

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



EDUCATION EXECUTIVE

EDUCATION RECOVERY - UPDATE

REPORT BY DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (Education, Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration Services)

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To invite the Education Executive to note the implications of the revised Scottish Government national guidance issued on 30 October 2020; the plans for National Assessments in 2020; progress in education recovery; steps being taken to reduce digital exclusion; and contingency planning.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) To note the implications of the revised Scottish Government Guidance issued on 30 October 2020; the plans for National Assessments in 2020; progress in education recovery; steps being taken to reduce digital exclusion; and contingency planning.
- 2) To note that local guidance to schools to reflect changes to national guidance, and to support education recovery and contingency planning will be developed and updated under the delegated authority of the Depute Chief Executive, and that previous plans for blended learning remain as a contingency.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

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| I Council Values | Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; providing equality of opportunities; developing employees; making best use of our resources; working in partnership |
| II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment) | Educational Continuity Directions and related statutory guidance; non-statutory Scottish Government guidance. |
| III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers | Delegated authority to the Depute Chief Executive to implement further changes to the Local Phasing and Delivery Plan. |
| IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators | Potentially significant impact on education outcomes, with mitigation steps set out in this report. |

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| V | Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement | Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed. |
| VI | Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property) | <p>The Scottish Government has stated that it will work with Councils to address resources issues that they face in reopening schools.</p> <p>The net revenue cost of the plan for the full re-opening schools was estimated at £1.958 million excluding further additional teaching costs. This position is subject to further monitoring and review.</p> |
| VII | Consideration at PDSP | Due to frequent changes to circumstances and guidance it has not been possible to consult PDSP members and representatives. |
| VIII | Other consultations | Headteachers, teaching and non-teaching trade unions. |

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 Background

The Education Executive, at its meeting of 23 June 2020, approved a Local Phasing Delivery Plan based on the planning assumption that physical distancing would require a reduction in the number of pupils who could attend school at any one time, and that as a consequence Blended Learning would be required. The Scottish Government subsequently changed its planning assumption to the full time re-opening of schools to all pupils from the 11 August 2020. This was conditional on infection rates being sufficiently low to continue to control the virus, public health and testing systems being in place and protective measures and risk assessments being carried out in schools.

A revised Local Recovery Plan was produced in terms of the authority delegated to the Depute Chief Executive. Schools and Early Learning and Childcare establishments subsequently opened successfully during week beginning 10 August 2020.

All schools have produced a School Recovery Plan which take account of local circumstances and include establishment specific risk assessments and risk assessments for individual children where required particularly in regard to complex needs.

The Local and School Recovery Plans have remained dynamic to reflect changing national guidance and the developing national and local situation with regard to suppression of the virus.

D.2 Updated Scottish Government Guidance

Updated guidance for reducing risk in schools was issued by the Scottish Government, on 30 October 2020. All West Lothian Schools are following this guidance. A revised Risk Assessment has been produced, which is also being followed in all schools.

Physical Distancing and Face Coverings in Schools Early Learning and Childcare Settings

The revised guidance emphasises the following points:-

- Complying with physical distancing advice continues to be very important and requires regular reinforcement.
- At Levels 0-2 face coverings should be worn by adults where they cannot keep two metres from other adults and / or children and young people across primary and secondary (but with ELC models permitted for early stage, P1-2, as before). The “sustained period” 15-minute caveat no longer applies.
- At Levels 3-4 face coverings should also be worn by adults and young people in classrooms in senior phase.
- At all Levels face coverings should be used by adults when not working directly with children, for example when moving around settings or when in staff rooms, administrative areas or canteens across all school settings.
- Face coverings should be worn by parents and other visitors to the school site (whether entering the building or otherwise), including parents at drop-off and pick-up.
- Classroom assistants and those supporting children with Additional Support Needs who routinely have to work within two metres of children and young people should wear face coverings as a general rule. However, the use of opaque face coverings should be balanced with the wellbeing and needs of the young person - appropriate use of transparent face coverings may help in these circumstances.
- In special schools and units, and where there are groupings of children with complex additional support needs, the balance of the staffing complement, the groupings of children and young people and their needs, and therefore the staffing and resources required, (PPE, cleaning of equipment), should be considered/assessed throughout the school day and adjusted where appropriate/necessary.

