

TEACHER PANEL

RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS

Purpose

1. This short paper is intended to assist the Teacher Panel with its discussion on the recent return to school for some pupils and the announcement on 2 March of plans for Phase 2.

Background

2. On 2 March the First Minister announced the Government's plans regarding the next phase of the return of pupils to in-school learning. As with Phase 1, this is subject to a checkpoint on 11 March but Ministers are working towards all children being back in schools full-time following the Easter holidays; subject to on-going monitoring of data and evidence.

Phase 2 return to school (2 March announcement)

3. From 15 March all pupils in P4-P7 will return to school full-time, and all young people in S1-S6 will have a combination of some in-school learning combined with high quality remote learning. S4-S6 pupils completing national qualifications will be prioritised for in-school time in order to deliver the Alternative Certification Model that has been developed. In particular, course content with practical learning and teaching that can only be done in-school will be prioritised. The existing provision that is in place for the children of key workers and S1-S6 vulnerable children and young people will continue so they can attend school as required.
4. Local authorities and schools will be empowered to determine the balance between in-school and remote learning at individual school level for S1-S6. This must be based on local circumstances to meet the needs of different groups of learners. They will be asked to maximise the time provided in-school whilst adhering to the current need for 2-metre physical distancing on each secondary school campus.
5. When S1-S6 pupils are not in school, we expect all young people to continue to experience high quality remote learning. It is important that the return of all pupils in person is not to the detriment of those learning remotely.
6. Phase 2 also includes a request that encourages schools and local authorities to develop a complementary 'wellbeing and outdoor learning package' that helps staff and pupils re-connect, supports readiness to return to in-school learning, and provides experiences to support learning and wellbeing.
7. We value regular contact with school staff unions and parent representative bodies, including through weekly meetings of the Covid-19 Education Recovery Group. Our guidance for schools, developed with input from these and other key stakeholders, sets out clear measures to reduce risks in schools, infection control

measures and the use of PPE in appropriate circumstances. Education Scotland published [on 5 March] guidance on in-school and remote learning for S1-S6 to assist local authorities and schools in their planning and preparations for the next phase of return to schools, alongside updated guidance on reducing risks in schools [to be published on 8 March] to support Phase 2, should the data and scientific evidence still support the decision. We have worked with partners to make twice-weekly at-home asymptomatic testing available to all school staff and senior phase pupils, to identify cases and help break potential chains of transmission as early as possible. We are grateful to schools and their communities for the work they are doing to ensure these measures are implemented effectively, providing confidence in a safe return to school for staff and pupils.

Points for discussion

The Teacher Panel is invited to discuss the following:

- Any 'front line' views of the level of compliance with migrations in/around schools.
- Are teachers comfortable with the extended asymptomatic testing offer for staff and senior phase pupils?
- What more can we do to make sure teachers, staff, pupils and parents are receiving the necessary information as we move forward?

Learning Directorate
March 2021