
Report To:	Education & Communities Committee	Date:	1 September 2020
Report By:	Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development	Report No:	EDUCOM/49/20/RB
Contact Officer:	Ruth Binks	Contact No:	01475 712748
Subject:	Education Update Report		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Education and Communities Committee as to the current updates for Education.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Schools and early years' establishments closed in March 2020 because of COVID-19. Since that time there has been ongoing work to provide childcare for vulnerable pupils and those of key workers. Home-learning has been provided for pupils.

- 2.2 Schools and early years' establishments in Inverclyde re-opened to pupils on 12 August 2020. This report contains details of the arrangements that have been put in place for opening schools and early years' establishments. Updates are provided on:

- School transport
- Physical distancing in schools
- National guidance on the re-opening of schools and early years' establishments
- The appointment of additional teachers
- Digital inclusion funding
- The delivery of 1140 early years childcare and education
- Tier 2 mental health and wellbeing and school counselling services
- Refunds for school trips

- 2.3 On 4 August 2020, the SQA issued certification for pupils based on teacher judgements. The Deputy First Minister later outlined in Parliament that, through a Ministerial direction, the SQA would change the previous approach to certification this year and instead award candidate results based solely on the estimates provided by schools and colleges. The results of those learners who were awarded a higher grade during the process will also be maintained. Analysis of results takes place when the Insight dashboard is updated later this year.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members of the Committee are asked to note the contents of this report.

Ruth Binks
Corporate Director
Education, Communities & Organisational Development

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 On 20 March 2020, following the unprecedented concerns about COVID-19, all school and early years' establishments were closed. On 25 March some of the buildings were re-opened for childcare for key workers. The SQA exams for 2020 and all school trips were also cancelled.
- 4.2 During the closure of schools opportunities were provided for home learning. School lunches, through the monetary equivalent, have been provided until the end of August. Childcare hubs were provided to the most vulnerable children and to the children of key workers.
- 4.3 In June, all education authorities submitted plans to the Scottish Government for opening schools in August 2020 with 2m social distancing. In June, the Scottish Government announced that these plans would become contingency plans and that schools were expected to open with no social distancing for pupils in August 2020.

5.0 RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS AND EARLY YEARS' ESTABLISHMENTS

5.1 School transport

On 16 July the COVID-19 advisory sub-group issued guidance on school transport. The key messages of the advice are listed below.

- As far as it is safe to do so, children and their parents/carers should be encouraged to travel to school on foot, bike or scooter.
- Dedicated school transport should be regarded as an extension of the school estate and physical distancing measures between pupils are not necessary (subject to continued low levels of infection within Scotland). We recognise that school transport will involve mixed age groups of pupils, but still consider the risk of transmission to be acceptably low when mitigations are in place.
- Important mitigations include: hygiene, ventilation, improved cleaning regimes including regular and thorough cleaning of surfaces, and regular handwashing. Hand sanitising should be required for everyone on every entry to dedicated school transport.
- Where public transport (including buses, taxi, trams, subway, trains, ferries and air) is required for school-aged children to attend school, the general advice and guidance from the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland should be followed. This currently includes the mandatory use of face coverings and physical distancing where possible.
- Drivers and staff on public transport, and to a lesser extent on school transport, are at relatively higher risk of exposure and particular attention should be paid to ensuring that they are protected from airborne and surface transmission.
- Local authorities should continue to work with public transport providers to increase capacity as far as is reasonably possible and consider the introduction of staggered start/finish times.
- The advice that follows is contingent on there being low levels of infection in the Scottish population and on systems being in place for close monitoring, rapid testing and tracing of suspected cases.
- Measures put in place as precautions may become more relaxed as the prevalence and incidence of Covid-19 in Scotland reduce. Conversely, measures may need to be strengthened or reintroduced if there is evidence of a resurgence, or in the light of localised outbreaks. Where other relevant new evidence has implications for this advice, it will also need to be taken into account.

- This advice is based on a balance of evidence, bringing evidence specifically about COVID-19 together with evidence relating to the wider wellbeing of children and benefits of education.

5.1.1 Inverclyde Education services have worked with SPT to ensure that transport is in place for those who are entitled. The provision of bus passes to use public transport has been delayed because the guidance only applies to school transport and not to public transport. No pupils who are entitled to transport to school in Inverclyde currently use public transport.

5.2 Physical distancing in schools

On 16 July the COVID-19 advisory sub-group issued guidance on physical distancing in schools. The key messages of the advice are listed below.

