
Report To:	Education & Communities Committee	Date:	25 January 2022
Report By:	Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development	Report No:	EDUCOM/11/22/RB
Contact Officer:	Ruth Binks	Contact No:	01475 712748
Subject:	Education Update Report – Overview of National and Local Initiatives		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to give an update on national and local projects and initiatives linked to education.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report contains updates on the following:

2.2 COVID -19 updates

- Return to school guidance update
- Latest update from SQA
- Education Scotland follow through inspections, resumption of scrutiny and thematic inspections

Early years updates

- Update on inspection of Happitots Greenock and Inverkip
- Early Learning and Childcare Consultation 2021
- West College Scotland Nursery update
- Early Years Budget

School holiday – benchmarking

School meals and breakfast clubs

- Breakfast Clubs
- Universal free school meal provision for P6 and 7 from August 2022

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Education and Communities Committee is asked to note the updates contained within this report.

Ruth Binks
Corporate Director
Education, Communities & Organisational Development

4.0 COVID -19 UPDATES

4.1 Return to school guidance update

The guidance for return to schools and early year's establishments was updated on 5 January 2022. The latest version can be found at this link:

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

Attendance

Prior to the Christmas break overall pupil attendance has begun to improve however schools continued to be affected as pupils awaited tests and outcomes. Inverclyde schools remained broadly in line with the overall national average. More data on this can be found here: https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/sg_eas_learninganalysis/viz/COVID19-SchoolsandChildcareInformationAugust2021/Introduction

Before Christmas staff absence had improved after having been higher than normal at the start of the October term, largely due to staff having to be absent from work pending the outcome of a PCR test. The actual number of staff having to be absent from work due to a positive PCR outcome or isolating due to being in contact with a positive cases was low. This has meant that any additional staff in schools such as recovery teachers have had to be used to cover staff absences.

Vaccinations 12 – 15 year olds

The role out of this continues and is led by our colleagues in health. So far schools have not been directly involved in or used as centres for vaccinations of pupils.

4.2 Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) update

The update below from the November Committee remains the latest information we have. Schools continue to progress plans for exams and most schools are now either planning for or carrying out preliminary assessments.

November update

SQA exams will take place from 26 April to 1 June 2022 with results day on 9 August 2022. While detailed planning for delivering exams is now underway, it is also important that SQA, along with the whole education system, plans for any further disruption that may happen due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The SQA are continuing to discuss with the National Qualifications Group any additional measures that will help the education system respond to further significant disruption to learning or changes to public health conditions.

Planning for a full exam diet

SQA have also published a variety of proposals for contingency as well as mitigations for a full exam diet. The services is working with schools to develop our own approaches to ensure that current assessment process are secure and robust without creating a dual assessment approach i.e. over assessing now in case exams do not proceed.

More information can be found at the link below:

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/99158.html>

4.3 Education Scotland update

Since the start of the academic year Education Scotland announced that they would resume their scrutiny programme which would include carrying out follow through inspections of establishments that were due pre pandemic. As well as this they announced that full scrutiny of regular inspection would resume from January 2022. Further to this they announced that they would carry out three thematic inspections during the Autumn term focussing on Outdoor Learning, Well-being and overall approaches to recovery.

Thematic Inspections

National thematic reports see HM Inspectors of Education share their professional view on particular aspects of education. Reports review current practice in focus areas and contain

advice and guidance around what is working well, as well as important areas for discussion and further development.

Inverclyde agreed to engage with all three of the thematic inspections as below:

- Outdoor Learning – full day visit by an HMI to Kilmacolm Primary School
- Well-being - full day visit by an HMI to Kilmacolm Primary School
- Approaches to recovery – presentation on our approaches to supporting primary schools with recovery, focus groups of Head teachers and a visit to St Patrick's Primary school

We do not receive individual reports on each visit. We may see some of the practice observed and shared written up as a case study in the overall report. However, informal feedback from all three visits was very positive, supportive and encouraging.

As soon as these national reports are published they will be shared with this Committee.

Resumption of inspection

In December 2021 Education Scotland announced that they would not resume full inspection programme from January 2022 as planned. This is largely in recognition of the ongoing impact of the pandemic on education services nationally. Instead, a series of visits to establishments will be carried out from February 2022 with a focus on identifying best practice in recovery. As yet we await the detail of these visits. More information can be found here: <https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/who-we-are/management/annual-programme-of-scrutiny/>

4.3.1 Follow through visits

2 schools in Inverclyde had inspections pre pandemic which required a follow through visit: All Saints Primary School and Lady Alice Primary School.

These follow through visits took place during November 2021 with the All Saints letter being published in December 2021 and the Lady Alice letter due to be published in January 2022. The All Saints report is the subject of a separate report to this committee and the Lady Alice report will be reported to the March Committee.

