

**COUNCIL: 22 JULY 2021**

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## **EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS STATEMENT**

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### **Covid-19 Update for Schools**

This month has seen a dramatic rise in the number of Covid-19 cases in schools. The start of the month saw low positivity rates across schools, but in the last two weeks numbers have risen sharply. In the week of 4-11 July 2021, there were over 100 cases with both pupils and staff affected. Schools continue to work closely with Public Health Wales to ensure the identification of close contacts, thereby resulting in as few isolations as possible. Linked with this is the high usage of Lateral Flow Device tests across all schools in Cardiff. Within the Cardiff & Vale University Health Board area, Cardiff schools are frequently the highest users of these tests and this provides added levels of confidence into the system.

On 9 July 2021, the Welsh Government Minister for Education and Welsh Language, Jeremy Miles MS, issued a [Written Statement](#) and sent a letter to all schools and colleges in Wales outlining the starting position for operation in the new academic year in September 2021. The main points were:

- The Welsh Government will no longer be recommending the routine use of face coverings in classrooms.
- Contact groups/bubbles will no longer be required for school pupils or full-time learners in colleges; however, the Welsh Government will use the Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) system in order to identify close contacts of learners who have tested positive, and TTP may contact schools to supplement the information they have gathered with any further intelligence the school may have available. The Welsh Government's expectation of schools is that they follow the specific advice they receive from TTP about whether individuals need to self-isolate.
- Normal session times will resume.
- Secondary school children and the education workforce should be encouraged to be tested before returning to school.

In addition, the Welsh Government also published an advice notice on the key changes from September 2021, along with updated operational guidance which provides further detail on all of the elements set out in the letter to schools, including further clarity on the roles and responsibilities associated with the TTP process from September 2021. The Council will work with the Welsh Government to ensure the updated guidance is appropriate and can be implemented in schools in readiness for the autumn term.

As we move to the end of an academic year like no other due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, this seems a good time for us all to thank our head teachers, teachers, teaching support staff and non-teaching school staff who have gone above and beyond in the last 12 months in unprecedented and very challenging circumstances. I also want to recognise the efforts of our children and young people in helping to keep schools safe and taking responsibility to help to stop the spread of the virus within our schools and communities.

In the school summer holiday period, I would urge parents to make use of the multi-award winning School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP), known as 'Food and Fun', that will be delivered in 29 schools in Cardiff. A list of these schools were provided in my previous statement to last month's Council meeting. Partner organisations will be providing a range of enrichment activities, as well as the opportunity for each child to enjoy at least one hour of physical activity, a healthy breakfast & lunch, and nutrition and food sessions each day, all delivered in a fun, safe and friendly environment.

### **Qualifications Assessment Arrangements 2021**

On 22 June 2021, the WJEC informed all schools and colleges in Wales that they had reduced qualification entry fees for summer 2021 by 42%, a discount that puts £8m back into schools and colleges in Wales. In recognition of the additional work undertaken by schools and colleges to support Centre Determined Grades, the Welsh Government has also committed to providing an additional £1.6m of support to centres in Wales, meaning the overall discount will be 50%. In line with the [WJEC timeline](#), all centres had to submit their Centre Determined Grades and sample of Learner Decision Making records by 2 July 2021. In turn, the WJEC was due to complete the quality assurance of learner decision records and overall outcomes by 12 July 2021 prior to the window of discussions with centres regarding any issues arising (13-16 July 2021). The second stage appeals window for AS and A Level qualifications will begin on 10 August 2021 and for GCSE on 24 August 2021, with priority given to decisions that may affect future learner pathways.

### **Cardiff Commitment**

The Cardiff Commitment worked in partnership with Fintech Wales to deliver a sponsored Show Debate with Debate Mate, SEREN Network and Cantonian and Fitzalan High Schools, which was held at Fitzalan High School on 23 June 2021. The aim of the event was to raise awareness of the growing Fintech Sector in Wales and develop pupils' critical communication skills. The two industry speakers in attendance were Harriet Rees, head of data science at Starling Bank, and Oliver Hale, chief executive officer at Buckit Ltd. The debate covered topics such as regulation, security, and digital privacy, with the winner chosen by audience vote.

The Cardiff Commitment is due to launch the "What's Next – Your Life, Your Future" post-16 provision and opportunities platform on 15 July 2021. The platform will serve to improve the accessibility and range of employment, education, training and volunteering opportunities for young people aged 16-24 years old in Cardiff. A Youth

Support Services information event to raise awareness of the platform will also be held on 15 July 2021 via Teams and will be accompanied by a marketing and communications strategy to ensure that young people, parents and carers, youth support services, and schools are informed of the platform and the opportunities for young people.

The Cardiff Commitment team is working in partnership with C Connected, Balfour Beatty, Transport for Wales, Sphere Solutions, Wates, Digital Health NHS, Virgin Money and the National Digital Exploitation Centre to deliver a 'Virtual Jobs for the Future' work experience week commencing on 12 July 2021. Year 10 pupils from Cardiff West Community High School and post-16 pupils engaged with the Pre-Construction Skills Course at St Mellons Youth Centre are taking part in the sessions, which aim to provide young people with knowledge and skills in growth sectors in the region. The sessions will also include practical activities related to the learning and tasks set by the partner organisations.

### **Summer of Smiles**

The 'Summer of Smiles' summer festival has started with the pop-up park at Churchill Way, which provides a place to play and relax. Phase two of the park will be in place in readiness for the school summer holidays and will consist of artwork from local schools, a natural play area and a row of hammocks. The main festival site situated on City Hall Lawn will be open for the first three weeks of the school holiday period and over 50 delivery partners will be running events across the city. I am also pleased to announce that seven young people have been recruited as festival artists and they will be creating artwork throughout the school holiday period. Further information can be found on the [Summer of Smiles website](#).

### **Pearson National Teaching Awards 2021**

I am delighted that two teachers from Cardiff secondary schools have each won a Silver Award in the Pearson National Teaching Awards 2021. Joseph Gill from Willows High School won the Silver Award for Outstanding New Teacher of the Year. Victoria Carey from Mary Immaculate High School also won the Silver Award for Teacher of the Year in a Secondary School. These awards demonstrate the commitment and dedication of these individuals to the education and wellbeing of the pupils at their schools and I am delighted that we have teachers of this calibre in Cardiff who are working hard to improve the education of our children and young people.

### **Industrial Cadets Silver Level Award**

Ysgol Pencae has been awarded the Industrial Cadets Silver level award after taking part and winning the highest points in the robot design and coding challenge as part of the first LEGO League Challenge programme, which is a national competition. The pupils who took part are members of the school's Coding Lego Team and they used block coding to control the robot and introduced functions so that the robot could undertake different tasks and move objects. It provided a great opportunity for team

building and development of coding skills, as well as encouraging our young people to become engineers of the future. They will each be awarded with an Industrial Cadets Silver level award certificate and badge that they can show to educators and potential employers in the future.

**Councillor Sarah Merry**

**Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Skills**

**15 July 2021**