



FALKIRK COUNCIL CHILDREN'S SERVICES RESPONSE TO THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE



Falkirk Council
Children's Services

19th March 2021



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?

Falkirk Council Children's Services Education Division has maintained its fidelity to the three over arching priorities for the Service which are:

Raising Attainment & Achievement:

Raise attainment for every child and young person and enable them to make excellent progress through their learning journey 3–18yrs.

Wellbeing, Equality & Inclusion:

Improve processes to support attainment and positive destinations for Falkirk's vulnerable children and young people.

Skills & Attributes Development:

Improve attainment and positive destinations for Falkirk's young people.

Since March 2020, our response and recovery plans have provided ELCCs and schools with support and guidance for the operational and strategic management of sustaining quality learning experiences for all children and young people whether that be face to face or remotely.

Throughout the pandemic, the service and school Improvement team have worked in collaboration and partnership with Early Learning and Child Care Heads of Centre, Primary, ASN and Secondary headteachers. Together we have created a

**Falkirk Council Children's
Service and School
Improvement**

**COVID -19 Response and
Recovery Planning and
Support**

[FCCS COVID-19 Response
Plan Phase 1](#) 20.03.20

[FCCS COVID-19 Response
Plan Phase 2](#) 16.04.20

[FCCS COVID-19 Response
Plan Phase 3](#) 30.04.20

[FCCS COVID-19 Recovery
Plan Phase 1](#) 23.06.20

[FCCS COVID-19 Recovery
Plan Phase 2](#) 10.08.20

[FCCS COVID -19 Recovery
& Improvement Plan Phase
3](#) 11.09.20

[FCCS Education Division
Standards and Quality
Report 2019 -2020](#)

[FCCS Education Division
Recovery and Improvement
Plan 2020- 2021](#)



supportive framework of guidance and support within which ELCC and school teams can work flexibly and creatively to meet the unique needs their settings.

We are proud of the adaptations, developments innovations to learning, teaching and communication that have kept our educators connected to children, young people and their families.

Assessing the quality of remote learning experiences has been a focus for all of our settings. The use of the Microsoft Teams insight function and other processes have enabled teams to track and monitor the level of pupils' engagement.

Our Blended, then Remote Learning Guidance set clear expectations of face to face engagement with children and young people. Along side this we worked with senior leaders and our Connected Falkirk digital learning team to create website for support and resources that can be accessed by learners, parents and staff.

Our Service and School Improvement Framework site has continued to provide strategy, support, professional learning opportunities and resources.

ELCC and Primary 1 - 3 returned on the 22nd February. This time has been well used to assess where children are in their learning and to plan targeted support and interventions for those who require it.

On the 15th March we welcomed back our primary 4 -7 pupils full time and our S1 -S6 pupils in a blended approach. The same focus on assessing where our pupils are is planned. SSI officers and headteachers are already working together to identify what further supports may be required to move learning forward at individual school level, from the service and nationally.

Falkirk Council Children's Service (FCCS) provides each school with a summary profile of key data. For example, the level of Free School Meal Entitlement (FME), attendance, Scottish National Standardised

**Falkirk Council
Children's Service and
School Improvement
Online Support and
Resources**

[SSI School Improvement Framework](#)

[Service and School Improvement Team Curriculum Support Page](#)

[Digi Learn Falkirk](#)

[Literacy Blog](#)

[Numeracy Blog](#)

[Connected Falkirk](#)

[Blended/Remote Learning Guidance Jan 2021](#)



Assessments (SNSAs) performance, Curriculum for excellence levels and percentage of children requiring additional support.

FCCS updates its guidance for the implementation and analysis of SNSAs annually. P4,7 and S3 did their assessments between October and December 2020. Primary 1 will be assessed between April and May. This provides further diagnostic information as part of the suite of formative and summative assessments that will be used.

