

# **EIS Guidance for Primary Members on Education Recovery: Curriculum and Pedagogy (Updated April 2022)**



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## **What's this guidance for?**

This guidance is intended to provide EIS members in Primary Education with some key principles in relation to curricular and pedagogical approaches within COVID-secure teaching environments and in the context of education recovery.

The advice is not intended to be all-encompassing. Teachers working with their own pupils and their own colleagues will use their judgement in determining what to teach and will arrive at solutions, in many cases involving pupils in this process, to overcome some of the practical challenges that COVID-19 presents in terms of conducting normal classroom interactions. The age and stage of pupils will be key in determining how such challenges are to be overcome.

The guidance is generic in nature and iterative, responding to the changing circumstances which members face while the threat of the virus remains.

## **Background**

For the last two years, teachers have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to meet the needs of children and young people in their schools and Early Learning and Childcare ('ELC') settings, responding with creativity and determination to the challenges and risks which COVID-19 has, and continues to, present.

With the continued prevalence of the virus within society and the emergence of new variants, we have all had to adapt to the changing circumstances in which we live and in Education, to continue to adapt to alternative forms of education provision, including moves to blended and remote learning.

Session 2021-22 has not been and should not be business as usual. The risks of the virus and of the potential impact of Long COVID persist. The emergence of new variants of the virus has highlighted the continuing importance of risk assessments in responding to local and individual

circumstances and of mitigation measures to protect children, young people and staff in educational settings.

The wellbeing impact of the last two years, both on pupils and staff, cannot be forgotten. For reasons of health and safety, in the interests of wellbeing, and in order to address the key priorities for recovery, we need to reflect on the good practice, developed during the pandemic and be cautious as we move forward. Any removal of mitigations in national guidance should **not** be seen as a signal to return to 'normal' in educational settings.

### **Scottish Government Guidance: Application and Terminology**

The Scottish Government Guidance, [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Reducing the Risks in Schools](#), is referred to throughout this document. In considering its application in practice, it is important to have an understanding of the scope of the guidance.

The Scottish Government Guidance applies to all local authorities and schools under their management. It also provides that it should be used by grant-aided schools and independent schools to support their recovery efforts.

The guidance is non-statutory in nature and does not absolve employers of their responsibilities, duties and legal obligations with regard to health and safety, public health and their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

Indeed, the guidance highlights the primacy of health and safety considerations, stating:

*'In implementing this guidance, it is imperative that schools and local authorities continue...to take every appropriate step to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and staff in schools.'*

## COVID-secure Schools

Essential health and safety procedures and standards required to minimise the risk of infection in schools have meant that much has been different in terms of how schools operate and in terms of the physical environment.

Whilst the Scottish Government Guidance introduces changes in relation to mitigation measures applicable in schools, it also emphasises that these changes should not be seen as ‘a recommendation for schools to return to previous practice that pre-dates the pandemic.’

The changes ‘should [instead] be led by local authorities in a way that capitalises on the good practice developed over the pandemic period, and which takes full account of practical considerations relevant to lifting mitigations in a way that does not create operational difficulties **or unnecessary additional workload for staff**’. (emphasis added)

The guidance makes it clear that ‘schools should operate in line with their own circumstances and risk assessments as they do in all areas of schools life’.

In devolving more autonomy in decision-making to local authorities, the guidance recognises ‘the importance of local dialogue, including with LNCTs and other recognised trade unions, in reaching local decisions.’ Collegiate practice should underpin the risk assessment process and the decisions made about the mitigation measures required to manage the risk at a local level.

Whilst national guidance might signal the removal of some mitigation measures, therefore, local risk assessments may determine their continued application necessary.

Aspects of school life will, therefore, continue to look different as schools endeavour to keep safe their pupils and staff and the school environment COVID-secure.

## **Personal Hygiene**

In addition to the EIS Advice to School Reps and Members re [Revised Risk Assessments](#), consideration should be given to Hand Hygiene protocols.

To mitigate against transmission of the virus, we would recommend that a hygiene protocol should be in place, providing for a hand hygiene regime for adults and children.

This should include arrangements for handwashing (for 20 seconds) with hot water and soap and drying thoroughly when entering or leaving the school building, before and after eating, after toileting, at regular intervals throughout the day and when moving between different areas of the setting.

Where appropriate, arrangements should be made to supervise the children when washing and drying their hands. In circumstances where a member of staff is required to provide assistance to a child when washing or drying their hands, consideration should be given to any additional risk mitigation measures which will be necessary. Where physical distancing cannot be maintained, consideration should be given to the use of face coverings by the member of staff providing support.

We would also recommend that tissues are provided within the setting to encourage good respiratory and cough hygiene practices when children are coughing or sneezing. Lidded foot pedal bins with double bagging should be provided to ensure the safe disposal of used tissues. A good pedagogical approach would be to talk with the children and young people about why these enhanced personal hygiene practices continue to be necessary in the context of infection risk, arising, in particular, from the increased transmissibility of new variants of the virus.

## **Wellbeing and Equity**

All children, young people and adults – parents, teachers and support staff – will have been affected in some way by the pandemic. Confinement, restricted social interaction, illness, bereavement, unemployment, poverty

and food insecurity, financial worries, media reporting of the virus, including information about the increased transmissibility of new variants of the virus, will all have made their mark to varying degrees on individuals, families and communities.

Whilst some may have managed some recovery, others will still be suffering the harsh consequences of Coronavirus on their physical and emotional health, family life, finances and employment status.

The EIS has been clear that periods of school closure and lockdown have wreaked the most damage upon children and families who are most disadvantaged by societal inequality, this having been well documented by researchers, press and media, and more recently in the data published in the [National Improvement Framework Interactive Evidence Report](#). With this in mind, we are of the firm view that the needs of those children and young people whose circumstances at home rendered their families less able to support them with remote learning at that time, and potentially during further periods of school closure, must be prioritised.

