
Report To:	Education & Communities Committee	Date:	11 May 2021
Report By:	Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development	Report No:	EDUCOM/25/21/RB
Contact Officer:	Ruth Binks	Contact No:	01475 712748
Subject:	Education and Communities Committee: expedited business, relevant updates and operational log for the Education part of the Committee		

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider expedited business, relevant updates and the operational log for the Education part of the Education and Communities Committee.

2.0 SUMMARY

2.1 This report considers the following expedited business and relevant updates:

- Opening of schools
- Update on the Attainment Challenge
- Audit Scotland report on improving outcomes for young people through school education
- SQA qualifications
- Early Learning and childcare expansion programme update
- Scottish Government recovery grants for education
- Review of ASN support staff
- West Partnership Interim Action Plan
- School Transport Contract Renewals 2021
- Phasing for free school meals
- Bring Your Own Device
- The Standards and Quality report for Education

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Education and Communities Committee is asked to:

- Note the contents of this report.
- Agree the proposed phasing for free school meals and the request to the Policy and Resources Committee for £192K funding to support this
- Approve the proposed changes to Bring Your Own Device in all educational establishments

Ruth Binks
Corporate Director
Education, Communities & Organisational Development

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 This report considers the expedited business, relevant updates and the operational log relevant to the Education part of the Education and Communities Committee.

5.0 RELEVANT UPDATES

5.1 Arrangements for reopening of schools

The latest government guidance for the re-opening of schools and early years settings can be found at:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-schools-reopening/>
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-learning-and-childcare-services/>

The scientific advice underpinning the phased reopening of schools can be found at <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/covid-19-education-recovery/cecg-guidance/>

The Education Continuity (No. 10) Direction expired on 2 April and no further direction is currently planned, given the next phase of re-opening. All schools and early years establishments are now open to all pupils.

Guidance documents continue to be published by Education Scotland and the Scottish Government.

5.2 Scottish Attainment Challenge – summary of progress report, 2015 – 2020

Education Scotland has recently published summary of progress reports on each local authority's progress in relation to the Scottish Attainment Challenge, these have been written in conjunction with our senior managers and the LA Attainment Advisor.

As well as acknowledging the outcome of the Education Scotland inspection of the authority's approach to delivering the Attainment Challenge and its overall strategy in addressing the poverty related attainment gap as remaining strong, the following strengths and next steps were identified:

In November 2020, the Education Scotland link attainment advisor worked alongside local authority project leads to analyse data and evidence of impact which identified the following key strengths:

- The leadership approach taken by Inverclyde in supporting the aims of the SAC and its implementation.
- Collaborative working across schools and between partners and schools is highly valued. This collaboration leads to improved outcomes for children. Highly effective professional learning has led to more skilled teaching. Through training and support in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved.
- The use of data is now an integral part of school improvement and the local authority continue to prioritise the development of data literacy. Processes for data analysis supports the review of the poverty related attainment gap and inform decisions in addressing this gap.
- Overall, there are improving trends in the attainment for children and young people in

Inverclyde affected by poverty. Data shows improvement over time and the poverty related attainment gap is decreasing. Initial positive destinations for young people from areas of disadvantage in Inverclyde are improving and are above national levels. There are many factors which contribute to this including the work by staff funded by SAC across primary and secondary schools.

Next steps identified include:

- Strengthen reporting of outcomes of PEF spend to ensure the impact of the fund is maximised.
- Review care experience children and young people's fund plans to ensure improved educational outcomes for this group of children and young people.

This report, alongside the ongoing evaluations of the evidence of impact from the Attainment Challenge team and school leaders, is now informing the next iteration of the SAC plan for the year 2021/22. This is due to be submitted to the Scottish Government in early May 2021 and as soon as this has been approved it will be shared with committee alongside the Education Services plan for 2021/22.