Ventilation

The revised Guidance contains extensive advice in relation to enabling schools to adopt strategies that help balance the need for ventilation with keeping people warm. Expert advice identifies that using pragmatic approaches which recognise the importance of people being comfortable may help everyone to stick to guidance in relation to ventilation.

Handling Jotters and Other Equipment

The revised guidance states that careful hand washing with soap and warm water/use of alcohol-based hand sanitiser before and after handling jotters (or other pieces of equipment) mitigates the need for quarantine for 72 hours before, and 72 hours after. Staff should also avoid touching their mouth, nose and eye area.

The Curriculum

West Lothian Schools are following detailed guidance on physical education, drama and music, and other subjects with practical experimental learning, and will continue to do so as guidance is updated. Although this has placed some restriction on lesson content, the emphasis is on a creative approach to identifying low risk activities.

D.3 National Assessment

The Scottish Government has announced that there will be no external assessment of National 5 courses this year and an alternative certification approach is being put in place based on teacher judgement, supported by assessment resources and quality assurance. The Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) has published broad guidance on evidence gathering and estimation with a clear focus on the quality, not quantity, of evidence. This is accompanied by an SQA Academy Course on quality assuring estimates. Subject specific guidance on the work that learners need to complete will also be published by the SQA. Higher and Advanced Higher exams are planned to start on Thursday 13 May 2021 and finish on Friday 4 June 2021, with Results Day on Tuesday 10 August 2021. SQA will put in place a contingency plan, including key checkpoints up to the February break, to respond to public health advice and its impact on the plans for exams.

D.4 Recovery of Learning

Recovery and Improvement Planning

Officers and Headteachers have prepared detailed guidance and plans to support continuity of learning and the curriculum in the recovery phase. The plans reinforce the importance of literacy, numeracy and wellbeing as the critical focus in recovery. Schools are balancing efforts to address lost learning with children and young people's social and emotional needs.

School Improvement Planning for 2020-21 will focus on recovery, and the continuity of provision. There will be a continued emphasis transitions at all levels, identifying gaps in learning; and a renewed focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap. particular, schools will have a focus on what can be done to remedy any impact around the widening of inequalities of outcome experienced by children and young people.

Digital Connectivity for Children and Young People

Digital transformation is evident across all West Lothian schools, enriching learning, teaching and assessment. The challenges faced by schools and the wider community during the current restrictions has allowed the benefits of this long term investment to be realised.

West Lothian has received a grant of £844,736 from the Scottish Government to provide digital devices and connectivity to children and young people at risk of digital exclusion.

2905 Windows 10 Netbooks have been purchased. These devices allow pupils to have access to both laptop and tablet functionality and the devices move easily between any wireless environment, inside and outside of school. Each school will receive a share of these devices to issue to pupils, based on their local knowledge of digital exclusion. The share of devices to each school is based on the number of pupils registered for Free School Meals, and the percentage share each school has of all registered pupils.

For pupils who do not have internet access outside of school, portable Wi-Fi 4G routers have been purchased with unlimited data packages for one year. These routers have been configured and delivered to schools for distribution to identified families.

Across West Lothian, the core digital tools to support learning, inside and outside of school, are Microsoft Teams accessed via GLOW, (Scottish Schools Learning Platform) and SEESAW (pupil online journal).

Glow, as a learning platform for Scottish pupils, has security at the core of its design. Glow accounts are issued to pupils when they are able to understand the need for secure passwords and can login without adult assistance. In general terms, this is issued around P4 and pupils will use this account until S6 allowing them to curating learning content thought their school life. All of the content available via this Glow password, including the Teams application, can be accessed anywhere, anytime and on any internet enabled device. In general, pupils in P1-3 are not issued with Glow accounts as they are not able to independently manage text based passwords. These pupils, instead have access to SEESAW, which removes the need for text based logins by providing login via a QR code. This application has been rolled out to all West Lothian primary and ASN schools and is actively being used by all.

SEESAW is a safe and secure online application providing pupils in P1-3 to access their online classroom via any internet enabled device. The platform allows teachers to post interactive learning activities to classes, groups and individual pupils. These activities can be completed at home or in school. The SEESAW classroom app allows teachers, pupils and families to stay connected whether pupils are in schools or learning at home. Pupils can evidence their engagement with learning and evidence their knowledge by adding videos, pictures and text which can be shared with their teacher, classmates and parents.