5.0 EARLY YEARS UPDATES

5.1 Happitots Greenock and Inverkip Update

Recent inspections by the Care Inspectorate of Happitots (Greenock) and Happitots (Inverkip) resulted in both settings failing to meet Scottish Government's national standard and Inverclyde Council's contract.

Both reports have now been published on the Care Inspectorate website. The providers are responsible for sharing these with parents.

Both Happitots settings have submitted an improvement plan to Education Services. The following scrutiny processes have been undertaken:

- Meetings with the management of Thrive Childcare;
- Scheduled scrutiny / monitoring visits;
- Unannounced visits;
- Support from an ELC teacher.

Further updates will be submitted to Committee in March and May 2022.

5.2 Early Learning and Childcare Consultation 2021

Inverclyde Council has a statutory duty under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 to consult with parents regarding the local delivery of Early Learning and Childcare. The consultation should seek the views of parents in order to review the delivery and impact of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and to inform the Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan.

The parental survey opened on 15 November and closed on 6 December 2021. 211 responses were received. Early analysis of the responses identifies:

- The main priorities for parents using ELC were utilising ELC entitlement, employment, to meet child's needs; to get child ready for school, for studying / education, to look for employment.
- The main reasons for parents choosing a provider are qualification of staff, reputation of provider, Care Inspectorate grades, suitability of operational hours; outdoor learning, close to home and affordability.
- 61% of families identified that the full day, term-time model best suits their needs. Other models such as extended year and day were less popular.

A full analysis of the survey findings and a draft delivery plan will be submitted to Committee in May 2022.

5.3 West College Scotland Nursery

West College Scotland nursery is located in the Finnart Campus in Greenock. The service is registered to provide 48 Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) places. It provides childcare for students and is contracted by Inverclyde Council to provide ELC places for children in the community.

On 15 December 2021 Education Services was informed that a decision has been taken to close the nursery on 17 June 2022.

Currently 23 children receive their ELC entitlement in West College Nursery. 13 of this cohort will move on to school and will therefore not be affected by the closure. 10 of this cohort are ante pre-school and will need to transfer to an alternative nursery for their pre-school year.

The implications of this decision are currently being investigated but will include:

- An impact on Inverclyde Council's duty to provide ELC for all 3 – 5 year olds. Given current capacity additional provision will need to be identified.
- The loss of a valued Provider in a locality where there is no other nursery provision.
- The loss of full day, term-time places which are the most sought after placements by parents.

Education Service's Officers will continue to work with the college to support both staff and families.

A further report will be submitted to Committee in March 2022.

5.4 Early Years Budget

Scottish Government has advised that the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) specific grant will reduce in the next financial year. Although a reduction in funding was anticipated it was thought that this would be on a phased basis.

In financial year 21/22 the Specific Grant for ELC was £8.734m. For 22 /23 this reduces to £7.598million resulting in a funding reduction of £1.136million

Officers are currently scoping the impact of the reduction and it should be noted that there has been a historic underspend in the ELC budget. A full report will be brought to Committee in March 2022.

6.0 SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

- 6.1 Further to a request from the Education and Communities Committee at its meeting on 2 November 2021 regarding the school holidays throughout the West Partnership, please see attached appendix 1 showing the holidays confirmed for 2022/23 and the principles attached to these holiday periods. Members will note the synergy across many of the school holiday dates across the partnership.

7.0 SCHOOL MEALS AND BREAKFAST CLUBS

7.1 Breakfast Clubs

Since the schools returned in August, breakfast provision in primary schools has been provided on a 'grab and go' basis to account for the restrictions around social distancing in canteen areas. Over the past few months there has been a planned return to lunchtime canteen service in schools and it was hoped that by January 2022, all primary schools would have returned to the original breakfast provision which will be served at tables and in line with nutritional guidelines. The guidance at the time of writing is that "bubbles" should remain in place and this means where practical classes will be kept separated from each other indoors. This may have an impact on breakfast clubs.

It is hoped that once breakfast clubs return to the original provision that the service will see an increase in uptake of breakfast provision in our schools as a result of the changes made, however, recruitment of breakfast club assistants (along with staff absence) remains a challenge for the service.

7.2 Universal Free School meal provision for P6 and 7 pupils from August 2022

At the November 2021 meeting of the Education and Communities Committee it was agreed that the roll out for universal free school meals for P6 and P7 pupils should follow the national timeline, awaiting the required adaptations to the kitchens. This was because there is a requirement for some capital expenditure to adapt kitchens and buy resources to be able to continue to deliver the range of hot meals on offer. Following the undertaking of a "deep dive" audit into the authorities who were experiencing the most significant issues, the Scottish Government have delayed the introduction of universal free school meals for P6 and P7 in August 2022. Further updates on the revised national timeline will be brought to future committees as more information becomes known.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None

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					

8.2 Legal

None

8.3 Human Resources

None

8.4 Equalities

Equalities

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

	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?

	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?

	YES
✓	NO

8.5 Repopulation

N/A.

9.0 CONSULTATIONS

9.1 N/A

10.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 N/A