
To: **Education and Children's Services Policy Board**

On: **18 March 2021**

Report by: **Director of Children's Services**

Heading: **Education Update**

1. Summary

- 1.1. As part of the government's approach to reducing the risk of transmission of the covid-19 virus, schools and early years centres have been closed for most children and young people throughout January and February 2021.
 - 1.2. A phased reopening of schools has now commenced and it is anticipated that this will continue over the coming weeks.
 - 1.3. The purpose of this report is to provide an update for elected members of the steps taken to support families during the period of lockdown and to provide an update on the current phased reopening of schools.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The education and children's services policy board is asked to note the content of this report.
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3. Background

- 3.1. During the period of lockdown during January and February 2021, schools and early years centres remained open for the children of key workers and vulnerable families.
- 3.2. During the period of school closure attendance has been around 8% of the total school roll. This is higher than during the first lockdown from March-June 2020 when this figure was around 1%. Figures by sector are detailed below. Note that in weeks 1 and 6, schools were only open for two days.

Table 1: Percentage of school roll physically present in school (based on weekly average)						
	Week 1 (7th & 8th Jan only)	Week 2 (commencing 11th Jan)	Week 3 (commencing 18th Jan)	Week 4 (commencing 25th Jan)	Week 5 (commencing 1st Feb)	Week 6 (11th & 12th Feb only)
Primary	7.1%	11.4%	11.7%	12.0%	12.4%	11.7%
Secondary	1.1%	2.6%	2.5%	2.6%	2.7%	2.5%
Special	6.7%	9.3%	9.6%	10.2%	10.1%	13.6%
All Sectors	5.4%	7.5%	7.7%	7.9%	8.2%	7.7%

- 3.3. There has been a gradual increasing number of pupils attending school since they opened on the 7th January. The first week was a partial week where only childcare was offered therefore attendance was lower. Learning began on the 11th January and in this week, there was an average of 2095 pupils present in schools and nurseries. The following week, beginning 18th January, this figure had increased to 2155. These figures have continued to increase across all sectors until week 6. However, the decrease in week 6 may be due to the partial week as attendance has tended to be lower on Fridays throughout the period of closures.

Table 2: Average number of pupils physically present in school per week						
	Week 1 (7th & 8th Jan only)	Week 2 (commencing 11th Jan)	Week 3 (commencing 18th Jan)	Week 4 (commencing 25th Jan)	Week 5 (commencing 1st Feb)	Week 6 (commencing 8th Feb)
Early Years	206	307	324	345	352	311
Primary	931	1488	1533	1575	1627	1526
Secondary	119	264	260	268	281	260
Special	26	36	38	40	39	53
All Sectors	1282	2095	2155	2228	2299	2149

- 3.4. Of the pupils attending prior to the phased reopening of schools, approximately 74% are children of key workers and 26% are vulnerable children. This split has been largely consistent over the period of school closure to date. However, there is some variation in these figures by sector. Special schools were the only sector where the majority of pupils were attending due to being identified as vulnerable.

Table 3: Percentage of pupils attending school by key worker/ vulnerable status by sector. Week commencing 1st Feb (latest full week available)		
	Key Worker	Vulnerable
Early Years	56%	44%
Primary	79%	21%
Secondary	71%	29%
Special	31%	69%
All Sectors	74%	26%

- 3.5. Provisional national data on pupil attendance has been published by the Scottish Government. On the 5th February (the latest date available), 6.5% of the school roll were physically present in schools nationally. This compares to 8.2% present in Renfrewshire on the same date.

