
Report To:	Education & Communities Committee	Date:	3 November 2020
Report By:	Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development	Report No:	EDUCOM/59/20/RB
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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 After closing in March 2020 due to COVID-19, schools and early years' establishments re-opened for pupils in August 2020.

2.2 Updates are provided on:

- Positive cases linked to schools and early years' establishments
- Distribution of laptops
- Risk assessments
- Staff and pupil absence levels
- SQA
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the contents of this report
- Agree to the distribution of some laptops to pupils who the schools identify may struggle to access blended learning.

Ruth Binks
Corporate Director- Education, Communities & Organisational Development

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 On 20th March 2020, following the unprecedented concerns about COVID-19, all school and early years' establishments were closed. On 25th 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 as to plans 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.
- 4.4 In August 2020 all schools and educational establishments re-opened to pupils.

5.0 Educational updates relating to COVID 19

5.1 Positive cases in schools and early years' establishments

Since the re-opening of schools, there have been times when test and trace has had to be activated because of direct contact with positive cases. If the Council is made aware of a positive case linked to a school then a Problem Assessment Group is convened by the Council to identify subsequent actions.

There are three types of letters/information that can be distributed following identification of a positive case:

The first letter is sent to any direct contacts of the positive case and asks the contact to self-isolate for 14 days.

The second letter is sent to all pupils who attend the school or centre, informing them that there has been a positive case linked to the school or centre but that they are not affected.

The third letter is sent to all pupils within the school/centre if there has been a positive case but no action has been identified as a result of this case. This is most often because the case will not have had any direct contact with anyone in the school.

5.2 Distribution of laptops

On 9th 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. Distribution of the laptops has now begun with approximately half of the laptops having been allocated. Education services are now recommending that alternative distribution methods are now used to expand those who may benefit from digital devices for blended learning, with priority being given to the senior phase in the first instance.

5.3 Risk Assessments

Inverclyde education services continually work with health and safety colleagues to ensure that risk assessments are revised in line with any new guidance and that schools are supported. Regular meetings continue to take place with trade unions to ensure that plans in

place are agreed and fit for purpose.

5.4 Staff and pupil absence levels

Schools and establishments are working hard to reassure families about the health and safety arrangements they have in place to limit the spread of the virus. Since the beginning of term, attendance in Inverclyde has risen above the national average. Schools are sent daily attendance updates and this is something that will be monitored closely over coming weeks and months.

Staff absence levels in our schools and centres due to COVID-19 related reasons fluctuate but remain low. Schools report some difficulties accessing cover and supply teachers but to date this has in no way reached crisis level. A typical week will see between 20-30 staff in schools (including all teaching and non-teaching staff) absent due to COVID-19 related reasons.

5.5 SQA – Priestley Review

Professor Mark Priestley was commissioned to conduct a rapid review of events following the cancellation of the examination diet in 2020. The review, published on 7th October made nine recommendations.

1. Suspension of the 2021 National 5 exam diet, with qualifications awarded on the basis of centre estimation based upon validated assessments.
2. The development of a nationally recognised, fully transparent and proportionate system for moderation of centre-based assessment.
3. The development of more extensive approaches to collaborative decision-making and co-construction by professional stakeholders of assessment practices related to National Qualifications.
4. A commitment to embedding equalities in all aspects of the development of qualifications systems.
5. The development of more systematic processes for working with and engaging young people, as stakeholders and rights holders in education.
6. The development of a clear communications strategy, co-constructed with stakeholders, to ensure that the extraordinary arrangements for 2021 are as fully as possible understood by all parties.
7. A review of qualification appeals systems, including consideration of the rights and roles of young people, in the context of the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scottish law.
8. The commissioning of independent research into the development and application of the 2020 ACM, involving full access to anonymised attainment data and the statistical algorithms used to moderate grades.
9. The development by SQA and partners of digital materials and systems for producing, assessing and moderating assessment evidence, to ensure that operational processes for gathering candidate evidence for appeals are less reliant on paper-based systems.

The full response by the Scottish Government can be accessed at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/rapid-review-of-national-qualifications-experience-2020-our-response/>

5.5.1 SQA – update following the Priestley review

On 7th October, in response to the Priestley review, the Deputy First Minister announced a number of measures for the awarding of National Courses at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher in 2020-21. There will be no external assessment of National 5 courses this year – either by an exam or by coursework. Higher and Advanced Higher externally assessed exams, including the completion of coursework where appropriate, will remain as planned.

Arrangements for National 5

National 5 courses will now be assessed using an alternative certification approach. This will be based on teacher and lecturer judgement supported by assessment resources and quality assurance.

SQA has published broad guidance on evidence gathering and estimation. This is accompanied by an SQA Academy Course on quality assuring estimates. This will be followed after the October break by subject specific guidance, published on a rolling basis, on the work that learners need to complete. Where possible, the SQA will specify between two and four pieces of work per subject that will form the basis of arriving at a final award. The SQA intent to provide some additional resources that teachers and lecturers can draw on for assessment purposes.

Higher and Advanced Higher

Higher and Advanced Higher exams are planned to start on Thursday 13th May 2021 and finish on Friday 4th June 2021, with Results Day on Tuesday 10th August 2021. The SQA will publish the full exam timetable at the end of October.

Contingency arrangements for Higher and Advanced Higher

The SQA will continue to develop a clear contingency plan, including key checkpoints up to the February break to assess public health advice and its impact on the plans for Higher and Advanced Higher exams.

5.5.2 Insight data for SQA

Because of the delay in awarding SQA levels this year, there has been a significant delay in the publication of INSIGHT data. INSIGHT is the national dashboard for local authorities to analyse exam results. This means that there will be an associated delay in briefing elected members on 2019/20 attainment levels.

6.0 Educational updates

6.1 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill

Scotland is set to become the first country in the UK to directly incorporate the UNCRC into domestic law. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament on 1 September 2020.

The UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill will make it unlawful for public authorities to act incompatibly with the incorporated UNCRC requirements, giving children, young people and their representatives the power to go to court to enforce their rights.

The Bill:

- Directly incorporates the UNCRC as far as possible within the powers of the Scottish Parliament
- Makes it unlawful for public authorities to act incompatibly with the incorporated UNCRC requirements
- Gives power to the Children's Commissioner to take legal action in relation to children's rights
- Requires Ministers to produce a Children's Rights Scheme setting out how they comply with children's rights and to report annually
- Requires listed public authorities to report every three years on how they comply with

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Finance

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?

<input type="checkbox"/>	YES
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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?

<input type="checkbox"/>	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO

(c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

X

YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

NO

7.5 **Repopulation**

N/A

8.0 **CONSULTATIONS**

8.1 N/A

9.0 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

9.1 None