In addition, the latest Service lift of current Curriculum for Excellence(CfE) levels attainment data for all stages in the Broad General Education P1 - S3 has been analysed to provide schools with current CfE assessment data by:

- Individual school
- Cluster group – (geographical association with secondary school)
- Neighbourhood Group – similar Scottish Index for Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and FME demographic

Targets are currently being set in preparation for the Scottish Government Achieved Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) lift in June

Transitions for children of all ages and stages have been considered in all of our response and recovery plans. We have provided more detailed support and guidance for the key stages of ELC into Primary 1 and for P7 in first year. In 2020, the creativity and efforts of teams to make this as robust and supportive as possible for families was tremendous in Falkirk. Digital approaches were developed to provide children and young people with virtual tours, introduction to staff and family learning activities. Door to door drop offs of resources and information were common.

connected Falkirk



1,873

devices deployed to all Primary and Secondary stage teachers.



1,500

devices deployed to our most vulnerable pupils.



600

unlimited data connections to support families with connectivity.

Falkirk Council Children's Service and School Improvement

Digital Support

Digital learning was a priority for Falkirk Council long before the COVID -19 pandemic. Our Connected Falkirk programme was initiated in 2019.

ELCCs and schools in Falkirk have embraced the use of digital technology to connect with children and young people and to deliver. Equity is a driving force for us. Schools used and shared their existing devices with families who needed them. Pupil Equity Funding has been used to provide more devices and internet access.

The [Connected Falkirk](#) programme has provided further devices, connectivity, technical support and professional learning.

Schools have accessed digital resources from the Scottish Government Connected Scotland fund.

In Falkirk, those who have needed support to be connected, online and learning have received it.



Transition approaches have been further sustained and evolved. Primary 7 -S1 transition started last term. Our secondary schools have dedicated P7 transition websites and are already planning for a blend of continued virtual experiences with face to face learning and activities as soon as it is safe to do so.

We recognise that the pandemic has impacted on traditional P7 residential experiences in 2020 and again this year. Many of our falkirk schools organise these trips with their cluster schools. We value the skills, attributes and connections that children develop through these experiences. In reponse we are collaborating with our active schools and outdoor learning colleagues to pool resources to provide a targeted programme of activities for all Falkirk Council's P7 pupils in term 4.

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

All Falkirk Council schools are to be commended for the work undertaken to deliver remote learning, then plan for blended learning in June 2020). They also deserve recognition for their resilience in changing these plans in August 2020 and then again for January 2021

This section of the Connected Falkirk site was developed by the Falkirk Council Blended Learning Short Life Working Group and central officers.

What is Blended Learning?



Find out more about what blended learning is.

Expectations for Blended and Remote Learning



Find out more about the expectations for blended learning.

Support and Resources



Take a look at our resources and support for blended learning.

FAQ



Find out more about blended learning by exploring our frequently asked questions.

What Does it Look Like?



Get a better idea of what blended learning looks like.

Educators



Blended Learning information for Falkirk staff. Please note this requires a Glow login and is accessible only to staff working in Falkirk Council Children's Services

Moving Learning Forward

The importance of effective transitions has featured in our planning since the beginning of the pandemic as outlined in FC Guidance papers below.

Key Transition Stages – Moving On Successfully:
[TransitionDocument - Paper 1 - May 2020.pdf](#)

Key Transition Stages – Moving On Successfully:
[TransitionDocument - Paper 2 - June 2020.pdf](#)

Our local guidance has been revised and adapted to meet every development in Scottish Government expectations and the needs of our ELCCs and schools.

Whilst some learners continue to learn remotely, our most recent guidance for remote learning sets out clear expectations.

[Blended/Remote Learning Guidance Jan 2021](#)

Likewise the [Blended/Remote Learning website](#) continues to provide clear expectations and support.



Our secondary school headteachers and leadership teams continue to work together to plan for and meet the latest expectations set out on the 3rd March publication of the Scottish Government's "*Guidance for preparing in-school and remote learning for S1 - S6.*"

S4-6 learners completing National Qualifications have been prioritised for in-school time in order to deliver the Alternative Certification Model (ACM) that has been developed.

In school learning and teaching of critical practical work in relation to qualifications in 2021 that can only be carried out in school, continues.

