

Argyll and Bute

EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE RESPONSE – IMPACT OF COVID

Introduction

We will continue the work of our recovery workstreams to ensure that our Covid recovery strategy and approach is clear, focused and understood by all staff. In addition, close working with the Northern Alliance RIC and networking with colleagues nationally ensures that we share and benefit from up to date research/good practice around ongoing recovery approaches

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

- **what plans, measures and strategy are in place to help pupils “catch up” following the impact of the pandemic on school education, particularly for those moving from Primary 7 into high school;**

In collaboration with our Head Teachers we will continue with our ongoing measures and strategies to assess, track and monitor where children and young people are within their learning and the interventions that are required to support continuing progress.

With respect to the current phased return of pupils in our secondary schools we are prioritising the senior phase whilst ensuring some in-school learning for the S1-S3 BGE.

We have agreed and funded a series of supported study lessons over the Spring break across our secondary schools appropriate to their context, staffing availability and needs of learners. In addition, the national e-sgoil offer will supplement what is being provided locally to support young people with progress in national qualifications and to build their confidence.

Our robust transition plans are in place at all stages to support wellbeing and progression in learning, with an emphasis upon transition between ELC to P1 (this will include a focus on play across Early Level), P7–S1, S3-S4 and Senior Phase – positive destinations. Our young people with ASN/complex needs will be profiled individually to establish specific learning gaps and schools will work closely with the relevant workstream to ensure their support is targeted and appropriate to their individual need. We have agreement of the Community Services Committee that young people currently in S6 with complex additional support needs may undertake a seventh year to support them to transition to a positive destination. We have enabled the choice of deferred entry to ELC for all children with an August-February birthday, ensuring that missed play and learning experiences due to lockdown can be experienced now.

We will ensure the continuation of high quality learning, teaching and assessment to establish baselines and identify gaps and specific targeting of need. These targeted interventions will be based upon rigorous data analysis with a strong focus upon literacy, numeracy and HWB. Tracking and monitoring of learning will continue to be robust to ensure gaps in learning are identified early and supported appropriately.

We will continue to track and audit the numbers and areas of focus within our GIRFEC child planning processes in collaboration with HSCP colleagues to support a holistic/multiagency approach and GIRFEC will continue to the overarching approach which guides all our recovery actions.

As part of this approach, we will enable phased return activities to meet any social and emotional needs of vulnerable groups

And we will ensure the continuation of the strong and effective communication with families by school staff which has worked very well during lockdown.

- **confirmation of how blended learning is being delivered in your local authority area, and**

All children in primaries 4 to 7 are back to school on a full-time basis. All primary school children have returned to regulated childcare, including after school and breakfast clubs. We will meet the Scottish Government requirements for the BGE in terms of face to face teaching time, high quality remote learning which adheres to Scottish Government entitlements for all children and hub provision for key worker and vulnerable groups continues, with a focus upon wellbeing and guided by nurture principles.

All secondary school pupils will return full time after the Easter holiday period with the 14 school days in advance of the holiday period used flexibly to enable all young people to be invited into schools to re-engage with friends and staff whilst continuing to learn remotely. Until then, individual school arrangements have been developed at school level and these have been shared with young people and families. The 2m distancing rule in schools has significant implications on capacity and for this reason, courses will continue to be delivered remotely so that all children can continue to access a full curriculum.

Senior phase pupils who are undertaking national qualifications remain a priority group to ensure successful certification but all pupils will be afforded the opportunity to reconnect with friends and staff. Tracking and monitoring data has been reviewed to determine which additional pupils in the senior phase would benefit from further in school attendance to support certification. This will provide a targeted response whilst increasing the number of senior phase learners in school at one time. School leaders will consider how best to balance increased attendance whilst not compromising the quality of the remote learning offer. We will continue to offer high-quality remote learning for S1-S6 up to the Easter holiday period as per our secondary school blended learning timetables. Eight of our secondary schools are engaging with three outdoor learning partners or Local Authority partners to support the Health and Wellbeing and re-engagement of S1-S3 with school life and also to support the ongoing HUB provision. This has increased the re-engagement offer for S1-S3 pupils and is supportive of their health and wellbeing.

- **whether any school building capital projects have been delayed as a result of the pandemic.**

All of our ELC capital projects have been delayed by a minimum of 12 months and our capital work planned for summer 2020 was delayed by one year.

- **What will be the immediate priorities as pupils again return to in-school learning?**

We will continue to deliver high quality learning, track and monitor; attendance, engagement and progression in learning in all establishments. Our Educational Psychology Service has developed assessment, training and intervention materials for school non-attendance which will support educational establishments to identify the needs of individual children and young people to guide the most appropriate intervention. Tracking, monitoring and analysis of attendance data will facilitate intervention at a strategic level to link together wellbeing and the delivery of learning to meet the presenting needs of our children and young people.

