

Covid 19: Written Answer Reports
Week beginning 15th March 2021

15/3/2021

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether teachers with underlying health conditions are required to return to classrooms before (a) receiving their COVID-19 vaccination and (b) an adequate period of time has passed for their COVID-19 vaccination to take effect. **(S5W-35733)**

John Swinney: The Scottish Government [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance on reducing the risks in schools - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-guidance-on-reducing-the-risks-in-schools/pages/1-1.aspx) is clear that school staff who have underlying health conditions are able to work within schools.

Where there are any concerns about the impact of COVID-19, these should be discussed with their employer and individualised risk assessment undertaken.

Advice for those on the shielding list, which is available from [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): shielding advice and support - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-shielding-advice-and-support/pages/1-1.aspx), is that they should not go to work during lockdown, unless they can work from home.

This includes school staff. This advice continues to apply when they have had a coronavirus vaccine.

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what educational support is available for children with long-COVID, who are too unwell to return to school. **(S5W-35843)**

John Swinney: The Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000 places duties on education authorities to make special arrangements for children or young people who are unable to attend school due to ill health to receive education elsewhere than at an educational establishment.

This applies to all children and young people who are unable to attend school due to ill health, regardless of their medical condition. Where a child or young person is absent from school due to the effects of long-COVID, schools should take this into account when deciding upon the most appropriate form of educational support whilst they remain absent.

In June 2015, the Scottish Government published revised guidance to education authorities to support them in implementation of their duties under this legislation. This guidance is available on the Scottish Government's website through the following link: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/06/6846/0>.

16/3/2021

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government what consideration it has given to allowing parents with young children to travel across local authority boundaries to receive support from their immediate family, in a socially distanced and safe way. **(S5W-35654)**

Maree Todd: The Scottish Government continues to acknowledge the fact that on-going restrictions have been challenging for everyone, in particular for families with young children.

Essential reasons for travel include providing care, assistance, support to or respite for a vulnerable person, which can include providing support to a parent of a child under the age of 1.

17/3/2021

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of schools not re-opening on a full-time basis until after the Easter holidays, how teachers will be able to gather sufficient evidence to produce estimated grades by the deadline in June 2021. **(S5W-35820)**

John Swinney: The priority at this time should be on learning and teaching to ensure that learners consolidate their learning and have sufficient course coverage prior to assessment.

On 16 February, the National Qualifications 2021 Group issued an update to the Alternative Certification Model providing clarity on the assessment approach to be adopted this year. The revised model included a further extension to the submission date for provisional results to 25 June to provide more time for learning and teaching and gathering of evidence.

SQA has reduced the evidence requirements for each National Course to the minimum to preserve the validity and public confidence in the qualifications. In addition, SQA published 116 subject-specific guidance documents across National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses to support teachers and lecturers in gathering key assessment evidence as the basis for provisional results. Teachers will be using a holistic approach and a range of evidence to determine the provisional results. They also have the flexibility to assess learners at times and in ways that are appropriate to their needs.

18/3/2021

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what its latest guidance is regarding outdoor teaching following the full-time return of primary schools. **(S5W-35840)**

John Swinney: A refreshed version of the Scottish Government's guidance on arrangements for the phased re-opening of schools was published on 8 March 2021. This guidance reiterates the Scottish Government's message that schools should consider the increased use of outdoor spaces. This is because the outdoors can provide extra space for distancing between consistent groups of learners, help to decrease the risk of transmission and improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of young people. This refreshed Scottish Government guidance also complements recent Education Scotland school reopening guidance which states that learning outdoors can help learners to continue to connect with one another and the school environment, support readiness for the

full-time return to in-school learning and provide experiences which enhance learning.

In order to support more outdoor learning, the Scottish Government has funded the development of the Teaching Learning Outdoors and Supporting Learning Outdoors professional development courses. These courses are available free of charge to all teachers and support staff across Scotland.