Key messages

- Subject to continued suppression of the virus, and to surveillance and mitigations being in place, the balance of the evidence suggests that no distancing should be required between children in primary schools. The evidence is less clear for older pupils but at present we support the same approach being taken in secondary schools on the basis of the balance of known risks, the effectiveness of mitigations and the benefits to young people of being able to attend school.
- Two metre distancing should remain in place wherever possible between adults, and between adults and children who are not from the same household.
- Face coverings are not required for most children (those clinically advised to wear a covering would be an exception). Adults in schools do not need to wear face coverings as long as they can retain two metre distancing. Where adults cannot keep two metres distance, are interacting face-to-face and for about 15 minutes or more, face coverings should be worn.
- No additional general protections are proposed for particular categories of children or staff, such as those with underlying health conditions. Instead, requirements should be put in place to reflect individual circumstances in line with any specific clinical advice.
- The concerns within BAME communities must be recognised and individual requests for additional protections should be supported where possible. Care should be taken to ensure that BAME staff, pupils and families are involved in decisions about additional protections.
- Teachers should be provided with support and back-up in how to assess and meet the needs of children who have experienced neglect during the period of school closures.

A package of measures must be put in place to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus:

- There should be an increased emphasis on hand hygiene and surface cleaning. Hand washing/sanitising should be required for everyone on every entry to the school.
- As close as possible to zero tolerance of symptoms should be in place, and strict compliance with the Test and Protect system.
- In both primary and secondary settings, the preference should be to avoid large gatherings and crowded spaces and, as much as possible, to keep pupils within the same groups for the duration of the school day.
- Sharing of equipment/utensils/toys/books should be minimised; and smaller groups and more outdoor activities put in place.

- Movement between schools - of children, and of temporary/ supply/peripatetic staff etc. - should be kept to an absolute minimum.

Co-ordination with wider easing is vital, and the approach needs to feel coherent to children and adults. The sub-group emphasises that connectivity with transport issues will be critical.

5.2.1 Inverclyde Education Services have worked with health and safety colleagues to ensure that risk assessments have been revised in line with the new guidance and that schools are supported. Hand sanitiser stations are in schools and a system has been set up for the ordering of PPE. Extra cleaning has been put into schools. Regular meetings have taken place with trade unions to ensure that plans in place are agreed and fit for purpose.

5.3 **Guidance for re-opening of schools and early years' centres**

The guidance for opening schools and early years' centres was published on 30 July 2020. The full guidance can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-preparing-start-new-school-term-august-2020/>

A letter was sent to all parents on Friday 31 July outlining the communication timeline for the return to school. Meetings were held with heads of establishments and Trade Unions on Monday 03 August.

A Frequently Asked Questions document was distributed to all parents on Tuesday 04 August and during that week all schools and establishments were in touch with families to explain the arrangements in place for their return.

All schools have a checklist linked to the guidance and have undertaken appropriate risk assessments and reviewing procedures.

Whilst out of school care will start as close to the beginning of term as possible, Breakfast Clubs have not started right away and many after school activities will not take place. The provision of Breakfast Clubs will be reviewed as the term progresses, but this may well be to limited numbers of children.

After a phased start, all schools opened to all pupils on Monday 17 August 2020. Feedback has been extremely positive, with most pupils and parents happy to return to a routine.

5.4 **Additional teachers**

The Scottish Government intends to provide additional funding of £50 million (c. £33 million in 2020-21 and c. £17 million in 2021-22) to ensure that local authorities are supported to provide sufficient teachers and support staff to cover any additionality that may be needed in the 2020-21 school year.

£45 million of this additional support from the Scottish Government will be conditional on the understanding that additional teachers are recruited. This should be in accordance with the workforce planning guidance in the school re-opening guide, and in accordance with normal local authority employment practices. It is anticipated that these additional teachers will provide a range of additional support to help with recovery work such as supporting young people who may have suffered a loss of learning during lockdown, supporting young people who are shielding, supporting small groups of learners who need more intense support and covering classes for teachers who are shielding. They will also be vital in responding to any local flare-ups of the virus, which could necessitate implementation of contingency plans for blended learning for a period.

A further £5m (£3 million in 2020-21 and £2 million in 2021-22) will be made available to local authorities to invest flexibly in either teachers or education support staff, depending on local need, to support the objectives set out above during the 20/21 academic year.

5.4.1 Inverclyde's share of the above funding is £809,842 over the financial years 20/21 and 21/22

which covers the academic year 2020/21. This will mean that Inverclyde has been able to recruit approximately 17 additional teachers. Interviews took place over the summer holidays and teachers have been allocated to both primary and secondary schools.

