

Cabinet Secretary gets Priory pre-school off to a flying start

The pre-school at Priory Church in Wales Primary School is one of five new Flying Start childcare settings across Powys.

Flying Start is the Welsh Government's targeted early years programme for families with children under four years of age living in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Wales.

It provides free part time childcare for 2-3 year olds; and enhanced health visiting service; access to parenting support, and support for speech language and communication.

Carl Sargeant said:

"I am delighted to officially open Priory pre-school and to meet some of the staff, parents and children. It has been particularly pleasing to hear details of the real difference Flying Start and other programmes are making to the lives of children and their families living in Brecon.

"Powys received a revenue grant of over £1.8 million this year and I have protected funding levels for next year to enable us to maintain the service. Since 2012, Powys has also benefited from almost £200,000 capital funding which has helped to create five new childcare settings across its Flying Start areas.

"My congratulations and thanks go to everyone involved in making this a success and for ensuring families and children continued to receive services during this challenging period."

News story: Further decisions on reviews of marking, reviews of moderation, and appeals

From:

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Changes to arrangements for reviews and appeals in GCSEs, AS and A levels

Ofqual has today (16 February) announced a number of decisions about the future arrangements for reviews of marking, reviews of moderation, and appeals services.

The exams regulator for England announced in July 2016 a number of decisions related to how it intended to make the systems schools and colleges use to challenge GCSE, AS and A level results in England clearer, more consistent, and fairer for all students. Today's decisions were deferred at that time so that more evidence could be gathered about their potential impact. In light of feedback from a range of stakeholders, Ofqual has decided:

- to introduce the requirement for exam boards to make marked GCSE scripts available to centres, before their deadline for requesting a review of marking, for the summer 2020 exam series onwards
- to introduce the requirement for exam boards to provide the reasons for review of marking decisions automatically for the summer 2020 exam series onwards
- to introduce the requirement for exam boards to grant learners the ability to request results of centre-marked assessments for the summer 2018 exam series onwards
- to defer implementation of the removal of automatic grade protection that currently applies, following a review of moderation for at least two years. During this time, we will review the approaches exam boards take to moderation before deciding whether to remove this protection

Ofqual has announced requirements for key dates for the completion of reviews and appeals. These will ensure common, minimum timelines for centres and students.

A final decision regarding extending the grounds for appeal will be taken later this Spring once analysis of a pilot study has been completed. Official statistics on GCSE, AS and A level result appeals will be published on 21 March 2016.

Ofqual has also launched a [survey for teachers about their experience of the review of marking and moderation services](#) (formerly known as EARs).

Bakery's superfast boost for Aberdaron

Minister for Skills and Science Julie James today saw how, since the arrival of superfast broadband, the Becws Islyn bakery has been used as a hub to provide a wi-fi network for the centre of the village.

The pilot project was undertaken by Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig with members of the local community. As a result, locals and visitors to the village at the western tip of Gwynedd can now access a wi-fi network.

The system is analytics-enabled, which helps promote Aberdaron and its attractions to new and existing visitors. Five thousand email addresses used by people logging into the wi-fi have been collected. These visitors now receive regular information about Aberdaron, encouraging them to return to the village and helping to build relationships.

More premises in the village are due to get access to superfast broadband when further engineering work is carried out by engineers from Openreach, BT's local network business, on behalf of the Superfast Cymru the partnership between the Welsh Government, BT, UK Government and European Regional Development Fund, bringing faster broadband to areas which would otherwise not receive it.

Many parts of Wales, including the whole of Gwynedd, would not have had access to superfast broadband without the intervention of Superfast Cymru. As a result of the programme, 49,941 premises in the county now have access to superfast broadband, with more gaining access every day as the rollout continues.

Eight out of ten premises in Wales can now access superfast broadband compared with just over half two years ago. Wales has the highest availability of superfast broadband among the devolved nations.

The Minister said:

"It's been great to see how the community here in Aberdaron have taken advantage of the superfast broadband connection to Becws Islyn to create a wi-fi network.

"Superfast Cymru is about bringing faster broadband to areas which would not receive it, such as Aberdaron. Fast and reliable broadband is of increasing importance to all of us – businesses and households.

"We know there is more to do before Superfast Cymru comes to an end this year, and we're already looking at how to reach the final few premises in Wales once the project is over. It's encouraging to hear the positive impact of this kind of project as we look at those next stages."

Geraint Jones of Becws Islyn said:

“Everyone expects access to wi-fi now, even when you’re on holiday in a rural area like Aberdaron. It’s great that the bakery has access to superfast broadband, which in turn has been a hub for the community wi-fi.

“The feedback from visitors has been very positive and it has been a boost for the business encouraging more people to come to the bakery’s café.”

Becws Islyn has increased its number of full time employees from one to four, with part time employees totalling 14.

