

Framework for Decision Making

Phased Return of Pupils to School

A period of lockdown began at the beginning of January 2021, and Scottish schools were closed to all pupils (with the exception of key worker and vulnerable pupils). Phase one of a return to school began on 22nd of February with the return of children in early learning and childcare settings, P1-P3 pupils and some senior phase learners to allow for essential practical work. The Scottish Government recently announced that phase two of this process would begin on 15th of March. Phase 2 involves all P4-P7 pupils returning to in-school learning and a mixture of limited part-time return and remote learning for all secondary aged pupils. The most up to date guidance can be viewed [here](#).

Planning Assumptions

The following planning assumptions, which are based on Scottish Government guidance for the phased return of pupils to school from the 15th of March 2021, should be the basis on which schools plan their particular models. These planning assumptions should be considered as a framework for decision making, to ensure equity of provision and compliance with government expectations. This supports dialogue with stakeholder groups, including staff and pupils.

Planning Assumptions in Detail

1. Two metre social distancing should apply in all aspects of school life and all classroom situations until the end of term except for the transport which is 1 metre (this has the consequence of requiring schools to draw on existing plans which evaluate the capacity available for pupils to return – for example in previous versions of blended learning plans, schools were aiming to have between 30% - 40% of pupils in at any given moment).
2. Priority should be given to senior phase pupils in advance of the process of alternative certification of courses for this year's SQA processes (given that pupils have been learning on line for a number of weeks, clearly on return it will be important to check the progression in learning and ensure a proper balance between time for learning and assessment for learning).
3. The government guidance makes it clear that all S1 – S6 pupils should have some in-school learning experience each week as part of any school plan – however, the language used in the government guidance does say that this applies 'where possible'.
4. We are trying to ensure a fine balance between maximising in-school learning and remote learning. Therefore, it is crucial that whatever plans are in place give a high level of importance to maintaining the on-line offering which will still make up the majority of the learning offer for S1 – S3 pupils.
5. For S1-S3 pupils, schools are encouraged to augment in-school and remote learning provision with a learning package that helps them to re-connect with learners, support readiness to return to in-school learning, and provides experiences to support literacy, numeracy and wellbeing.

6. Crucially, schools must build into their planning consideration as to how they will continue to meet the needs of key worker and vulnerable children.
7. School leaders should continue to manage attendance in line with legal responsibilities (and those of all teaching staff) to provide daily registration of learners and in particular ensure that there is meaningful support in place for vulnerable learners.

Health and Safety Considerations

The following mitigations are required to ensure a safe return to in-person learning:

- 2 metre physical distancing to be applied within school
- Face coverings should be worn throughout the school day, including in case, by all pupils and staff.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on ventilation by keeping windows and doors open where possible and safe to do so
- Continued emphasis on hand and respiratory hygiene and ongoing cleaning regimes
- Minimise the general flow of learners throughout the day
- Consider the use of all available spaces within buildings to maximum learning and teaching spaces
- Continue to encourage engagement with asymptomatic testing programme for all staff and senior phase pupils
- Reviewed risk assessments and procedures to reflect the phased return of pupils
- Continued reinforcement of the above via regular communications across the school estate and wider community

Key Challenge Questions for Consideration

1. Does your school's approach provide equity of access to learning for all pupils?
2. Is it proportionately weighted to meet the needs of pupils in both the senior phase and BGE?
3. Does your school's approach seek to build on existing single column per day arrangements for the senior phase, or does it involve a significant re-timetabling exercise? (incremental change or new design)
4. How do you ensure that capacity devoted to in-school delivery does not weaken the online offering?
5. How will you continue to facilitate progressive learning and teaching within this model?
6. How will you continue to plan for key worker and vulnerable children?

Next Steps

1. Ensure plans are fully discussed with staff including SRG.
2. Ensure plans are submitted to heads of service for approval by close of business on the 9th March 2021.
3. Ensure parents and carers are aware of plans utilising existing communication channels by 12th March 2021 at the latest.