The health and wellbeing of our children and young people will continue to be a key priority of the Service and as pupils return to in-school learning we will ensure that any presenting needs are supported. Whole school nurture approaches are adopted and our teachers have participated in Trauma training in order that they can further support children and young people. We will continue to work in partnership with HSCP colleagues to ensure that the principles of GIRFEC and a multi-agency approach is front and centre. Counselling services have been provided to support children and young people who are now accessing the service resulting in a greater than expected level of self-referral. Resilience and relationships will be an immediate priority as pupils return to in-school learning. Communication with parents will ensure that our children and young people are supported to fully re-engage with in-school learning.

Health and Wellbeing liaison officers offer individual trauma-informed support for children through a referral system via the Named Person. This is needs based but is offered from a menu of; brainstorm calming activities, mentoring, focussed one to one relationship building, support in the home to access online learning where pupils cannot attend school (COVID related or otherwise); and support for parents and carers who may require it (online, telephone or face to face).

We will continue with our enhanced engagement with the Lead for LGBTQ+ young people across Education and Social Work to ensure key staff are aware of the issues that may be experienced by young people identifying as LGBTQ+ to support them to respond more effectively to presenting need.

In addition to the health and wellbeing of our children and young people, that of our staff is also a key priority and we will support all of our education staff during recovery through access to counselling and workplace options.

We are committed to ensuring that upon our return to in-school learning that good practice that has been established within the remote and blended model of delivery will continue to be developed. Specifically around the use of digital delivery models for building learner independence, consolidation to support progression and personalisation and choice for pupil/teacher interaction. We will continue to build upon our growing teacher capacity in digital delivery through ongoing CLPL provision.

- **How and when does the local authority plan to assess impacts of the pandemic on learning and wellbeing?**

Teachers have continued to plan and deliver learning remotely throughout lockdown and any subsequent phased return. They have been monitoring and tracking attendance, health and wellbeing and progress on an ongoing basis. Formative assessment in the classroom with the return of in-school learning will provide further data to inform gaps in learning and interventions required. We will also undertake to record progress in literacy and numeracy through the Progress and Achievement model to provide both school and authority data on the impact on learning.

Delivery of the alternative certification model for national qualifications, in particular the local and national quality assurance and feedback, with the submission of provisional results to SQA that are consistent, equitable and fair will provide attainment data that will be used to assess the impact of the pandemic on learning.

We will also conduct a pupil voice wellbeing and learning survey to ensure that we capture the voice and experience of our children and young people in future planning. Evaluation is built in to core strategic developments which will allow reporting on the impact on health and wellbeing of the pandemic. Key to the delivery of the mental health strand of our Children and Young People's Improvement Plan 2020-23, and in line with the Community Mental Health framework, is engagement with young people as subject matter experts to ascertain their views on which supports and services are most effective and identifying any gaps in provision / approaches. This work will be progressed through strong links with youth services, active schools the third sector and existing networks for children and young people across Argyll and Bute to ensure interventions are well considered and targeted.

Data around key measures such as attendance, exclusion, universal child's plans, requests for flexible learning and home education, engagement with the counselling service and transition from the BGE to the senior phase and finally, participation measures will inform the impact of the pandemic on learning and wellbeing and interventions required.

There has been strong uptake for the coaching support offered to our school leaders with positive feedback on impact. This intervention was put in place following discussion with head teachers about measures that would support the continuation of effective leadership in uncertain times. This has been extended to other groups to include the central team and early years' team. We will continue to support in this way and use the data to assess impacts of the pandemic on the wellbeing our Head Teachers and to identify ongoing support required.

- **Does the local authority anticipate providing additional activities, learning opportunities or wellbeing support to pupils? If so, please provide examples?**

As aforementioned, we will be delivering supported study sessions for senior phase pupils during the Easter break to build pupil confidence, to support attainment and to allow moderation opportunities for teachers.

We will continue to work with partners to provide outdoor learning activities to support our pupils' mental, physical and emotional wellbeing. This will include the delivery of after school clubs to support raising attainment and to facilitate peer engagement for our children and young people.

We will continue to work closely with families and partner agencies to re-engage children and young people not attending/engaging post Covid.

Additional funding allocated to the Education Service from the 2021 Council budget will be used to support the health and wellbeing of our young people eg HWB Officers, additional capacity for Educational Psychologists and Counsellors.

Finally, as a result of our teachers' continuing commitment and capacity to delivery learning in a variety of modalities, we will seek to redefine our policy around flexible learning to enable a more bespoke approach to learning delivery and engagement which meet the needs of all learners post Covid.