Ed Hunt, director for next generation broadband in Wales, said:

“It was a significant engineering challenge to make our fibre network available in Aberdaron due to its isolated location. We’ve worked hard to make this happen and we’re pleased to be part of such an innovative and forward thinking programme. It’s great to see villagers making full use of the technology. Fibre broadband is such an important part of everyday life nowadays and people expect to be able to access it even when they’re away from home. I’m sure visitors to the local area will be delighted to find they have access to a superfast connection and it’ll be a boost to local attractions now that people can easily look them up online.”

Jonathan Jenkin, Nuclear Decommissioning Authority Stakeholder Relations and Socio Economics Manager said

“Supporting this project has given a huge boost to the local businesses helping to mitigate the socio-economic impact of decommissioning Trawsfynydd and ensuring sustainability within rural communities. Expanding provision of free wi-fi will further strengthen rural infrastructure as well as attracting more visitors to the area.”

The wi-fi project was funded through the Welsh Government’s Rural Communities – Rural Development Plan 2014 – 2020, which includes Welsh Government and European funding for rural Development. It is also part funded by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and Gwynedd Council.

Green Party: List of employers named and shamed for underpaying workers is just the tip of the iceberg



16 February 2017

The Green Party is appalled by the revelation 360 employers underpaid thousands of workers almost £1 million [1] but believes it is just the tip of the iceberg as the Government process for naming and shaming employers is extremely flawed [2].

The current system means that large, profitable companies are only being named and paying penalties for a small part of all the arrears identified by HMRC [3].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“Employers must be held to account if they fail to pay their workers properly. It might seem like an insignificant amount of money to the businesses but to the individual workers who need it to pay their rent or buy food it has a huge impact. In this age of insecurity everyone deserves to be able to make a living to support themselves and their families.

“It’s absolutely right these employers are being named and shamed but the Government needs to make sure this is not the only action it takes to prevent the exploitation of workers. There is still a lack of transparency in the process as errors that are self-corrected by businesses are not included in the list. It means most of the back payments remain a secret and the public might never find out the true scale of the problem.

“The Green Party believes the introduction of a minimum wage of £10 by 2020 is a necessary step towards tackling inequality and poverty and we have long campaigned for the minimum wage to be raised to the living wage level.”

Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-38979368>
2. <https://www.carolinelucas.com/latest/minimum-wage-enforcement-ministers-making-a-mockery-of-%E2%80%98naming-shaming%E2%80%99-scheme>
3. For example, if two workers owed £500 each bring a complaint, HMRC will investigate and decide the employer owes total of £1,000. The employer will be named and shamed for that amount and pay a penalty of £2,000. However, if the employer reveals it actually has 200 workers in the same position and HMRC agrees, HMRC will allow the employer to self-correct in those 200 cases. But the employer does not get named and shamed for this £100,000 error and no penalty is imposed – because the employer self-corrected.

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News story: Alok Sharma marks 45 years of UK-China Ambassadorial ties

In Beijing on Thursday 16 February, Mr Sharma met Chinese Assistant Foreign Ministers Liu Haixing and Kong Xuanyou for wide-ranging political talks to strengthen the global partnership between the UK and China. The Minister emphasised the UK's support for China's Belt and Road Initiative and explored opportunities to develop closer infrastructure and finance partnerships.

The Minister's visit to Beijing follows a three-day tour of south China, leading a delegation of UK healthcare and life science business leaders to Guangzhou, Fuzhou and Xiamen. The delegation showcased world class UK expertise and explored trade and collaboration opportunities across the region.

Speaking at a reception in Beijing, Mr Sharma said:

Throughout the last 45 years, the UK-China relationship has been steadily strengthening. Personal ties and mutual understanding are at the heart of any successful relationship. That is why promoting business, cultural and educational links is so important to us. Forty-five years ago, there were 200 Chinese students in the UK and today we welcome over 150,000 Chinese students at universities, colleges and schools across the UK. Through our Generation UK programme, we are working to increase the number of British students studying in China from 5000 currently to 20,000 by 2020.

As we look ahead to the future for the UK and China, it is important to reflect on what our two countries have achieved over the last 45 years. Trade is clearly a key element of our partnership. In 45 years, trade between our two countries has increased by an incredible 200-fold to CNY 553 billion. We want to do even more. We are also working together to address some of the significant challenges facing the world today, such as conflict in the Middle East and international terrorism. Our Infrastructure Alliance will allow us to work together to build the capacity of third countries, and we are tackling global health issues such as anti-microbial resistance.

An anniversary is always a good moment to reflect on our past achievements. This one is no exception. In the past 45 years since our countries established diplomatic full diplomatic relations, the pace and scope of what we have achieved individually and together is extraordinary.

Further information

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