

TEACHER PANEL

THE EDUCATION RECOVERY PHASE AND THE RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS

Purpose

1. This short paper is intended to assist the Teacher Panel with its discussion in relation to the education recovery phase and schools re-opening.

Current context

2. Scotland's schools re-opened from 11 August, and welcomed back all children and young people on a full-time basis from Tuesday 18 August.
3. Overall, there has been a positive response to the full-time re-opening of schools. The current situation is not without significant practical challenges, but available evidence indicates that the school community are working well together in difficult and uncertain circumstances.

Guidance for the re-opening of schools

4. School staff, children and young people are facing significant challenges in ensuring practical arrangements are in line with the relevant COVID-19 Education Recovery Group (ERG) guidance on the [re-opening of schools](#). Nonetheless, feedback suggests that local authorities and schools are working creatively to plan and implement the operational changes required in light of local circumstances, and to ensure the safe return of all.
5. The guidance sets out a suite of important mitigations that local authorities and schools have been asked to implement. These include risk assessments, enhanced cleaning regimes, good hand and respiratory hygiene, ventilation, use of PPE where appropriate, continuous vigilance for symptoms, and surveillance, testing and outbreak management.
6. The Scottish Government seeks regular feedback from partners via the Education Recovery Group about the way in which our guidance is being implemented in schools. We are keen to ensure we receive frank feedback about what is working well and what is not, to support any improvements to the guidance or the support available.
7. Available evidence suggests that the guidance has been generally well received and implemented. We understand that there are a number of challenges, however. A number of union surveys have been generally less positive, highlighting perceived deficiencies in the implementation of certain mitigations.

Financial and other support from the Scottish Government

8. School staff will be offered new health and wellbeing and professional learning support as part of a £1.5m funding package to help manage additional pressures as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
9. Additionally, the Scottish Government has supported school re-opening with funding of £135m investment. This includes £75m for local authorities to recruit additional teachers, £5m to recruit additional teaching assistants or other education support staff, and up to £50m to support matters such as public transport for pupils, increased cleaning costs and adjustments to school buildings and other learning spaces.
10. The Scottish Government continues to work alongside COSLA and local authorities to review whether there is a need for any further funding.

Points for discussion

11. The Teacher Panel is invited to discuss the following:

- Is enough being done to support schools and build confidence at a crucial point on time? Can we do more?
- Are teachers receiving the necessary support from employers?
- Do we have a sense of how effective the guidance is? Are there any gaps?
- Are there good processes in place at a local level to ensure that any challenges with implementation of the guidance can be identified and addressed quickly?
- Are teachers' views being heard on the re-opening of schools?