

Scottish Borders Council

- **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;**
 - We have focused our work on the Build Back Better and Fairer model, providing continued ongoing engagement with headteachers and their teams to: support the return of learners, capture evidence of where learners are and raise awareness and understanding of national and international research findings.
 - Regular engagement meetings with headteachers before each phase of learner returns, to look at short, medium- and long-term planning and how they are assessing where learners are upon return.
 - Working closely with headteachers to hone in on assessment approaches by year group and phase, as directed by research and local data.
 - Consultation with clusters and strategic heads around what support is required, to inform local authority planning processes.
 - Dissemination of Build Back Better, What Scotland Learned paper & continued reinforcement key messages.
 - Focused P7 – S1 transition discussions within each cluster to support Building Back Better & Fairer together; e.g. work with PTs of English & Maths across cluster.
 - Encouraging headteachers to build on opportunities and maximise access to quality teaching as they return.
 - Planned ongoing scrutiny of data at all levels throughout Spring and Summer terms to track impact of Build Back Better & Fairer approach, and develop plans accordingly.
- **confirmation of how blended learning is being delivered in your local authority area, and**
 - Building on success of Scottish Borders Council Inspire Learning programme providing devices to all learners – giving further opportunity for online learning where needed.
 - Local authority guidance around blended learning is in place in all of our schools. Adapted in response to DFM updates as secondary schools reopen.
 - Almost all young people in S1-S3 have a full day in school each week, providing transition from home learning to full time in school learning after Easter. Time is being used to reconnect with school community and school routines. Remainder of time is focused on continuing high quality home learning, reinforced while they are in school.
 - S4 – S6 attending for at least 2 days a week, with extended lessons with usual teacher for each subject studied. Remainder of time is focused on home learning.
 - All of the above has enabled a strong plan of re-engagement for the fortnight preceding Easter holidays.
- **whether any school building capital projects have been delayed as a result of the pandemic.**
 - Jedburgh Grammar Campus completed on time but opened August 2020 having been scheduled to open in April 2020

- Early Learning and Childcare provisions in Innerleithen and Priorsford due to complete in August 2020 were completed and opened in January 2021.

More generally, the Committee would also welcome any other comments you have to make on the impact of Covid-19 on school education, including the following:

- **What will be the immediate priorities as pupils again return to in-school learning?**
 - Following the research evidence around re-connecting we will be focusing on high quality learning & teaching and re-establishing routines for our learners in school.
 - We are surveying all learners and parents to capture their views.
 - Wellbeing and mental health support is being increased to capitalise on what has worked and increase intervention where needed.
 - Supporting schools and clusters with identifying any attainment gaps which may have been exacerbated by school closure, and providing cluster level support to address those gaps.
 - Supporting schools and headteachers to reflect on how any interventions introduced are evidenced-based and cognisant of how they link to high quality learning & teaching for all.
 - Working with schools to support staff wellbeing as they implement Build Back Better & Fairer approaches and additional work which will need to be done – e.g. certification model for our secondary schools.
 - Building on partnership with parents and families, to capitalise on the return to school and further strengthen relationships. This will enable us to develop further practices around family learning, and put in to practice evidence-based approaches to partnership working – as developed in our HT development morning earlier this term (in partnership with University of Edinburgh and Education Scotland).
- **How and when does the local authority plan to assess impacts of the pandemic on learning and wellbeing?**
 - This is an ongoing and long term process. It forms part of our quality improvement priorities and school improvement plans.
 - We are identifying how professional learning for our school teams can be a key driver in mitigating against any identified gaps in learning and wellbeing.
 - We are assessing impact through a range of indicators, gaining a full picture of how the pandemic has impacted on the learning and lives of our young people.
- **Does the local authority anticipate providing additional activities, learning opportunities or wellbeing support to pupils? If so, please provide examples?**
 - Schools are identifying ways of doing this, depending on the outcomes of the needs they are identifying as learners return.
 - This is locality based and driven by schools and clusters – e.g. Easter activities.
 - Community based mental health work is delivering additional community level support.

- We are focused on a Building Back Better and Fairer model across all of our schools, to build on the silver linings of the past 12 months and capture the different learning which our children and young people have engaged in.
- We are tailoring any additional support and interventions to respond to the evidence we have locally and what the research is telling us.
- We would welcome support from Scottish Government in continuing to reinforce the Build Back Better and Fairer approaches, building on practitioner skills and development, with a particular focus on the Scottish context and avoiding quick fixes.