, which includes cancer treatment.