

Motions Questions and Answers: Written Answer Reports
Week beginning 22nd February 2021

22/2/2021

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government what additional childcare support it plans to offer to key workers who are single parents, and have no access to wraparound childcare before and after school, in order to enable them to continue working their scheduled hours. **(S5W-35038)**

Maree Todd: All schools and regulated childcare providers are currently able to remain open for children of keyworkers.

This means that children who are offered a place, can access their usual childcare or school setting, including for wraparound childcare services before and after school. Informal childcare (the use of friends or family) is also permitted under the current restrictions where necessary.

The definitions of key workers agreed with local authorities previously during the pandemic continue to apply in the current circumstances and are defined in the guidance published in January for schools and for childcare. This guidance is intended to be used by local authorities, childcare settings and schools themselves to consider which children and families will benefit most from continued attendance at their usual setting, and to prioritise places accordingly.

Parents who believe they meet the criteria set out in the guidance can speak to their usual school or childcare provider or the local authority for further information.

Business has a key role to play in minimising the demand for school and childcare places. Employers are asked to be flexible with staff in these circumstances and to prioritise and only request places for staff who are absolutely critical to the provision of essential services and who cannot work from home.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government what support it will provide to current probationary teachers who are not able to secure permanent teaching posts when their contracts end. **(S5W-35194)**

John Swinney: The Scottish Government has provided local authorities with £80 million of additional investment in education staff, sufficient for the recruitment of around 1,400 additional teachers, and 200 support staff this year.

In addition, a package of £45 million of new funding was announced on 13 January to support the delivery of remote learning. This funding is sufficient to employ an additional 2,000 teachers during this financial year, and a further

£25 million has been made available to local authorities to support this to the end of the school year.

The funding is not ring-fenced for a specific group of teachers, and may be used by local authorities to recruit additional newly qualified teachers, recently qualified teachers and other qualified teachers.

This money is additional to the £160 million that we have already committed for education recovery since the start of the pandemic. A further £100 million for 2021-22 was announced on 16 February to support education recovery.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government what estimate it has made of the number of current probationary teachers (i.e. the 2020-21 cohort) who will not secure a permanent teaching post after their first year of employment. **(S5W-35198)**

John Swinney: Whilst the recruitment and deployment of teachers are matters for local authorities, given the significant additional funding we have made available to local government to support education recovery, and the need to ensure that children and young people have appropriate support for their learning and wellbeing as we return to in-person learning, we would expect employment opportunities to be available for many teachers.

Since the start of the pandemic we have committed to investing over £300 million to support education recovery, this has helped to recruit an additional 1,400 teachers and over 200 support staff.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government what advice is available to parents who are home schooling regarding preparing their children for National 5 assessments. **(S5W-35231)**

John Swinney: The Scottish Government recognises that remote learning arrangements present a number of challenges for young people, parents and carers, particularly those learners working towards National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications. We have been working intensively with national partners to ensure that our senior phase learners are provided with the clarity and the support they need.

On 16 February, the National Qualifications 2021 Group issued an update to the Alternative Certification Model to address the current remote learning position. The details provide clarity on the assessment approach to be adopted this year, with a further extension to the submission date for provisional results to 25 June to provide more time for learning and teaching. The priority at this time, and on immediate return to school, should be on learning and teaching to ensure that learners consolidate learning and have sufficient course coverage prior to assessment later in the academic session. The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) has published a blog which aims to keep learners, parents and carers informed on changes to assessment of SQA qualifications, which can be found at the following link:

<https://blogs.sqa.org.uk/2021/>

Local authorities and individual schools are responsible for providing advice and support to parents which is relevant to their own context and situation, and their teachers and schools draw on information and advice from the SQA and Education Scotland.