Schools have communicated effectively with pupils and parents to share their rationales and arrangements for the timetabling of in school learning for all pupils.

Extensive and intensive planning has ensured that pupils are able to be in school whilst adhering to the COVID-19 restrictions and safety protocols.

Service and School Improvement officers continue to work closely with senior leaders to manage the balance between in-school and remote learning at individual school level, based on local circumstances. Our secondary school teams are very well prepared to meet the needs of different groups of learners. Commendably, this has been achieved whilst still providing key worker provision, non-class contact cover and remote learning. We hope that the complexity of this task is recognised by the Education and Skills Committee.

Moving learning Forward

11 Falkirk schools contributed to the Education Scotland HMIE National Overview of Practice - Remote Learning. This sample included ASN, primary and Secondary Schools. we are confident that our current approaches align with the recommendations made in the subsequent [reports](#) for schools and for local authorities..

Secondary schools are already accessing the national offer from Education Scotland [Esgoil](#)

In addition to the in-school study support being offered, Falkirk's secondary schools will be supporting pupils to participate in the Esgoil Easter School.

We will work with our schools to continue to contribute to the Esgoil study support and learning offer for BGE stages and senior phase in term 4.



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

As a result of the pandemic, specifically the closure of construction and related industries as part of the first national lockdown, eleven capital projects relating to 1140 hours expansion of early learning and childcare (ELC) were delayed by a number of months beyond the original planned timescale.

This number represents 21% of all local authority-run ELC settings. The removal of the statutory implementation date of August 2020 provided the opportunity to reassess project plans.

No primary or secondary schools have been affected.

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

In Falkirk Council we are embracing the positive legacies from the changes we have had to make to learning and teaching.

Our priorities are to celebrate where children and young people are in their learning. We aim to move learning further forward. We know where our pupils are with their learning now, we will know even more about this as they all return. Our aim is to reassure pupils and parents that we know where we want our pupils to be, we have plans and will make more plans with children and young people on how to get them there.

Maximising the face to face time that we have with our pupils is critical. Support staff will be redeployed in each

Operational Priorities

Revision and updating of current risk assessments

Continued monitoring of Lateral flow testing processes

Continued central support for provision of PPE

Strategic Priorities

Programme of professional learning and support focusing on assessment processes and data analysis

Contributing to the resourcing and delivery of the Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional improvement

Collaborative and Education Scotland Easter School and continued study support offer for the BGE

Continue with our FCSSI Quality Associates Programme to build capacity across the service to evaluate the quality of provision across all sectors



setting to work with those who need additional help the most.

We will continue to provide challenge for those pupils who have sustained good progress and there are many.

We recognise that remote learning suited many pupils, plans are already in place to sustained blended approaches to learning to sustain personalisation and choice.

Recovery planning has focussed on literacy, Numeracy and health and wellbeing. The expectations that children and young people experience a broad general education remain. One of our main priorities is to create a supportive framework that helps schools to assess children and young people skills and attributes development across the curriculum.

We will spend time with our teams over the next few weeks to set the expectations for ELC and school evaluation, contextual analysis and improvement planning and reporting to ensure that progress and achievement are recognised and plans are in place to move learning forward.

Work force support and development is integral to all of our improvement work. This will remain a key priority as the full workforce returns. We will continue to provide facilitated sessions that bring leaders and practitioners together to share, problem solve and plan.

We have Got this!

One of Falkirk's greatest strengths is the culture of partnership for improvement between the central team, ELCCS and schools.

This has become all the stronger during the pandemic.

We have stayed connected and collaborative throughout. We have evolved and increased opportunities and programmes which enable:

- Gathering and sharing of effective practice
- Connecting practitioners across all sectors
- Professional learning networks for support for learning assistants, support for learning teachers, secondary subjects, ELC and primary practitioners.
- Leadership development for aspiring leaders, DHTs and newly appointed Headteachers
- Facilitated, small group Leading "Well" sessions for Heads of Centre and Headteachers
- ELC, Primary and secondary Improvement partnerships



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

Supporting and monitoring the wellbeing of our school teams and communities has been, and continues to be, essential.

