# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Reform of the School Day and Year** |
| **DATE**  | **09 December 2021** |
| **BY** | **Jeremy Miles, Minister for Education and Welsh Language**  |

As a Government, we are committed to exploring reform to the school day and school year dates so that we support learner and staff wellbeing, tackle educational inequalities and bring them more in line with patterns of family life and employment.

As part of this, up to 14 schools will take part in a national trial, providing additional hours for learners during a 10-week programme this academic year. These schools have volunteered to take part, supporting disadvantaged learners, improving access to social and cultural capital and helping to address the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on learning. I am making available up to £2m of funding to support this trial. This work will be carried out in collaboration with the Plaid Cymru Senedd Group, as part of the Co-operation Agreement between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru.

The primary and secondary schools trialling the additional time will provide an extra five hours of bespoke activities each week for groups of learners, with sessions such as art, music and sport, as well as core academic sessions.

This approach draws on international models and proposals made by the Education Policy Institute. We know that supporting learners to benefit from an extended range of activities, including arts and sports as well as social activities and academic programmes, can be good for attainment, well-being and wider relationships.

Each school in the trail will decide how and what is delivered during the trial period, which is due to start in the spring term. Local needs must be taken into consideration and the funding provided will give schools the flexibility to work with external partners to run the additional sessions or to adapt existing activities such as after school clubs. I am keen to see a wide range of different models we can learn from.

This funding is complementary to the £7.4m Winter of Wellbeing package for all schools and colleges to provide more sessions around the school and college day to promote physical, mental and emotional wellbeing through increased access to creative, sporting, play and cultural activities in Welsh and English. Part of the Renew and Reform plan, this is intended to create a better environment for learning and progression and seek to re-build confidence in all learners, particularly those most disadvantaged by the impacts of the pandemic. This wider package will also give us valuable evidence and information for future policy development.

I will also be taking forward work on the rhythm of the school year. We haven't had a serious conversation about the way we structure the school year in Wales for decades. That is clearly too long and we need to consider whether the current structure still fits with modern living, best supports the progression of our learners and underpins learner and staff well-being.

In the coming weeks and months, the Government will be leading discussions with young people and their families, the education workforce, businesses and communities to seek their views on reforming the school year.