- 3.6. Schools and nurseries started to reopen from 22 February 2021. During this first phase:
- children attending nursery and early learning centres returned full time;
 - P1-P3 pupils returned full time;
 - some pupils in the senior phase (S4-S6) returned part time and on a limited basis where there is a need to support practical elements of their national qualifications; and
 - there has been a small increase in the existing provision for children and young people with significant additional support
- 3.7. Support for the families of key workers and vulnerable children will continue until schools fully reopen for all children and young people.
- 3.8. During the phased reopening of schools, children who are learning at home and entitled to a free school meal on the basis of low income, are receiving a payment instead. Those entitled to receive a free school meal and attending school will continue to receive one as normal.
- 3.9. Updated safety guidance, operational guidance on testing and technical guidance on in-school practical work has been published by the Scottish government to support the reopening of schools.
- 3.10. The Scottish government has also announced the roll out of asymptomatic testing for staff and senior phase pupils. The testing programme will be available to all primary, secondary and special school staff (including school-based early learning and childcare staff), as well as all senior phase pupils. Its purpose is to contribute to the reduction of COVID-19-related risks in schools, and in so doing to enhance the confidence of school communities. It will do this by helping to identify asymptomatic individuals in school environments at the earliest possible opportunity and asking them and their close contacts to self-isolate, thus minimising the likelihood of them passing on the virus. Testing kits have been delivered to schools and arrangements made for staff to collect and use these prior to the return of pupils from the 22nd of February. Separate arrangements have been established for staff in stand-alone local authority and partner early years centres.
- 3.11. Staff working very closely with children and young people with the most complex additional support needs were offered coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccinations as a priority. This will help to support the protection of some clinically vulnerable children and young people. Staff in this group have been defined as Health and Social Care workers within group two on the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) priority list. It should be noted that this is not a deviation from the JCVI priority list but simply a clarification to ensure that all staff working with children and young people with the most complex healthcare needs, particularly those with severe neurodisabilities are vaccinated. These children and young people require a range of interventions, including personal and intimate care and invasive procedures such as PEG feeding, and staff who support them regularly undertake healthcare duties, social care duties, and moving and handling, all of which may mean they are in regular close contact with many of these children. The criteria being applied has been agreed by all education

authorities in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board area to ensure consistency of approach. Those staff who were identified attended the Louisa Jordan vaccination centre on Sunday 14 February for their appointments.

- 3.12 A number of schools are expected to be used as polling places for the parliamentary election which is scheduled to take place on Thursday 06 May 2021. In order to reduce any further disruption, it has been agreed that the in-service day which was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 04 May will be moved to coincide with the election day. This change of date has been communicated to parents and carers.
- 3.13 Remote learning continues across Renfrewshire. Underpinned by C-19 Education Recovery Group (CERG) remote learning guidance, schools are using a blend of activities to engage pupils in their learning, including live and recorded lessons as well as online and paper-based resources. Teachers are carefully planning their lessons to meet the specific needs of pupils.
- 3.14 A recent survey completed by 4953 parents/carers highlighted that 78% felt their child's experience of remote learning was positive. Schools and the central education team are using survey feedback to inform future planning.
- 3.15 There are approximately 3500 devices and 500 wifi dongles are available to support on-line learning.
- 3.16 Schools are continuing to provide devices to pupils who are unable to access on-line learning from home. This has been prioritised by need to ensure that there is at least one device per household, with lessons being planned accordingly.

Implications of this report

1. Financial

None.

2. HR and Organisational Development

None.

3. Community/Council Planning

Our Renfrewshire is thriving	- <i>enter details/ delete if not appropriate</i>
Our Renfrewshire is well	- <i>enter details/ delete if not appropriate</i>
Our Renfrewshire is fair	- <i>enter details/ delete if not appropriate</i>
Our Renfrewshire is safe	- <i>enter details/ delete if not appropriate</i>
Reshaping our place, our economy and our future	- <i>enter details/ delete if not appropriate</i>
Building strong, safe and resilient communities	- <i>enter details/ delete if not appropriate</i>

Tackling inequality, ensuring opportunities for all	- <i>enter details/ delete if not appropriate</i>
Creating a sustainable Renfrewshire for all to enjoy	- <i>enter details/ delete if not appropriate</i>
Working together to improve outcomes	- <i>enter details/ delete if not appropriate</i>

4. Legal
None.

5. Property/Assets
None.

6. Information Technology
None.

7. Equality and Human Rights
The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because for example it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website. (Report author to arrange this).

8. Health and Safety
None.

9. Procurement
None.

10. Risk
None.

11. Privacy Impact
None.

12. Cosla Policy Position
None.

13. Climate Risk
None.

List of Background Papers
None.

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