

Eich cyf / Your ref:	Gofynner am / Please ask for:	Gareth Morgans
Fy nghyf / My ref:	Llinell Uniongyrchol / Direct Line:	01267 246522
Dyddiad / Date: 20-03-20	E-bost / E-mail:	EDGMorgans@sirgar.gov.uk

Dear Headteacher,

It has to be recognised that it's a very challenging time for us as an education service and that we have to respond at pace to issues that we have not faced before. We all need to do all we can to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus among the residents of Carmarthenshire and our communities. I would like to thank everyone for your assistance, constructive ideas and willingness to support the '*new purpose*' for schools.

The latest advice from Welsh Government and Public Health Wales is clear; it is imperative that, as far as possible, we minimise social contact. This means that if children can stay safely in their home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.

We need to minimise the number of children making the journey to school or a childcare setting and keep to the minimum possible the number of children in educational or childcare and play settings. The smaller the numbers, the more we can lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable people across our communities.

This means parents need to keep their children at home, wherever possible and schools and childcare and play settings should be open only for those children who absolutely need to attend. Quite simply the fewer people having social contact, the more effective the overall impact of the current measures will be.

From next week, our schools will be closed to children and young people except to provide the vital care for essential workers and vulnerable children who have no other option.

To ensure a system that is fair, sustainable and resilient and a system that safeguards our staff, children and young people it was decided to plan this strategically at a County level. On purpose it was decided to start on a small scale and learn from the experience and then build the provision as we understand the demand and requirements for the safe operation of our new centres.

In the first instance, from Monday, March 23rd, **three centres** will be active in Carmarthenshire providing childcare for key workers (see Appendix 1)-

- Llanelli area- Ysgol Penrhos
- Ammanford area-Ysgol Bro Banw
- Carmarthen area-Ysgol y Dderwen

#### Gareth Morgans

Cyfarwyddwr Addysg a Gwasanaethau Plant, Neuadd y Sir, Gaerfyrddin,  
Sir Gaerfyrddin SA31 1JP

Director of Education & Children's Services, County Hall, Carmarthen,  
Carmarthenshire SA31 1JP



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The intention is to monitor these closely and then open a further **eight centres** on Wednesdays, March 25th at the following venues-

- Burry Port Area- Burry Port Primary School
- Llanelli Area- Ysgol y Felin
- Carmarthen Area- Johnstown Primary School
- Newcastle Emlyn Area- Ysgol Y Ddwylan
- St Clears Area- Ysgol Griffith Jones
- Llandeilo Area- Llandeilo Primary School
- Llandovery Area- Ysgol Rhys Prichard
- Brynaman Area- Ysgol Brynaman
- *Other venues is possible*

We will monitor the demand and if necessary and if we have a suitable complement of staff we will establish further centres after Wednesday.

If we'd had more time, we would have been able to plan this in more detail and trialled it. We are working to address the issue of providing free schools meals whilst the Welsh Government develop a national approach.

To close I reiterate Welsh Government's clear message-

*...parents need to keep their children at home, wherever possible and schools and childcare and play settings should be open only for those children who absolutely need to attend...this means, we should continue to provide care for as small a number of children as possible- children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the Covid-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.*

The arrangements in this letter will be monitored and amended as circumstances develop, which, as you appreciate, happen suddenly. The arrangements are based on the most recent advice from the UK and Wales Governments and following discussions across the Council.

Yours sincerely,



Welsh Government Advice- <https://gov.wales/education-coronavirus>

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## Appendix 1

**If your work is critical to the COVID-19 response, or you work in one of the critical sectors listed below, you should attempt to make arrangements for your child to be safely cared for at home. Only where there is no safe alternative should provision be made in schools or other settings.**

**Health and social care** - this includes but is not limited to doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, care workers, and other frontline health and social care staff including volunteers; the support and specialist staff required to maintain the UK's health and social care sector; those working as part of the health and social care supply chain, including producers and distributors of medicines and medical and personal protective equipment.

**Education and childcare** - this includes nursery and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who must remain active during the COVID-19 response to deliver this approach.

**Key public services** - this includes those essential to the running of the justice system, religious staff, charities and workers delivering key frontline services, those responsible for the management of the deceased, and journalists and broadcasters who are providing public service broadcasting.

**Local and national government** - this only includes those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the COVID-19 response or delivering essential public services such as the payment of benefits, including in government agencies and arms length bodies.

**Food and other necessary goods** - this includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution, sale and delivery as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (for example hygienic and veterinary medicines).

**Public safety and national security** - this includes police and support staff, Ministry of Defence civilians, contractor and armed forces personnel (those critical to the delivery of key defence and national security outputs and essential to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic), fire and rescue service employees (including support staff), National Crime Agency staff, those maintaining border security, prison and probation staff and other national security roles, including those overseas.

**Transport** - this includes those who will keep the air, water, road and rail passenger and freight transport modes operating during the COVID-19 response, including those working on transport systems through which supply chains pass.

**Utilities, communication and financial services** - this includes staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure), the oil, gas, electricity and water sectors (including sewerage), information technology and data infrastructure sector and primary industry supplies to continue during the COVID-19 response, as well as key staff working in the civil nuclear, chemicals, telecommunications (including but not limited to network operations, field engineering, call centre staff, IT and data infrastructure, 999 and 111 critical services), postal services and delivery, payments providers and waste disposal sectors.

If workers think they fall within the critical categories above they should confirm with their employer that, based on their business continuity arrangements, their specific role is necessary for the continuation of this essential public service.

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