

Key messages

UsforThem Cymru is part of UsForThem UK to make sure parents in Wales could come together and speak out about their specific concerns about school closures and social distancing measures being put in place when schools reopened (to more than key workers' children). We were worried that the voices of children in Wales was being lost as the brief time being offered in schools before the summer break was seen as sufficient contact. We want to make sure children are not left behind as Wales reopens and want to see a plan that ensures children can catch up on months of missed learning without undue pressure. We reject the blended learning model and want a full time education in schools for all children who can do so safely. There is now a huge momentum behind UsForThem. More than 7,500 people signed the UsForThem petition to reopen schools without social distancing, including teachers, scientists, MPs, doctors and of course children themselves.

We are calling for all social distancing measures between children to be removed in schools

Social distancing in schools is disproportionate and should be removed.

- The risk of the virus to and from children is virtually negligible whilst the damage that these measures cause is high.
- There are other respectful safety measures already in place, which we feel are sensible and don't harm children. In terms of schools these cover ill children staying at home, regular hand washing, sneezing into a tissue, or an elbow and thorough cleaning of premises, not separating children into small 'bubbles' and isolating them from their friends and peers.
- There should not be any social distancing between children in schools and children should be allowed to live a normal school life. The healthy development of children relies on interaction, including group interaction being part of the skilled, structured and nurturing environments that schools usually provide.

Remove the social distance in schools and return children's rights to be educated

- Article 2 of the First Protocol of the Human Rights Act provides "No person shall be denied a right to an education." Despite this under 2 percent of the 10 million schoolchildren have been in school since school closures.
- Less than 2% of children in Wales have received four hours of daily online lessons. Just over a quarter have received two to three hours, while nearly 3/4 have accessed just an hour or less.
- Regional variation, disparity of provision of home learning between schools and reliance on parental support is deepening socio-economic inequality in Wales and across the UK.
- Planning should start now to make sure children who need to be shielded due to the level of risk for their families or themselves receive a comprehensive education in Welsh or English once schools reopen full-time.

Children are already damaged by closures, let's stop this now

- Harm has already been done to children. Within a month of school closures children with 67% of children (two-thirds) had suffered with their mental health and a quarter had suffered physical health problems.
- Vulnerable children have been exposed to domestic violence and deprivation, living in isolation at home and possibly crowded spaces, yet 94% of vulnerable children have not been in school since closures and safeguarding referrals have halved during this period.
- Children learn through play, which is vital for their wellbeing, and their social and emotional development. Over 120 leading experts agree that It is crucial to remove social distancing measures so that children can interact with each other and re-establish friendships to help them recover.

Get our kids back to school normally