The advice from schools to parents and carers is supplemented by a range of

national advice sources, including:

- The National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFS) provides a Nutshell guide on learning at home which they are currently updating. This is part of a broader suite of Nutshell guides for parents, available from the NPFS website.
- The NPFS is hosting a series of webinars on the phased return to school which will be posted on You Tube.
- Practical advice and support to parents is available via the Parent Club Covid-19 site, which includes specific advice on supporting teenagers with learning at home.
- Advice materials and further remote learning activities provided via the Education Scotland "Scotland Learns" platform.
- Additional study support options for senior phase learners. As part of the National e-Learning Offer, the e-Sgoil initiative has been widening access to a range of live lesson programmes covering ages 3 to 18, augmenting the work of classroom teachers across the country. In September 2020, e-Sgoil rolled out a package of free interactive online study webinars for senior phase pupils, an offer which has received positive feedback from learners. For the duration of this current period, e-Sgoil is running a new Lockdown Live programme. The e-Sgoil provision includes daytime online study support sessions, available to all schools who use the Glow platform, and encompassing National 5 qualifications.

E-Sgoil are currently looking for S4/5/6 pupils input to planning for their Easter Study Support provision. This will be held during the week beginning 5 April 2021. It is individual schools' decision as to whether and how they wish to integrate the e-Sgoil offer as part of their own learning and teaching support to learners. Further information is available at: <http://e-sgoil.com/daytimestudysupport2020/>

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government how the SQA plan to assess National 5 candidates, in light of the cancelation of the 2021 exam diet. **(S5W-35232)**

John Swinney: We are committed to ensuring that learners can be fairly assessed this year following the cancellation of the 2021 exam diet. National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher exams in 2021 have been replaced by an Alternative Certification Model based on teachers' and lecturers' judgement of evidence of each individual pupil's attainment.

Following the move to remote learning, the National Qualifications 2021 Group has been overseeing changes to the Alternative Certification Model and associated timeline that was announced in December 2020. A revised Alternative Certification Model was published on 16 February taking into account the current remote learning position. This includes an extension of the final date for schools and colleges to submit provisional results to 25 June 2021 to allow greater time for learning and teaching. This provides clarity to teachers and learners on the assessment approach to be adopted this year.

The priority at this time, and on immediate return to school, should be on learning and teaching to ensure that learners consolidate learning and have sufficient course coverage prior to assessment later in the academic session.

Provisional results will be based on demonstrated learner attainment consistent with the requirements set out in National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher subject-specific guidance published by the Scottish Qualifications Authority. These results will be subject to local and national quality assurance.

23/2/2021

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on reports that some pupils will not potentially return to the classroom until mid-April. **(S5W-35065)**

John Swinney: In terms of the order in which we exit lockdown, the Scottish Government has always made clear that education should be the priority. In line with the advice of the COVID-19 Advisory Group on Education and Children's Issues, the first phase of children and young people returning to schools went ahead as planned from 22 February.

We will need to monitor the impact of this change very carefully before taking any further decisions. The need to properly assess the impact of the new limited return means we do not envisage, at this stage, any further return to school before 15 March.

As we consider these issues, we are of course doing everything we can to ensure that schools are as safe as possible for children, and for school staff. The guidance on reducing risks in schools, developed in partnership with the Education Recovery Group, sets out a range of additional safety mitigations.

To help Local Authorities to implement these measures, we will be providing local authorities and schools with an additional £40 million, as part of a wider £100 million package to accelerate school recovery. The success of this limited return, and the prospect of getting more pupils back later in March, very much depends on all of us continuing to abide by the wider restrictions in place.

We are not in a position to state, at this stage, at what point all children and young people will be able to return to education settings, as this is dependent on our monitoring and assessment of the first phase of pupils returning to school, and the wider societal picture in the coming weeks.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the current requirement for teachers in both primary and secondary sectors. **(S5W-35193)**

John Swinney: Each year the Scottish Government undertakes a teacher workforce planning exercise in partnership with other educational stakeholders through the Teacher Workforce Planning Advisory Group. Statistical modelling and other intelligence relating to teacher supply and demand is taken into account.