Our ELCC and school leaders, practitioners and support teams are to be applauded for their resilience, commitment and collective endeavours to keep children and young people safe, confident and learning.

The wellbeing of staff and children has been front and central to all aspects of our response and recovery plans. This focus is in no way diminished as children, young people and staff come back together.

The level and quality of pupils interaction has been monitored in both periods of lock down. Between August and December tracking monitoring and assessment was integral to day to day learning and teaching. Holistic approaches to assessing children's wellbeing, progress achievement and attainment are already underway.

Schools are currently reviewing the data they have gathered to plan for further assessments as children return to full time education.

ELCC and school teams are welcoming children and young people back with positivity, ambition and aspiration. They are celebrating and evaluating what has been achieved and planning carefully for next steps.

There is a joint determination in Falkirk to harness the energy, resilience and high levels of engagement that children and young people have returned with. We will continue to be adaptable and responsive based on the data generated from previous, current and further assessments of both wellbeing and attainment.

Assessment Approaches

- FC Tracking Tool
- Summative assessments
- Peer assessment
- Self-assessment
- Formative assessment
- Teacher feedback
- Pupil feedback
- Parents/ carers feedback
- Scottish National Standardised assessment
- Teacher professional Judgement
- Portfolio and course work assessment
- Assessment of skills and attributes development
- Learner conversations
- Learner journey profiling and evaluation

Supporting Resources

- FCCS ASN Staged Intervention
<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/fa/asnfalkirk/>
Framework
- SQA assessments
- Insights
- Education Scotland Assessment in the BGE
- Scottish Attainment challenge Self-Evaluation CfE National Benchmarks
- FC Progression Pathways
- FVWLric Equity Toolkit
- National Improvement Hub



We have a clear sense of shared responsibility and accountability to get it right for every child in Falkirk. We are working with partner services to ensure that those most vulnerable and those in need of additional help in nursery, in school and at home are appropriately supported.

Connecting those who support additional needs has been a priority. Microsoft Teams networks are in place to enable support for learning teachers (SFLT) to share ideas, signpost resources, successful interventions, effective strategies and relevant information. Colleagues can ask for support/advice from central officers or each other. Professional learning sessions and opportunities have been signposted to team members and facilitated by central officers. This professional learning network is providing a strong link between SFLT and the central team and is another asset to our suite of assessment and improvement approaches.

Support staff have had a pivotal role in all aspects of our work. ELC and support for learning assistants (SFLAs), home link/ welfare officers have all contributed to our collective efforts to reach out to families during periods of lock down and to keep the connection between ELC, school and home. As with SFLT we have a Microsoft Teams professional learning network for SFLAs. We have also increased professional learning and training opportunities for this important workforce group. Their expertise and knowledge will contribute to our holistic assessment of children's wellbeing, progress and achievement.

Falkirk is placing significant importance on working with parents and carers to build on their evaluation of their children's remote learning experiences, strengths and needs. In addition we are refreshing our parental engagement strategy to sustain and enhance the many innovations in communication, collaboration and consultation which have developed over the last 12 months.

Wellbeing

The FC Children's Commission are working with the Community Planning Partnership Mental Health Group to develop a public page with children, young people and parents to understand what they need to support their MHWB. This is a priority focus area for the new Falkirk Council Children's Services Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Service supported by Scottish Government funding.

Our Falkirk Council [Practitioner Pages](#) provide local resources and supports and signposts to national professional learning, advice and resources.