5.3 **Audit Scotland report on improving outcomes for young people through school education**

In 2019, Audit Scotland carried out audit work to look at how effectively the Scottish Government, councils and their partners were improving outcomes for young people through school education. This work was paused in March 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was restarted in October 2020 to look at the impact of Covid-19 on school education and the response taken by the Scottish Government, councils and their partners. This report draws together the key findings from these two pieces of work. Audit Scotland recognise that this is a fast-changing situation and this report only covers actions taken by the Scottish Government, councils and their partners up until early January 2021. They also recognise that the global Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant effect on education systems, children and young people and families across the world

The report contains several key messages as outlined below.

1. Those involved in planning, delivering and supporting school education were working well together prior to the pandemic.
2. Both national education policy and the curriculum reflect the importance for pupils of different pathways and opportunities, and outcomes beyond exam results.
3. There is wide variation in education performance across councils, with evidence of worsening performance on some indicators in some councils.
4. The poverty-related attainment gap remains wide and inequalities have been exacerbated by Covid-19.
5. Council spending on primary and secondary school education across Scotland increased by 5.1 per cent in real terms between 2013/14 and 2018/19, from £4.1 billion to £4.3 billion. Most of the real-terms increase in spend can be attributed to the Attainment Scotland Fund, which the Scottish Government set up in 2015/16 to close the poverty-related attainment gap. When this is excluded, real-terms spending increased by 0.7 per cent during the period, to just over £4.1 billion. The Scottish Government had put over £200 million of extra money into Covid-19 mitigation measures and education recovery by early January 2021.

The full report can be accessed at the following link:

<https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/report/improving-outcomes-for-young-people-through-school-education>

The report uses a limited range of measures, however members of the committee are asked to note the continuing and improving strong performance of Inverclyde.

5.4 **SQA qualifications**

As a result of the cancellation of all exams in Scotland in 2020-21, we developed a common

approach to the SQA Alternative Certification Model at all levels to ensure a consistently robust methodology across all centres in the authority. All SQA guidance can be found at <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/95579.html>

We focused on supporting all senior phase pupils to successfully complete qualifications and reach the highest levels of attainment possible whilst safeguarding the health and wellbeing of our school communities. In response to the unprecedented challenges faced by all of our communities, we developed new systems of delivery for teaching, learning and assessment, blending face to face teaching in schools with remote learning models as required at different points in the school year.

At every stage, we have followed guidelines and advice published by the Scottish Government, Education Scotland and SQA, ensuring we engaged with all our stakeholders as we navigated the varying challenges. To date, our main stages of development have included:

- Developing clear guiding principles for all practitioners which are updated with each SQA publication;
- Detailed quality assurance guidance for subject, centre, authority and West Partnership level verification and moderation activity;
- Set up and development of Subject Network Teams to facilitate discussion, collaboration and cross-authority quality assurance;
- Auditing of all subject departments engagement with SQA Understanding Standards to plan for the phased return to school in February;
- Engagement of SQA Appointees within Subject Networks as required;
- Fortnightly meetings with Education Officers and Heads of Service across the West partnership to ensure a consistent and robust approach;
- Chairing of fortnightly meetings between SQA Liaison Manager and SQA Coordinators in all 8 schools to ensure information is up-to-date and queries resolved timeously;
- On-going collaboration between Education Officers and Head Teachers to develop a shared and meaningful response to each challenge including a robust timeline for final stage of ACM to ensure all pupils have a consistent experience of assessment across Inverclyde;
- Two data analysis meetings to be held with each school in May and June prior to final submission of provisional results;
- Regular collaboration with two partner authorities (ERC & SLC) at each stage of the process.

As part of the national scrutiny of local authorities' implementation of the ACM, we will meet with colleagues from HMIE on Friday 23 April to present our approach.

5.5 **Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Programme Update**

Inverclyde Council submitted its expansion plan to Scottish Government in March 2018. The plan provided details of current services and the developments required to deliver 1140 hours. Since this time the plan has been subject to change in line with local need and the timeline for infrastructure developments.

On Wednesday 1 April 2020, The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Modification) (No. 2) Revocation Order 2020 was approved by the Scottish Parliament due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant that there was no statutory duty to provide 1140 hours from August 2020; however Inverclyde Council was in a position to implement the programme ensuring families benefitted at the earliest stage.

