

## **Comhairle nan Eilean Siar**

Please find below a response in relation to your e-mail dated 26 February 2021

**1. 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?**

Children and Young People had strong engagement with the e-learning offer over the last year with 90% + involvement recorded and reported on. On return to school we found that the gap was not as feared and that the children and young people took the enforced change in their stride. E-learning is more feared by adults than by children. It should be mentioned that staff did an excellent job in supporting children and young people in the new circumstances that they found themselves in. We will now focus on areas where there are some concerns such as Gaelic Medium Education and do some specific work in addressing the gap in language regression.

Because of the experience children and young people have had most parents were reporting very positively on the learning experience in the last year. Catch up is an unfortunate term as we don't believe that most children will have to catch up. The playing field is level and children and young people will progress through their learning in a planned and systematic manner. Where individuals have challenges, these will be addressed by careful planning in order to meet any gaps. We are also aware of the ongoing need to concentrate on the experience of specific groups such as care experienced children and young people.

We have small numbers in Primary 7 in the islands and transition activities will be planned next term as in previous years.

**2. Confirmation of how blended learning is being delivered in your local authority area**

Blended learning will continue as it has done during this term. Timetables are in place to teach those that are at home and those that are in school.

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

Slight delay in Stornoway Primary building work but this has now been completed. No other capital projects have been delayed.

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

Health and Well Being will be the priority. We are working closely with Education Scotland and we are being very careful about the language we use to ensure that the messages children and young people get is a positive one. Negativity in any shape or form will be countered in a supportive manner. There will be an emphasis on routine and rhythm. We are working with the Scottish Children's Parliament, gathering data on Mental Health and Well Being across our primary

aged group and will report to our Education, Sport and Children's Services Committee in June.

We continue to monitor children's attainment through teacher judgement and will identify gaps through this process. We have been well supported by Education Scotland colleagues in this sphere. Northern Alliance working groups have also provided effective support.

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

The Local authority has been assessing the impact of the pandemic on learning and wellbeing throughout the year. We have closely monitored attendance of Looked After Children, Extended Learning Pupils and Additional Support Needs Pupils. Staff have been in touch with these children and young people on a daily basis.

We are enhancing a monthly data gathering process in Children's Services and staff have managed caseloads efficiently.

We have a monthly data gathering process in place in Children's Services for a number of children. Staff have managed caseloads efficiently.

It should be noted that for a number of children and young people that, Head Teachers report, they have had better engagement with their learning through a virtual environment.

We will gather assessment data at local level this year and evaluate. We will plan learning based on what the data tells us.

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

The Local Authority plans to do things differently as we emerge from the pandemic. This has given us an opportunity to do things differently. We will look carefully at wider achievements and work more closely with colleagues in other agencies to deliver our curriculum differently.

Yours sincerely

**William MacDonald**

**Director of Education, Skills and Children's Services**