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what its latest guidance is regarding PE teachers who are asked to teach outside all day, including in poor weather conditions. **(S5W-35841)**

John Swinney: Guidelines on physical education and dance have been prepared by Education Scotland to assist with decision-making and the safe implementation of timetabled physical education. The guidelines are continually updated to reflect any changes in the scientific advice. Currently, physical education and dance can only take place outdoors, which reflects the hierarchy of risk:

- outdoors being safer than indoors;
- activities undertaken at a quiet volume or that have lower respiratory exertion being safer than aerosol-generating activities;

On 9 February 2021, Education Scotland ran a webinar attended by 227 teachers to share online pedagogy and how to create a supportive learning environment. Through online learning, teachers have set physical activity challenges, both indoors and outdoors, so that learners can choose depending on their home setting. These practices were shared at the webinar and welcomed by the attendees. The webinar Teams space is now 'live' for teachers to continue to collaborate, share practice, and seek solutions in these challenging times. A recorded version of the webinar will be shared on DigiLearn in due course and similar events will be considered for the future.

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will introduce guidance for schools whose pupils require further home learning and a slower phased return to school. **(S5W-35845)**

John Swinney: There are no plans to provide guidance on this specific point. The existing schools guidance available at: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance on schools reopening - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-schools-reopening/pages/2-1-introduction-to-schools-reopening.aspx) provides a range of information on preparing for and implementing the return to in-school learning. Schools and local authorities are best placed to make decisions on appropriate arrangements for individual learners during the return to school and beyond.

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government when the Higher Applications of

Mathematics course will be introduced, and whether delivery will be delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. **(S5W-35849)**

John Swinney: The new Higher Applications of Mathematics course is designed to get more young people studying mathematics and developing the skills they need for modern citizenry, such as statistical literacy, financial literacy and being able to use technology to solve problems and inform decision making.

The course has been in development for more than two years and the specification and specimen assessment materials were made available at the start of the current session for first teaching in 2021-22. An additional specimen paper and sample coursework will be made available in June 2021.

There is considerable interest in, and appetite for the new Higher, and there is no intention to delay the introduction of the course.

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what support it will provide to teachers in order to facilitate the development of the new Higher Applications of Mathematics course in time for its delivery in August 2021. **(S5W-35850)**

John Swinney: The Scottish Government is funding Scholar to provide online resources to support the Applications of Mathematics courses at National 5 and Higher level from 2021-22. The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is developing resources, including additional question papers and exemplar coursework, and are working with Education Scotland and the University of Strathclyde to support teachers with the roll out of the qualification.

The University of Strathclyde secured funding from the Scottish Funding Council to develop and provide online courses to upskill teachers in statistics and mathematical modelling to enable them to be well prepared to deliver the new Higher. A significant number of teachers have successfully completed these online courses. In addition, information has been made available to teachers through events such as the Scottish Mathematical Council's Annual Conference. The most recent online conference, held on 6 March, had almost 1000 participants, with 130 attending the SQA session on the new Higher course.

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what financial support it will provide to ensure schools can deliver the new Higher Applications of Mathematics course, in light of reports that the SQA-prescribed software is prohibitively expensive for most schools. **(S5W-35851)**

John Swinney: The Scottish Qualifications Authority is not prescribing particular software for the delivery of the course. Learners are expected to be able to use spreadsheets to explore mathematical models and manipulate data. R studio, freeware that is commonly used in industry and Higher Education, is expected to be used for undertaking statistical analysis and there is considerable support available to upskill teachers in the use of this software.

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of concerns that the new Higher Applications of Mathematics course requires knowledge and skills outside many teachers' area of specialism, what (a) consideration was given and (b) steps were taken when developing the course to ensure there was no adverse impact on the workload of teachers delivering it. **(S5W-35852)**

John Swinney: Prior to the development of the new Higher, a national survey was undertaken to identify the purpose and content that teachers and other stakeholders believed were necessary in such a course. The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) worked with practising teachers and lecturers, academics and industry specialists to develop the new Higher, to ensure it is fit for purpose and develops the mathematical and statistical skills needed for life, employment and further study.