Information on the projections of teacher numbers can be found at:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/teacher-workforce-planning---2021-exercise-statistical-model---november-2020/>

The statistical teacher workforce planning model indicates a reduction in primary student teachers. However, the Scottish Government has recommended to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) maintaining intakes to initial teacher education (ITE) in 2021-22 at 2020-21 levels, 1,934 in primary and 2,136 in secondary. This is on the grounds that pressures on Education Recovery from the Covid 19 pandemic may require additional teachers in the system moving forward.

24/2/2021

Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government what impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the Developing the Young Workforce programme. **(S5O-05052)**

Jamie Hepburn: As with many areas of government policy COVID-19 has resulted in changes to the way we have implemented the Developing the Young Workforce programme. Since the outset of the pandemic we have prioritised working with partners and employers through our network of DYW Regional Groups.

This work has focused on the online delivery of activity to support summer leavers in 2020 and the creation of E-DYW, the DYW Skills Academy and Scotland's Biggest Parents Evening.

The publication of the report from the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery, Sandy Begbie was appointed to lead the Scottish Government's Young Person's Guarantee. An integral part of this is the roll out of DYW School Coordinators across Scotland. These roles are being funded by the Scottish Government and will be integral to driving partnerships with education and employers and will be delivered by the employer led DYW Regional Groups.

Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government, following the recently announced publication of the revised Strategic Framework, whether it will provide an update on the steps being taken to support further and higher education and to support students. **(S5W-35512)**

Richard Lochhead: Our colleges and universities are national assets, providing our students with opportunities for personal development and making a critical contribution to Scotland's economic success. They are essential in developing the talent, research and innovation to drive our economic recovery.

The revised Strategic Framework, published on 23 February, sets out our initial priorities, and an indicative timeframe, for cautiously easing and reviewing restrictions and restoring greater normality to our lives, just as quickly as it is safe and sustainable to do so.

Education is our priority and although we are operating within these continued restrictions we informed colleges and universities on the 23 February that they are

able to bring back more students, up to a limit of 5% in person learning at any one time, whose learning is critical and time-sensitive to them progressing or graduating which cannot be delivered remotely or postponed. Importantly, those students on work placements, which are essential for our future workforce needs, in areas such as health and child care, are able to undertake these placements. We are continually reviewing the data to assess when we can consider easing these restrictions even further.

We realise these continued constraints remain very challenging. However, they are currently necessary to help reduce the impact of Covid. I have said in Parliament several times that I am grateful to both staff, students and our institutions for all their efforts and I would like to again convey my gratitude and appreciation.

I wish to assure all our students who may be concerned about the implications for their education that we are urgently working in partnership with colleges, universities, and staff and student representatives to investigate all practical solutions available to help and support as many of them as possible complete their courses.

We will endeavour to support any student who may not be able to complete their course to the original timescale and we will consider what further financial assistance may be required for both learners and their institutions.

We are also continuing to work with the sectors on the issues students are facing including as part of the Student Hardship Task force, which will assess the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on student hardship and determine if the mechanisms and measures currently in place are sufficient. We have already committed additional £17 million this year to help alleviate the financial burden and stress facing our students, which alongside the additional £5 million for student hardship announced in December is now being issued to the sector.

For Further Education students, the Scottish Government has committed an additional £3 million and this is being supplemented with a further £5 million from SFC budgets.

I am also very aware of the mental health and well-being challenges faced by students at this time. We have already invested £3.645 million to support our existing commitment to introduce more than 80 additional counsellors in colleges and universities and have also provided additional funding of £1.32 million for this financial year to help students deal with the mental health impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

I can now announce a further £4.4 million of support specifically for our college students and staff as they deal with and respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. This builds on our Programme for Government investment of £1.9 million to support the sector recruit and access additional counsellors and our investment of £1.1 million to support colleges to deal with impact of Covid-19 and college student associations to provide vital wellbeing services to students.

