

Senedd Cymru  
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

Ymchwiliad i effaith argyfwng Covid-19 ar  
blant a phobl ifanc yng Nghymru

COV 119  
Ymateb gan: Unigolyn

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Welsh Parliament  
Children, Young People and Education Committee

Inquiry into the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on  
children and young people in Wales

COV 119  
Response from: Individual

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I am a retired teacher writing in a purely private capacity with a suggestion to facilitate the re-opening of schools from June 29. There are two central issues with this - safety and public confidence in that safety. I think my suggestion goes a good way to meet both concerns. It would certainly give me confidence, were I a parent of school-age children, to send my own back to school.

So, what is my suggestion? It is to issue all schools with temperature testing devices of the sort in wide use in some other countries and in the UK for other purposes. As I am sure you will know, these devices give an almost instantaneous reading of an individual's body temperature. If schools were able to test every person before they crossed the threshold, turning away with no exceptions anyone (pupil, staff, ancillary staff, visitor) who failed the test, they would be able to ensure that nobody with any sort of temperature got inside the building. If this was combined with a visual test to screen out anyone who had other possible symptoms but no temperature (e.g. a cough), one could establish a high degree of confidence that no one inside the building that day was a Covid carrier. A 'high degree of confidence' is of course not certainty, but complete certainty is something that is unachievable anyway until, and if ever, a vaccine is developed that gives total immunity to all.

We all urgently need schools to start functioning normally again. The current insistence on two-meter distancing means that schools can operate only on a very limited basis with strictly limited numbers of pupils. This is certainly better than nothing, but not that much. Nor has this gained full public confidence as not all parents are convinced their children are safe in these circumstances. They require more reassurance. They might have it if they knew that everyone in the school that day had at least passed the 'temperature test'.

Is it practicable? Yes, I believe so. Each test takes seconds only, so it would be possible to test large numbers of pupils in a short time. If schools were issued with more or fewer devices depending on school size, it could be done. Even if the process were to take longer and ate a bit into teaching time, lesson durations could be shortened a bit accordingly.

The greatest benefit of this strategy, in my view, would be that it would obviate the need for the two-meter social distancing which so inhibits the whole school experience for pupils and so limits effective teaching and learning.

I offer this suggestion, not as any implied criticism of or impatience with current policy, but in a spirit of assistance and support at this difficult time, especially for decision-makers such as yourselves.