Scottish Government has now revoked the 1 April 2020 order meaning that the statutory duty for 1140 hours will be in place for August 2021. Only minor modification to staffing models and the provision for children with additional support needs are required for August 2021.

Inverclyde Council has received specific revenue grant funding from Scottish Government since 2018. This funding has increased incrementally since this date and is ring fenced to support the roll-out of the 1140 hours expansion. Over the past 2 years there has been an underspend in this budget.

The current uncommitted earmarked reserve for 2019 / 20 is approximately £427,000 and £440,000 which there are currently plans in place for. The underspend for 2020 / 21 is approximately £1,640,000.

Inverclyde Council Officers met with Scottish Government colleagues to share information on the current underspends and seek guidance and approval for the use of the underspend to support young children and their families across Inverclyde.

The plan for utilising the underspend can be summarised into 3 main categories of COVID-19 recovery interventions, early level recovery and infrastructure developments. Scottish Government has approved the use of the underspend.

5.6 Scottish Governments Recovery grants for Education

Inverclyde continues to receive grants for educational recovery. The grants and their usage are intended to allow schools in Inverclyde to support pupils for any gaps in learning as previously reported to Committee. This includes teachers, support staff and resources. At the time of writing, the additional money for the summer holiday programme has yet to be confirmed, however officers are working with educational establishments and partners to progress proposals for hands on, experiential activities which will be offered to all pupils over the summer period. This will be in addition to the core summer provision already in place and the pilot for childcare.

5.7 Review of ASN support staff

Recognising the increase in the levels and complexity of needs pupils with additional support needs have in our establishments, a review was undertaken to revise the job outlines of three groups of staff which exist in our establishments in order to better support pupils.

This review has resulted in classroom assistants, additional support needs assistants and learning assistants being amalgamated into one role of 'pupil support assistant' which will enhance the offer to establishments and better support our young people with additional support needs. Although many in the role of classroom assistant and additional support needs assistant will see their grade move from grade 2 to 3, the expectations of the job will also increase. However, this review will be supported by a comprehensive training programme for affected staff. This review has been supported by Unison and the Head of Culture, Communities and Educational Resources and Unison have begun engaging with affected staff to support them into the new role from August 2021.

5.8 West partnership interim action plan

The West Partnership Improvement Plan 2020 to 2023 sets out the key areas for collaborative action to bring about improvement across the partnership region.

In January 2021, a further plan, the Interim Action Plan was drawn up at the request of Directors to address the challenges of the current and immediately foreseeable educational landscape. In particular, the challenges of delivering a meaningful education provision whilst most children and young people are unable to attend school.

The Interim Action Plan is based almost entirely on the existing plan for 2020 to 2023. It recognises the need to prioritise and accelerate certain aspects of the West Partnership's Plan 2020 to 2023. It acknowledges too that other aspects of the plan will be paused temporarily or placed on a maintenance basis.

The Interim Action Plan identifies 7 priority projects, each of which has a specific relevance during the period of Covid-19 restrictions. They include: important and heavily subscribed leadership activities; supporting learners with additional needs; tracking learners' wellbeing; as well as our significant contribution to the national digital learning offer, West OS.

[Resources – The West Partnership](#)

5.9 **School Transport Contract Renewals 2021**

Given the current uncertainty around the restrictions on school transport due to COVID-19, SPT has advised that it will not be able to procure the volume of contracts required this year to start in August 2021 (circa 800 +) through its standard tendering process. The standard process involves tender timeframes, evaluations, analysis and standards checks along with Council approvals and school/parent/operator notifications before the August start date. In addition, this the standard tendering process will be challenging for operators to cope with due to the volume of tendering and may not produce the normally expected standard based on best value.

SPT has confirmed with its procurement department that, in circumstances such as this, a Public Body may invoke Regulation 33 of the Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2015 to conduct a non-standard procurement approach in order to procure the required services (new 1 year contracts being offered).

The Education and Communities Committee is being asked to note the intention of SPT to extend current school transport contracts for 1 year from August 2021.