As plans for the phased return of students develop, I urge all students to keep up to date with current advice by visiting the Student Information Scotland website at <https://www.studentinformation.gov.scot/> . Students who are part of the phased return and who will be changing households as a consequence, will now be able to book a test prior to making that change.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government what guidance it has published regarding how dyslexia assessments should be managed while pupils are not in school. **(S5W-35237)**

John Swinney: Since the first lockdown in March last year we have worked closely with partners to develop continuity in learning guidance. This made clear that local authorities and schools should ensure that personalised support is in place to meet the needs of children and young people in light of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This includes the assessment, planning, action and review for individuals' needs and is consistent with the values and principles of getting it right for every child, and the provisions of the Additional Support for Learning Act 2004. Further guidance was published on 16 February to support the phased return of pupils to schools in February to March 2021.

The approach to the identification of dyslexia in children and young people in Scotland is an inclusive and collaborative process, which takes place over a period of time and should include consultation with teachers, school staff, parents, pupils and other relevant agencies when there are concerns about a pupil's progress.

We have provided a range of free professional learning opportunities for teachers aimed at supporting practitioners to further develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in supporting learners with dyslexia, and reduce barriers to learning. This includes the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit and identification pathway, launched in 2017, and the Dyslexia and Inclusive Practice online professional learning modules, which enable staff to gain professional recognition in this area.

A formal identification of dyslexia is not required in order for pupils to access support while learning from home.

25/2/2021

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what guidance and support is in place for teachers of physical education who, due to COVID-19 restrictions, are having to run outdoor activities in poor or challenging weather conditions. **(S5W-35120)**

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, two metre physical distancing must be maintained in secondary, minimal sharing of equipment, and being outside all contribute to further lowering of any risk of transmission.

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.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Scottish Green Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide further information on the mitigation and safety measures that it is putting in place for the reopening of schools for P1 to P3 pupils. **(S5W-35145)**

John Swinney: The Scottish Government published supplementary guidance on 16 February regarding the first phase of children and young people returning to schools. This is in addition to the existing guidance on reducing risks in schools, which remains in place.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-schoolsreopening/>

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-onreducing-the-risks-in-schools/>

There is also a range of advice and information for parents on the Parent Club website. <https://www.parentclub.scot/topics/coronavirus>

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the statement by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills on 13 January 2021 (*Official Report*, c.17), whether it will provide a breakdown of the £160 million that the cabinet secretary said he had already committed for education recovery since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and what other funding has been committed towards this since that date. **(S5W-35356)**

John Swinney: Overall, we have committed over £375 million as part of a long-term programme of recovery.

This includes £160m, which can be broken down as follows:

- £80m for teachers and other support staff
- £50m to help offset the additional costs required to support safe, open and welcoming schools
- £25m devices & connectivity
- £3m youth work
- £2m The Promise as part of the Care Review

In addition to that, we have also committed funding, which includes:

- £51m for free school meal alternatives during remote learning and school holidays
- £45m support for schools and families
- £25m more for teachers and support staff
- £40m more to offset the additional costs required to implement protection measures in schools
- £60m education recovery funding to support and accelerate learning recovery and enable children to catch-up on missed education.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government whether there is a means for recently retired teachers to help support home learning or catch-up learning on a voluntary basis for pupils prevented from attending school due to COVID-19. **(S5W-35397)**

John Swinney: Retired teachers can re-register with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS), which will allow them to be employed by local authorities to help with education recovery.

The Scottish Government has worked with the GTCS to gauge interest from recently retired and lapsed teachers and ensure that they can re-register Council for Scotland contacted around 3,000 recently retired and lapsed teachers in June 2020 to establish their availability and willingness to return to the workforce and increase the potential pool of additional teachers. We understand that, to date, interest has been limited with fewer than 100 applications and notes of interest received by the GTCS.