The practitioner pages are directly linked to our Educational psychology blog:

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/fa/epservice>

Examples of support include [Learning & Wellbeing at home during coronavirus](#)

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/fa/epspractitioners/> for materials to assist practitioners, including [covid-19 resources](#)

[Understanding and responding to anxieties in children that may arise from covid-19 and returning to school.](#)



In August 2020 wellbeing was the first of our three focus areas for recovery planning as shown in the table below

Wellbeing	Moving learning forward: curriculum learning teaching and assessment	Blended approaches including transitions in learning
<p>HWB curriculum development Partnerships for delivery and specific interventions</p> <p>Structure and balance of curriculum</p> <p>Continue to develop arrangements with Forth valley College (FVC) and engagement with school leavers, if appropriate</p> <p>Family engagement/learning Additional Support Needs (ASN) – staged intervention to support those children and young people who emerge as requiring further support</p> <p>Pupil Equity Funding/ Scottish attainment Challenge Funding (PEF) – universal and specific interventions</p>	<p>Range, validity and reliability of assessment information – formative, summative and diagnostic</p> <p>Use of assessment tools to understand learner progress</p> <p>Revision plan – timescale for this – consistency in approach</p> <p>Structure and balance of the curriculum i.e. centrality of wellbeing with cognisance of pace and challenge of learning</p> <p>Developmentally appropriate pedagogies</p> <p>Continue to work with partners to ensure learning is tracked and monitored</p>	<p>Communication to staff, parents/carers, children and young people regarding expectations, entitlements and support</p> <p>Learning and teaching: modes, models and applications for delivery</p> <p>Use of technologies for learning, teaching and assessment</p> <p>Processes for monitoring the quality of blended or remote learning</p> <p>Expectations and processes for monitoring learner engagement and quality feedback</p>

As noted in previous sections of this response, wellbeing and assessment are integral to the other two areas of moving learning forward and blended approaches to learning.

It was a significant task for local authorities, ELCCs and schools to manage the avalanche of guidance and expectations that focused on wellbeing. Appendix 1 provides a sample of the wellbeing supports that are in place in Falkirk and will be further developed moving forward.

We will continue to use this framework of support, guidance and resource as we evaluate and assess learning and plan forward for session 2021 -2022.



SERVICE/ SECTOR	Additional Support Theme	ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS BEING PROVIDED
Falkirk Children's Commission Rights & Engagement Group and Leadership Group	Finding out what children and young people's needs are.	Seeking young people's voices on what matters to them for our Integrated Children's Services Plans. Feedback being analysed now and young people asking for support with exams, their future and Mental Health and Wellbeing. This will be feedback across the Commission Leadership Group and across the partnership to develop additional activities, learning or wellbeing supports further.
	Developing mental health and wellbeing supports and services with children and young people	Consultation and engagement with children and young people, as much as restrictions allow, to identify what they think we need developed as part of the new Community Mental health and Wellbeing Supports and Services.
Champions Board	Social media messaging re wellbeing	Our champs have started a social media campaign on Instagram and twitter and are looking to engage local social influencers to help spread positive messages and supports for wellbeing.
Community Learning & Development	1-1 and outreach support	Continued support from CLD supporting young people by phone and digitally. Socially distanced 1-1 and outreach work has continued in line with restrictions and will be scaled up
CPP Mental Health Planning Group/ Falkirk Children's Commission	Mental health and Wellbeing (MHWB) Sessions for Parents	Mental Health and Wellbeing sessions for parents delivered by NHS and Falkirk District Association for Mental Health 3 secondary sessions run so far.
	MHWB Community Flyer	Community MHWB support flyer developed to support street youth workers, foodbanks and community groups supporting some of most disadvantaged communities.
	Practitioner webpage re MHWB	MHWB to support children and young people (CYP) page developed and promoted across the partnership and specifically with all schools and ELCC centres. https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/fa/GirfecFalkirk/learning-development/mental-health-wellbeing/ Has links to immediate help, staff wellbeing supports, learning and development and resources to support CYP and families.



