

C-19 Education Recovery Group
Minutes of meeting, Thursday 24 September 2020

Attendees

- John Swinney MSP, *Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Chair)*
- Councillor Stephen McCabe, *Children and Young People spokesperson, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)*
- Sam Anson, *Deputy Director, Scottish Government*
- Jane Brumpton, *Chief Executive, Early Years Scotland*
- Alison Cumming, *Deputy Director, Scottish Government*
- Greg Dempster, *General Secretary, Association of Headteachers and Deputies in Scotland (AHDS)*
- Sheena Devlin, *Executive Director, Perth & Kinross Council (ADES)*
- Andrew Drought, *Deputy Director for Workforce, Infrastructure & Reform, Scottish Government*
- Larry Flanagan, *General Secretary, Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)*
- Eddie Follan, *Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)*
- John Gallacher, *Regional Manager (UNISON)*
- Gayle Gorman, *Chief Executive and Chief Inspector, Education Scotland*
- Carrie Lindsay, *President, Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)*
- Graeme Logan, *Director of Learning, Scottish Government*
- Elizabeth Morrison, *Deputy Director, Scottish Government*
- Ken Muir, *Chief Executive, General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS)*
- Malcolm Pentland, *Deputy Director, Scottish Government*
- Matthew Sweeney, *Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)*
- Jim Thewliss, *General Secretary, School Leaders Scotland (SLS)*
- Marie Todd MSP, *Minister for Children and Young People*
- Maria Walker, *Strategic Director, Education Scotland*
- Margaret Wilson, *Chair, National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPF5)*

The Deputy First Minister first welcomed to the group Margaret Wilson, the newly appointed Chair of the National Parent Forum for Scotland.

The meeting then began with a brief update on Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), highlighting the previous correspondence and engagement with local authorities, and that Attainment Advisors are working with schools and local authorities on how best to use this funding throughout the academic year 2020-21.

Officials then provided an update on the recently published infographic, which has been shared extensively on social media. It shows that the number of positive tests in the population aged 2-17 is at its highest to date, yet remains below percentage figures for the overall population. The number of pupils not in school for COVID-related reasons remains around 1.5% of the pupil population.

The group also discussed the impact of a rise in cases and associated mitigations. GTCS provided a brief update on the progress made in re-registering former members.

A brief discussion was had on ventilation in schools, with recognition that keeping school buildings well-ventilated will become harder in the winter months. We know that Public Health Scotland are working with Health Facilities Scotland to develop advice and that the Advisory Group are looking at this in further detail. There is recognition that school building temperature has an impact on teaching and learning, but that any advice to schools should not be too onerous, given the context schools are currently working in.

Education Scotland then presented a paper looking into the implementation of the Returning to School guidance across Scotland. There's an awareness that school staff are having to juggle many demands at the moment, and that there's a role for Education Scotland to play in ensuring that examples of good practice are picked up and highlighted. It was also noted that not all elements of school life are always conducted in the safest manner, often for practical reasons e.g. staff meetings, classroom observations. It was discussed that, in line with the wider societal responsibility in other settings or outdoors, maintaining physical distancing in schools should be a shared responsibility amongst all staff and young people.

The group then discussed parental engagement, with a focus on parents' evenings. It was recognised that there are pros and cons to both face-to-face and online or telephone parent consultations, as well as pressure on schools to provide the same level of parental engagement as in previous years. The Scottish Government and Education Scotland are working together to develop concise guidance with examples of good practice to support schools and early years settings with strategies and tools for engaging with parents. It was noted that, for some families, digital communication is having more traction than previously used methods.

Next meeting: Thursday 1 October 2020