5.10 **Phasing of free School Meals**

The Scottish Government have announced its intention to roll out free school meals to all primary pupils no later than August 2022, phased over academic year 2021/22. In Inverclyde primary schools, pupils in Primary 1-4 receive free school meals. P1-3 are currently funded by the Scottish government and pupils in P4 are funded by Inverclyde Council.

The Members Budget Working group considered different options for the phasing of free school meals in Inverclyde. The proposed intention in Inverclyde is to phase in free school meals for all pupils in primary school as soon as practically possible over the course of academic year 2021/22 – starting with P5 in August 2021. This approach gives schools and the service the opportunity to overcome any practical implications of managing the full roll out of free school meals whilst managing the significant ongoing challenges of providing lunches and maintaining a COVID safe environment.

The cost of introducing free school meals for all P4-7 pupils in August 2021 is approximately £192K over academic year 2021/22. A phased approach would cost less than this. The Policy and Resources Committee will be requested to allocate the £192,000 out of the Covid Recovery Fund for the roll out of free school meals. Officers will report to the November Education and Communities Committee with an evaluation of the initial P5 roll out and proposed next phasing.

5.11 **Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)**

Since 2011, students and staff in our secondary school establishments have been able to access the Bring Your Own Devices (BYOD) Wi-Fi network to enable them to continue with their learning on their own personal devices within our school building. Access to the BYOD network was further extended to Primary School and ELC staff in 2018.

Changes to the volume and range of devices now seeking to be connected to this network have resulted in a number of challenges for schools, particularly around managing access to the network. Constant changes to digital security certification and the platforms that devices use, have resulted in some devices working less efficiently on our network or indeed no longer connecting.

Education Services is now looking to simplify access to BYOD, to allow students to be able to bring the devices they have been using for remote learning, including those being issued to Primary and Secondary pupils in response to the pandemic, into the school buildings. It will also allow schools more flexibility in the range of devices able to be used to support learning and to re-engage with those which are currently not working.

Education Services have been working with our ICT Services colleagues to redesign the access

process, in line with other Wi-Fi networks currently operated by the Council. Education Services therefore request from committee, approval to put into place appropriate network and security changes to allow access to work more effectively, across all of its establishments.

5.12 **Education Services Standards and Quality Report 2020/21 and Service Improvement Plan 2021/22**

The service produced its Standards and Quality Report 2019/20 later in 2020 than would have been normal practice due to the pandemic. As well as this the Service Improvement Plan which would normally run from April to April was only written from August 2020 to April 2021.

In order to capture and evaluate the work of the service since August 2020 and revert back to the usual timescale of planning from April to April each year, a standards and quality report has now been produced and can be found here:

<https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/education-and-learning/education-services-in-inverclyde>

The report seeks to capture the significant amount of work undertaken by the service, schools and its partners in a short space of time and under the pandemic and lockdown conditions which include the second lock down for most of the Spring term.

The report outlines much of the service's response to remote learning and seeks to outline its effectiveness and impact.

As well as this the report outlines the next steps for the service and all establishments, which will now support them to produce their annual improvement plans.

The report will be produced in a published form with support from the authority's graphics team.

The service improvement plan is still in draft form but the Standards and Quality Report outlines its key priorities and focus. A final version of the plan will be produced during May 2021.

Highlights included in the S and Q are:

- The strength of leadership of the service and across all establishments throughout the pandemic in creating clear guidance on aspects such as the recovery curriculum alongside adjustments to service delivery in line with government guidance
- Ongoing partnership working to ensure pupils' needs were being met through the challenging contest of the pandemic
- Successful introduction of the Wellbeing service in partnership with HSCP and Action for Children
- Strong response of schools to the challenges of remote learning during lockdown 2 and the improvements made to the quality of provision and the engagement of families in comparison to lockdown 1
- The strong performance of the senior phase in comparison to the national picture in 2020

The successful revalidation of the authority by the GTCS which recognised the quality of our training for all staff and the leadership of professional development.

6.0 OPERATIONAL LOG

6.1 There is no operational log for this report

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**

N/A

7.3 **Human Resources**

N/A.

7.4 **Equalities**

Equalities

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

X

YES

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?

X

YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.

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 N/A.