

Renfrewshire Joint Negotiating Committee for Teachers

To: Renfrewshire Joint Negotiating Committee for Teachers

On: 1 September 2020

**Report by
Head of Schools**

Responding to the Pandemic and Reopening Schools

1. Background

- 1.1 In March 2020 Renfrewshire Council moved quickly to respond to the emerging coronavirus pandemic, protecting and supporting employees and communities, particularly vulnerable people across the area.
- 1.2 Colleagues across the Council have shown great commitment and resilience during the covid-19 delivering essential services, volunteering to support frontline services and helping others to remain safe at home. Teachers and other schools staff have worked hard throughout the period of lockdown in supporting learning from home and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our most vulnerable children and young people.
- 1.3 Early years provision and schools closed on 20 March 2020, with education moving entirely to a home-based setting thereafter. This was a mixture of paper-based and online learning and 650 Chromebooks and 330 dongles were distributed to local families to support this and mitigate the impact of digital exclusion.
- 1.4 Local authorities were required to provide childcare for key workers during the lockdown and subsequent phases until childcare providers were able to restart care. Renfrewshire Council operated 8 childcare hubs for typically 300-350 children per week. This provision continued during the summer holiday and closed on 6 August 2020 to allow for cleaning of school premises before pupils returned. Contingency plans were in place should national guidance change and childcare be required beyond that date.
- 1.5 Following the decision by the Scottish Government, children and young people returned to full-time education in school or nursery from 12 August 2020, with appropriate protective and hygiene measures in place.
- 1.6 Ongoing collaborative engagement with professional associations has been key to ensuring schools have been able to reopen. In line with national guidance, the role of JNC will continue to be a highly significant part of continuing to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of all our employees.

- 1.7 Education establishments have contingency arrangements in place should any further local or national lockdowns be required. As the expectation until the end of June was that a blended learning model would be in place from August, detailed plans had already been prepared and scrutinised positively by Education Scotland. These can be implemented rapidly in the event of any second phase of Covid-19 infections. The lessons learned from the lockdown phase have been documented and are informing the recovery plan as education services 'Build Back Better'.
- 1.8 Supporting the health and wellbeing of all children and young people will be central to a return to school; they must feel safe, confident and engaged in their surroundings. Teachers and early years practitioners will work with children and young people to gain insight into their lockdown experience and plan appropriate revision and next steps for learning and wellbeing. Additional individual supports will be put in place where required. Children from P6 upwards will take part in our Skills for Recovery programme in the first six weeks, while younger children will be guided through other wellbeing programmes. Outdoor learning and learning through play will be a key feature for younger children, and PSE classes for older children will have a focus on mental, emotional and social wellbeing.
- 1.9 The Health and Safety team worked with all head teachers; heads of centre and local school trade union representatives to produce HAZID documents and associated risk assessments for all children's services schools and early learning establishments.
- 1.10 The HR team have worked closely with all head teachers and heads of centre to ensure the safe return of employees, who were identified as at risk with underlying health conditions during the lockdown. All employees completed a covid age risk assessment which asked a series of questions. Based on the outcome of this assessment and where appropriate employees were then referred to OH for further advice and guidance in relation to their conditions.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 The JNC is asked to note the contents of this report.