For pupils in P4-S6, Microsoft Teams accessed via Glow, provides a digital learning environment, bringing together tools to ensure learning and teaching may take place, anywhere, anytime and on any device. Teachers create TEAMS (digital classrooms) where learners can come together to learn. Pupils are introduced to TEAMS in P4 and gradually build confidence in using the tools available to support and personalise their learning. These TEAMS often have membership related to a specific class but can contain pupils from multiple classes working on a specific project or from multiple schools where students are learning together.

Microsoft TEAMS allow pupils to take part in live lessons where audio and video can be shared. These lessons can be both delivered and accessed from anywhere a teacher and pupil have internet enabled device. Teachers can make use of the video conferencing aspect of TEAMS to deliver live lessons to a class, groups of pupils or to allow an individual pupil to take part in a lesson from a different location. This can be useful when pupils from different schools or classes are learning together. This video conferencing tool can also be accessed from home and school.

As part of this application, pupils also have access to a digital jotter (Class Onenote) where they can keep all of their learning in one place and shared with a teacher. Teachers can leave 'real-time' feedback in the form of written or audio notes no matter the location of the pupil or teacher. The assignment and calendar features built into the TEAM application allows pupils to keep on top of class work and assignments allocated to them.

Staff are supported to develop their skills via a comprehensive online CLPL offering related to Microsoft 365, Teams and Onenote. Similar online learning content related to these digital skills has been developed for use by students and pupils and this is an ongoing development.

Developments in digital connectivity will support pupils self isolating or otherwise unable to attend school, and form an important part of school contingency plans, as set out below.

Pupils Self Isolating or Otherwise Unable to Attend School

Although the majority of pupils have returned to school successfully, a number of pupils have been required to self-isolate with some significant numbers in a few schools. These pupils have required to be supported at home, including pupils displaying symptoms of COVID-19, and those advised to self-isolate as a result of possible contact with a person infected with COVID-19. These pupils have received support at home for their learning.

Digital platforms SEESAW (P1-P3) and TEAMS (P4-S6) are being used to support learning in the classroom. This allows pupils to become familiar with them so that they can be used successfully in the event of pupils being unable to attend school for any reason.

D.5 Contingency Planning

The Local Phasing Delivery Plan approved on 23 June 2020 included plans for blended learning. Although these were not implemented in August 2020, they have been retained as a contingency measure.

Blended learning could be necessary, for example should guidance limit the number of pupils able to attend a school at the same time. In these circumstances, the West Lothian plan is for pupils will have a mix of in-school and in-home learning.

The West Lothian plan would see each pupil in both mainstream and ASN schools allocated a minimum of two days of in-school learning each week. The hours provided would equate to 50% of curriculum time with some extended provision for identified vulnerable children. There would be direct in-school learning, teaching and assessment on school attendance days, to be followed by home based learning.

Pupils Primary and ASN Schools and Units would attend on Monday/Wednesday or Tuesday/Thursday. This split will allow in-school learning to be followed up by tasks at home which can then be reviewed on return to school, in a rolling cycle. It will permit contact with vulnerable children to be maintained with minimum interruption.

Within Secondary Schools, the pattern of attendance would be based on subject requirements, professional judgement and SQA arrangements amongst other factors.

Siblings who attend the same primary school would be allocated the same days of attendance, but it will not be possible for parents/carers to choose their days of attendance or which pupils will attend together. Cluster arrangements will seek to maximise alignment with siblings in secondary school where possible but secondary timetabling arrangements may not always permit this. Where possible sibling groupings will also be taken into consideration for those families who have children within the ASN sector. It will not be possible to align attendance at Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) with school attendance as ELC allocations have already been made on the basis of parental requests, and physical and staffing capacity.

The arrangements for blended learning have been agreed in discussion with Headteachers in line with the council's Scheme of Devolved School Management, which empowers schools to put in place curricular models that meet the needs of their learners. Further detail are set out in each School Recovery Plan.

Plans remain flexible in order to be able to respond to a number of possible circumstances.

E. CONCLUSION

West Lothian schools continue to operate in accordance with national guidance. Local and school guidance and risk assessments are produced and updated to reflect changes in national guidance and national and local circumstances.

West Lothian Schools continue to implement their recovery plans, including addressing digital exclusion.

Contingency plans for blended learning exist, and will continue to be developed and updated, in case they are necessary.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on reducing the risks in schools – 30 October 2020

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