5.4.2 A further £50 million has been allocated to support schools to return, £20 million of which will be allocated to additional resources such as cleaning and transport. The additional £30 million is expected to support education services but the criteria for this is as yet unknown

5.5 Digital inclusion funding

On 9 July 2020 Inverclyde Council successfully applied for funding to provide 1200 digitally excluded students with laptops and 350 with Wi-fi. This programme is aimed to equip every student with an entitlement to free school meals in secondary education with access to a device with appropriate connectivity as required. Further details of the arrangements in place to administer the distribution of the laptops is considered as a separate report to this Committee.

5.6 Early Years

Although, the Scottish Government relieved education authorities of their duty to do so, Inverclyde Education Services has been able to roll out the full 1140 hours provisions. The details of this provision is considered in a separate paper to this Committee. As anticipated, some families were not always able to get their first choice of venue and pattern and there was inevitably some dissatisfaction about this. However, given the scale of the roll out, almost all families have been very positive and there have been relatively few complaints.

5.7 Tier 2 mental health and wellbeing and school counselling service

After a procurement process, Action for Children have been awarded the contract to deliver a Tier 2 mental health and wellbeing and school counselling service to all school aged pupils living in Inverclyde. This contract is funded in part by a Scottish Government grant as well as funding from IJB. The contract has been jointly procured by colleagues from HSCP and Education Services. Action for Children are now working through the implementation and mobilisation phase and are on track to be fully operational from 1 September 2020, which is the Scottish Government expectation i.e. that all LAs will offer such services aligned to the grant from this date. As well as the counselling service at tier 2, Action for Children will also offer early intervention programmes alongside school based staff to groups of pupils, including online solutions. Any school aged pupil in Inverclyde can be referred by both education and health professionals. This includes pupils from Independent schools in Inverclyde. A report on the progress of the project will be presented to the Committee on an annual basis in line with the governance framework.

5.8 School trips

Following the cancellation of school trips, schools who were unable to secure a full refund for their trip are now submitting insurance claims. The Policy and Resources Executive Sub-Committee agreed that parents would be refunded any monies owed. School are now in the process of refunding money through Parentpay.

6.0 SQA EXAMS

6.1 The SQA exam diet for 2020 was cancelled and schools were asked to submit teacher estimates to the SQA.

6.2 On 4 August 2020 the SQA published the exam results and released details as to their approach of moderating the results. The SQA stated that results had been moderated because if this had not happened then there would have been an overall rise in attainment for 2020.

6.3 On 4 August, Inverclyde had performed broadly as anticipated overall. However, there were

some individual anomalies that were concerning and schools/departments with improving trends anticipated that they would have to submit a significant amount of appeals.

- 6.4 It is fair to say that following the release of the results, there was a huge concern as to the approach the SQA had taken for certification. Subsequently, the Deputy First Minister outlined in Parliament that, through a Ministerial direction, the SQA would change the previous approach to certification this year and instead award candidate results based solely on the estimates provided by schools and colleges. The results of those learners who were awarded a higher grade during the process will also be maintained.
- 6.5 Members of the Committee will be aware that any in-depth analysis of SQA results is usually undertaken once the national dashboard Insight is updated. This is usually later in the year. Any headline figures issued in August are just that, and at that point virtual and national comparators are not available. Having said this, Inverclyde would expect to continue to maintain and build on a strong performance in the SQA exams.
- 6.6 The Deputy First Minister also directed the SQA to provide an appeals process for centres. The SQA wrote to centres on 14 August outlining the new appeals process which allows for three grounds upon which centres can submit an appeal. The new arrangements are as follows:

Firstly, centres can submit an appeal if they discover that an administrative error was made when they submitted their estimate or entry information for a candidate.

Secondly, a centre's internal review process may disclose that a candidate's estimate was affected by discrimination or other conduct by the centre that is unacceptable under the Equality Act 2010.

Lastly, where the Head of Centre believes that there has been an error within the SQA's internal processes for confirming results to centres following the 11 August announcement, they can also appeal.

SQA anticipates that in all three circumstances such appeals will arise only exceptionally.

Priority will be given for candidates who need to confirm a university or college place. Outcomes of these appeals will be advised to UCAS by 04 September.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Finance

This is an update report outlining the latest updates for education. Any financial implications have already been considered in separate reports to the Policy and Resources Executive Sub-Committee.

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

7.2 Legal

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. It should be noted that aspects of education have been considered under COVID-19 education continuity directions.

7.3 Human Resources

There are no specific HR implications from this report.

7.4 Equalities

Equalities

(a) Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES
X	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required

(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report’s recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report’s recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
X	NO

(c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
X	NO

7.5 Repopulation

N/A.

8.0 CONSULTATIONS

8.1 N/A.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None.