In recognition of the need to support teachers implementing the new course, the Scottish Government is funding Scholar to provide online resources to support the Applications of Mathematics courses at National 5 and Higher from 2021-22. The SQA is developing resources, including additional question papers and exemplar coursework, and is working with Education Scotland and the University of Strathclyde to support the roll out of the qualification.

The University of Strathclyde secured funding from the Scottish Funding Council to develop and provide online courses to upskill teachers in statistics and mathematical modelling to enable them to be well prepared to deliver the new Higher. A significant number of teachers have successfully completed these online courses. In addition, information has been made available to teachers through events such as the Scottish Mathematical Council's annual conference. The most recent online conference, held on 6 March, had almost 1000 participants, with 130 attending the SQA session on the new Higher course.

Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what provision it is making to ensure that local authorities and schools are able to provide adequate classroom space to facilitate face-to-face teaching for all pupils, in light of physical distancing requirements and other related considerations. **(S5W-35869)**

John Swinney: To date, we have committed over £375 million to support local authorities and schools to prepare for the phased return to face to face learning. This investment supports costs of necessary safety mitigations in schools such as infrastructure adjustments. It also includes funding for additional teachers, support staff, digital devices and connectivity solutions to support in-school and at home learning as necessary. We have also published a suite of guidance on the [return of pupils to schools](#) specifically to support schools and local authorities on reducing risks in schools and to support [in-school and remote learning](#) for secondary learners in the run up to Easter.

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what consideration it has given to testing school pupils without COVID-19 symptoms, and what its reasons are for its position on this matter. **(S5W-36180)**

John Swinney: We introduced an enhanced asymptomatic testing programme for school and early learning and childcare staff and senior phase pupils in line with the first phase of a return to in-school learning on 22 February. Voluntary twice-weekly at-home testing, using Lateral Flow Devices, is being made available to all school staff in primary, secondary and special schools, and all senior phase pupils. We have also announced that we will extend the availability of testing to all S1-S3 secondary school pupil year groups following an expected fuller return after the Easter break, which will be subject to continued progress in suppressing the virus.

Regular staff and pupil asymptomatic testing is part of a robust package of COVID-19 mitigation measures already in place in schools, and must not be viewed in isolation from those measures. We view twice-weekly asymptomatic testing as an additional precaution which will help us to make a return to in-person learning as safe as possible for staff and pupils. The goal of this testing is to identify staff or young people who have the virus but do not have symptoms and require them to self-isolate, thus breaking potential chains of transmission early and minimising the risks of outbreaks in schools. Lateral flow tests provide quick results – usually within about half an hour. That makes them useful for regular testing programs of this kind. However, we are aware that lateral flow tests are less sensitive than laboratory PCR tests and for that reason we will continue to ask that everyone who tests positive using a Lateral Flow Device under the schools programme has a confirmatory PCR test.

We are working with key partners such as YoungScot to ensure we understand the views of young people and can take these into account to improve the testing offer over time.

19/3/2021

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to provide an update on progress towards the publication of a strategic policy framework for school-age childcare. **(S5W-36010)**

Maree Todd: The Scottish Government has today published its School Age Childcare: Progress Report which sets out progress towards developing a future school age childcare strategic policy framework in Scotland including recognition of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on children, parents and carers and the school age childcare sector. You can access the Progress Report [here](#)

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the IT equipment available to teachers to support remote and blended learning. **(S5W-36153)**

John Swinney: Local authorities are responsible for ensuring that their staff have access to appropriate equipment in order to carry out their work. The Scottish Government has focused on supporting digital inclusion amongst learners and to date, over 67,000 devices and almost 14,000 connectivity solutions have been distributed.