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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Education &amp; Communities Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>8 March 2022</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Corporate Director Education, Communities &amp; Organisational Development</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>EDUCOM/21/22/RB</b>
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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Education Update Report – Overview of National and Local Initiatives</b>		

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## 1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to give pertinent updates to the Education part of the Education and Communities Committee on national and local projects and issues 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
- Digital Strategy Update

Early years updates:

- Update on inspection of Happitots Greenock and Inverkip
- West College Scotland Nursery update
- Governance of Funded Providers

Election of parental and teacher representatives to the Education and Communities Committee.

## 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 further updated on 1 February 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/pages/overview/>

#### Attendance

Inverclyde schools remain 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>

Staff absence remains an ongoing challenge and despite changes to earlier return to work from periods of isolation being possible after the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> day schools continue to have staff isolating due to having COVID. This means that any additional staff in schools such as recovery teachers are being used to cover staff absences.

### 4.2 Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) update

Schools have now completed their preliminary assessments. Focus is now on completion of courses, revision and examination preparation. All schools are offering after school study support and this is supplemented by national after school study support provided by e-Sgoil which pupils can access through the Glow account. Schools are planning to offer supported study over the Easter holiday – government funding has been announced to support this.

On Tuesday 1 February, SQA announced the move to Scenario 2 of the contingency plans for exams. Scenario 2 will involve publishing some revision support for learners to help them with their revision during the final run up to their exams. Exams will still take place and there will be no further modifications to the exam paper other than those already announced. An overview of the modifications that have already been made and the revision support that will now be made available can be viewed here: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/100366.html>. The supports for all courses will be published by 7 March 2022.

SQA also announced three services to support learners for the 2022 exam diet:

- **Exam exceptional circumstances service (available while exams are taking place)** – this service is available for learners who are unable to attend an exam due to a reason beyond their control.
- **Grading (takes place once exams have been sat and marked)** – in recognition of the disruption that learners have faced over the last two years, and the different approaches to assessment, this year we are prepared to be more generous in our approach to grading than in a normal year to factor in the impact of the pandemic on learners. This is in line with the approach being taken across the rest of the UK.
- **Appeals service 2022 (after results have been published)** – available for learners who want to question their SQA results. In 2022, all learners will continue to have free direct access to the appeals service and a priority service will also be available for those applying to university, college, training or employment.

The full details of the announcement from 1 February can be viewed here:

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/100512.html>

### 4.3 Digital Strategy Update

We continue to make good progress with our digital strategy. Currently good progress is

being made with the installation of the new interactive panels in schools with positive feedback being received on the difference they have already made. The work to improve Wi-Fi coverage and connectivity across most of our schools was completed around the Christmas holidays.

We gave out 1,140 laptops to secondary school students in session 2020/21 from government grants during the first lockdown. Around 80 of these have been returned by pupils who left school in June 2021 and have been processed for reallocation in 2021/22. Since April 2021, our community learning and development service (CLD) distributed around 170 devices to identified P4-7 pupils and this figure includes devices donated by the charitable arm of a national newspaper with the rest funded by other government grants. A further 650 laptops have been purchased for schools and are currently being distributed this year.

Further news about the government's plans for devices for pupils are still to be confirmed.

A recent announcement has been made regarding funding to support the teaching of computing. Backed by up to £1.3 million from the Scottish government, secondary schools can bid for grants of up to £3,000 to purchase additional computing science equipment, devices, software or teaching resources. The investment is in response to the 2020 independent Scottish Technology Ecosystem Review, which recommended increased funding to improve computing science provision in schools.

Every school will also receive two class sets of pocket-sized computers that introduce students to how software and hardware work together.

## **5.0 EARLY YEARS UPDATES**

### **5.1 Happitots Greenock and Inverkip Update**

Inspections by the Care Inspectorate of Happitots (Greenock) and Happitots (Inverkip) in 2021 resulted in both settings failing to meet Scottish Government's national standard and Inverclyde Council's contract.

