

Angus

Dear Ms Adamson

Thank you for your letter dated 26 February 2021.

In Angus a number of school building capital projects were delayed as a result of the pandemic:

- Two new Early Learning and Childcare Centres had opening dates delayed whilst other extension and renovation work was also delayed. However, this in no way impacted upon our ability to fulfil our commitment of up to 1140 hours childcare.
- The extension to one primary school was also delayed. There was no significant disruption caused by this due to the children and staff already being decanted into a temporary classroom for the duration of the build.
- The demolition of a now closed school has also been delayed. This has not caused any disruption to staff or children due to the replacement site being operational.

Following the announcement made by the First Minister on Tuesday 2 March all 8 Secondary Head Teachers met with their Service Leader. Our secondary schools will prioritise learning in the senior phase and will invite every young person (S1-6) at least once each week. Each of our schools operates within a unique context and the number of children who may be invited each day is dependent upon a combination of the capacity of the school building; the number of young people currently on the school roll; the number of young people currently attending due to their being the children of key workers or having been identified as requiring support; the capacity of our school transport and the timetabling priority for those in the senior phase.

Due to the requirement for physical distancing almost all of our staff will be required in school for face-to-face teaching and support. Our remote learning offer will be different from that in place when the majority of our young people were learning at home.

Since we first closed our schools in March 2020 our school leaders have continued to monitor engagement with, and progress in, learning. In addition, all school staff have continued to provide the support required by our families. This has involved close working with colleagues in social work, CLD, housing etc. Our specialist ASN and EPS teams remain in close contact with those who need support.

When we welcomed all of our children and young people back into our schools full time in August 2020 key staff supported children as appropriate. Our annual education plan focussed on wellbeing and the recovery of learning, particularly in reading.

Each of our schools has continued to record attendance, engagement with learning and progress in learning. All of our schools have also continued to use latest pastoral notes as appropriate.

We are also continually monitoring data in relation to the increase in number of families entitled to Free School Meals, calls to our EPS helpline and enquiries from families requiring additional financial support; as well as monitoring police child concern reports, child protection referrals and the number of our own staged intervention meetings.

As we once again welcome all of our children and young people back into settings after the Easter holiday our school staff will work with children and families to ensure that the transition back into full time attendance is smooth and made as stress free as possible.

Our immediate priority will be allowing the children to again build relationships with their friends and the staff. Obviously, there will be a renewed focus on the safety and hygiene requirements. We will focus on the well-being of our families and of our school staff.

Ensuring that all young people in the senior phase are supported in the learning essential for the alternative certification model and any learning required for courses accredited through Dundee and Angus College will be a priority.

Transition processes will be a focus, especially for those entering P1, those moving from P7 into S1 and school leavers. Individual support will be provided for any course choice process.

Despite our schools being closed to most pupils in the summer term of last year we successfully put in place transition arrangements, albeit some of these were virtual. In addition, the first week of term in August 2020 was used to undertake transition activities which may usually have occurred during the previous term. Importantly discussions of a pastoral nature or those which centred around specific additional support needs took place as usual.

This session we look forward to having all of our children and young people back in school full time for the summer term. This will allow our transition activity to follow the more usual pattern. With regard to our plans to “help pupils ‘catch-up’” – this session is no different to any other in terms of each learner progressing at a different rate. We do not expect every P7 to have achieved a particular standard or completed a set ‘body of work’. Each school is very aware of the level of engagement with learning at home and will support pupils accordingly when they return to school full time.

Children and young people will be advised of additional learning activities which they may complete as appropriate. As well as the focus on wellbeing in all of our schools we are utilising the monies provided by Scottish Government to support mental health and wellbeing to provide counselling in schools; train key school staff in signs of emotional distress (through Abertay University); provide local BActive memberships; provide support to those experiencing domestic abuse; provide specialist therapeutic input for those who have experienced trauma; provide outdoor learning for targeted groups of children and young people; work with colleagues in

our community planning partnership around families in need; and work with partners in the voluntary sector around support to families.

Yours sincerely

Kelly McIntosh

Director of Education and Lifelong Learning