	Suicide prevention training <i>Children's Services</i>	Training for Third Sector on suicide prevention from NHS and development of Community Wellbeing Champions
	Safety & Stabilisation Training for CYP and Parents	Safety and Stabilisation Training for Staff, Parents then 9-week course for YP. Testing with one high school and then potential for scale up as part of new Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Services
Community Learning and Development and Children's Commission Partners	5 ways to wellbeing summer programme	5 ways to wellbeing family learning programme targeting 4 geographies with highest poverty and highest referrals to CAMHS historically.
	Summer activity and food programmes	Universal provision for all children and young people
Falkirk Children's Commission – MHWB Group	Mentoring	Develop coordinated mentoring support to ensure CYP have a trusted adult to support wellbeing.
	MHWB & Employability	Multi agency group developed, data captured on needs and localities of concern. Information to be worked on with young people to identify gaps and develop new services as part of CMHWBS and Employability Pathways.
	Falkirk Families Support Line	Joint support line for young people and families provided by Aberlour and Barnardos. Funded by CMHWBS monies.
Falkirk Children's Commission - GIRFEC Group	Child's Plan	The group are rewriting the child's plan guidance to ensure GIRFEC and early intervention processes and named person roles and responsibilities are clear.
Falkirk Service and School Improvement Team	RIC Health and Wellbeing PSE Resources Blog	The Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative have established a working group to take forward developments for the Personal and Social Education curriculum (PSE). Resources for all areas including Mental, Emotional, Social and Physical Wellbeing, are available to support children and young people from 3—18. PSE Resources – Forth Valley & West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative (glowscotland.org.uk)
Falkirk Service and School Improvement Team	SSI Teams Weekly Comms Updates	A weekly bulletin is emailed to all schools where we take the opportunity to share any new resources and publicise and



	Falkirk Council <i>Children's Services</i>	training or events that would support our children and young people
Falkirk Service and School Improvement Team	Development of Substance education resources and training	Over 20 teachers from across Forth Valley and West Lothian have come together to develop our programme on Substance Use for pupils in the Senior Phase. Additional volunteers are starting to revise and improve our curricular offering for substances from Early to Fourth level now. An ambitious programme looking at tobacco prevention is being developed for Second Level (P5-7) and secondaries. Colleagues from health are complimenting this work by offering professional learning for staff.
Falkirk Service and School Improvement Team	Moving on from Covid Support Resources for Young people, staff, and parents/carers	A support document is being created to pull together readings, online learning/webinars, video clips, lesson plans etc for supporting young people, staff and parents/carers. This follows on from a support document produced last year during the initial lockdown period.
Falkirk Service and School Improvement Team	Mental Health and Wellbeing training for probationary teachers	An online 3 hour session on supporting children and young people's wellbeing as well as their own.
Falkirk Service and School Improvement Team	Mental wellbeing training session for the Girls' Sport Forum participants	A 1.5 hour session for the 18 girls from across our 8 mainstream secondaries who will be focusing on how to use sport as a positive vehicle in their schools for improving the wellbeing of young people
Additional Support Needs Team	Social media messaging re wellbeing	Use of the Falkirk Council ASN twitter to engage/signpost parents and partners to our range of supports.
Additional Support Needs Team	Staged Intervention	Continued training offered to practitioners to further develop their understanding of the Staged Intervention Model. Guidance produced (presentation) to facilitate wider understanding.
Additional Support Needs Team	Home Education	At a time where remote learning from home has become the norm, the ASN Team have further developed their information for parents and partners around Home Education, with this being updated on the Falkirk.gov.uk website.



Additional Support Needs Team	Parental Engagement <i>Children's Services</i>	Direct engagement with parents during the pandemic to get their views on all aspects of how CV19 is affecting their children.
Additional Support Needs Team	ASN/ICT Service	Continued issue of bespoke devices to support learning. This includes access to AAC devices and the introduction of larger screen iPad Pro models to support children with visual impairments. These devices have also supported their learning whilst at home due to the pandemic.
Additional Support Needs Team	PPE/Specialist FFP3	In very specific cases involving aerosol generating procedures, ASN staff have trained to provide face fitting for FFP3 masks for staff carrying out this procedure. This has allowed us to react to the changes at speed and keep our teams protected.
Additional Support Needs Team	Outreach Support	Throughout the pandemic the ASN Outreach Team has provided support and learning for their pupil cohort. This has proven very successful and in some cases, resulted in increased engagement.
Additional Support Needs Team	Early Years Outreach Support	Support of EY and Primary authority staff through Digi Learn Falkirk Teams page and EY ASN Outreach Service Page , training materials,CPD, signposting, networking