Officers from Education Services have continued to provide support and challenge although visits have been restricted due to COVID outbreaks in both settings.

There is some evidence of progress in both settings. Action to date includes:

- New management structures in place;
- Increased support from Thrive Childcare national team;
- Improvements to the fabric of the buildings and a commitment to purchasing new resources;
- Plan in place for professional learning for managers and staff.

Officers are continuously monitoring the situation and are due to meet with the operational manager of Thrive Childcare to address ongoing issues.

Officers will continue to monitor progress during the improvement period which ends in November 2022.

Happitots' current contracts to provide funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) finish in July 2022. In line with Scottish Government guidance both nurseries will receive a fixed term contract from August 2022 until the end of the improvement period in November 2022. Compliance with the Scottish Government's national standard and Inverclyde Council's contract will be assessed at this time.

## 5.2 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. This decision is still subject to consultation.

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. Education Service's Officers are currently engaging with parents to identify alternative placements.

Further scoping of alternative provision, to ensure Inverclyde Council meets its duty to provide Early Learning and Childcare to eligible children, is progressing. As children who attend the West College Scotland nursery come from the wider Inverclyde area options being considered include increasing capacity in local authority settings and funded providers; engaging with potential new Providers and increasing the number of shared places. The continued use of the West College Scotland accommodation is also being explored; however this may not be a viable option as:

- it is unlikely that Care Inspectorate would register this service for a new Provider as the accommodation does not meet current legislation in relation to ventilation, outdoor space and personal care facilities.
- A standalone nursery may not be financially viable due to the limited demand in the area for placements.

## 5.3 Governance of Funded Providers

As part of the Council's approved framework, reports for relevant organisations are presented to the relevant Service Committee each year giving updates and assurances in terms of performance and governance.

This update refers to Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) providers in the private, voluntary and independent sectors namely Battery Park Nursery, Duchal Nursery Happitots Nursery (Greenock and Inverkip), Madeira Nursery, St. Columba's School Early Years (Kilmacolm), Wellington Children's Centre (Greenock and Gourock) and West College Scotland.

In line with the framework two annual governance meetings have taken place, required information including annual accounts, board / management meetings, business continuity plan) has been submitted and reviewed.

There are concerns around the performance of Happitots (Greenock and Inverkip). This issue has been reported to Committee previously and an update is provided in paragraph 5.1 of this report.

West College Scotland has advised Education Services of its decision to consult on the closure of the nursery in June 2022. This notice period is in line with their contractual obligation. This issue has previously been reported to Committee and an update is provided in paragraph 5.3 of this report.

The Education and Communities Committee is asked to note the current status of ongoing governance arrangements and updates.

## 6.0 ELECTION OF PARENTAL AND TEACHER REPRESENTATIVES

6.1 There are separate Schemes of Arrangement, which have been approved by the Council, in relation to the election of a parent representative and a teacher representative. In terms of both Schemes of Arrangement the elections for a parent representative and a teacher

representative require to be held following the elections to Inverclyde Council. Both representatives will remain as a member of the Education Committee until the final meeting of the Council prior to the elections.

Accordingly, the tenure of both Ms Anna McMillan, as parent representative, and Ms Paula McEwan, as teacher representative for the Committee will end after the last full meeting of the Council prior to the elections in May 2022, and the March 2022 Education Committee will be their final scheduled meeting. Both Ms McMillan and Ms McEwan have been valued members of the Committee and have brought valuable insight to discussions. Ms McMillan has very helpfully provided an update to the Chairs of parent councils on pertinent Committee business and Ms McEwan has been a link between the Committee and the teaching workforce through the LNCT.

## 7.0 IMPLICATIONS

### 7.1 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					

### 7.2 Legal

None.

### 7.3 Human Resources

None.

### 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?

	YES
✓	NO

(c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES
✓	NO

**7.5 Repopulation**

N/A.

**8.0 CONSULTATIONS**

8.1 N/A.

**9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

9.1 N/A.