Any additional resources, including staffing where available, should be channelled towards helping those children and young people in particular to address the impact of any interruption in learning caused by the pandemic.

It has been well documented, also, that COVID-19 has had a disproportionately high impact on people from BAME backgrounds to varying extents in different parts of the UK, both in terms of likelihood of infection and death rates. Schools should be sensitive to the possibility that children and young people from BAME backgrounds and their families have been affected by COVID-related illness and bereavement and/or may be experiencing higher levels of anxiety related to infection risk.

## **Education Recovery**

The EIS has been influential in setting the national priorities for education recovery through its contributions to the CERG and associated working groups. Consequently, in its Coronavirus (COVID-19): [Curriculum for](#)

[Excellence in the Recovery Phase guidance](#) , the Scottish Government and the stakeholders who are part of the national Education Recovery Group advised that schools should:

- 'prioritise the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of children and young people, practitioners and families;
- recognise that 'children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds may have faced multiple barriers to learning over the period of the school closures';
- 'applying the principle of equity, consider how to provide additional and appropriate support where it is most needed in order to maximise engagement with learning and continue the work to close the poverty related attainment gap'.

Taking care of our physical and mental health is crucial at this time, when there are many social, emotional, health and practical challenges facing all of us: children, parents and teachers. The EIS view is echoed by Education Scotland in [advice](#) published in January 2021 which highlights that health and wellbeing remains a key element of the recovery curriculum for young people and the importance of this is clearly stated: 'We need to be mindful of the impact of COVID-19 on our children and young people, many of whom may have suffered loss and trauma as a result. For all learners, a key focus...needs to be health and wellbeing.'

It goes on to state, 'From the outset of the pandemic, schools and settings adapted their learning and teaching to ensure a strong focus on children's mental health and wellbeing, and engagement. This continues to apply.'

Equally, teachers should be mindful of their own health and wellbeing and the need for an appropriate balance of priorities in this regard.

The Scottish Government Guidance highlights this as an ongoing priority, stating that 'local authorities and schools, in partnership with health professionals, will continue to offer support to the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and staff' and goes on to reinforce 'the importance of wellbeing as a critical focus in recovery'.



Health, safety and wellbeing, and the principle of equity, therefore, must be of paramount importance as we continue to face the challenges which the pandemic presents and work towards education recovery. This has significant implications for the curriculum and pedagogy - what and how teachers teach and children and young people learn not only in this academic session but in the years to come.

## **Planning for Learning**

As under normal circumstances, the EIS is clear that teachers' planning for learning is a tool to aid them in their preparation of learning and teaching, and to support professional dialogue among colleagues with regards to this. Planning documentation should be designed and handled with this key priority in mind.

Primarily for teachers' own use, any associated planning template should be bureaucracy-light, and should neither be a generator of unnecessary workload nor an accountability tool. Neither class teachers nor colleagues who have management responsibilities have time to dedicate to onerous planning regimes at a time when the priority in schools must be the wellbeing of pupils and staff alike.

In the event that planning processes or associated paperwork, particularly relating to forward planning, are found by members to be overly bureaucratic and generators of unnecessary workload, this should be raised with the management of the school setting in the first instance. In doing so, members may find it useful to refer to Education Scotland [advice](#) and Deputy First Minister's [statement](#) regarding excessive bureaucracy. If necessary, the EIS School Rep and/ or Local Association Secretary can assist in helping the setting to reach a collegiate and bureaucracy-light solution.

## **Collegiate Activities**

As under normal circumstances and as has been the case since the start of the pandemic, it is important that colleagues are able to work together to reach solutions to the many challenges that maintaining safety and

providing opportunities for quality learning and teaching in the context of COVID-19 present.

Whilst collegiate activities that reflect the key Education Recovery priorities continue in accordance with school Working Time Agreements, this should be in adherence to the current public health advice around physical distancing and hygiene. Scottish Government Guidance continues to recommend the wearing of face coverings when working in shared spaces with others. Where it is not possible to comfortably maintain physical distancing for collegiate activities, particularly in light of the increased transmissibility of new variants of the virus, we would recommend that these should be done using virtual means.

### **Setting Priorities**

The wellbeing of pupils, teachers and families is to be at the forefront of all school-based decision-making as we work towards education recovery.

The Scottish Government guidance on education recovery advises that schools should set out:

‘...a clear statement of intent to deliver a broad and meaningful curriculum and to prioritise the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of children and young people, practitioners and families. Recognition that good health and wellbeing is fundamental to ensuring that children and young people can engage effectively in their learning.’

Communication to staff and parents should have this emphasis and it should be reflected in all school-based planning and decision-making in which teachers should be fully involved. The Empowered Schools agenda, with collegiate working at its heart, remains live.

Schools should not expect to nor feel under pressure to provide opportunities for learning in session 2021-22 as it would any other. Streamlining of priorities is encouraged while children, young people,

teachers and support staff continue to respond to the challenges of the pandemic.

The Scottish Government guidance goes on to state that:

‘...practitioners will want to take a proportionate approach as they develop and deliver a curriculum that best meets the needs of their learners. In some instances, it may be appropriate to make literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing the focus of the curriculum initially with learning progressively broadening out to take in wider aspects of all four contexts of learning.’

It recommends that time is specifically earmarked for

‘...maximising opportunities for communications and dialogue with children, young people and their families and continuing to build relationships and resilience. Benefits of play and outdoor learning will be factored into learning plans - including opportunities for learners to be physically active, to enjoy and learn about their natural environment, and to relax.’

With this in mind, teachers should plan to provide time for talking, socialisation, building resilience, play and outdoor learning, for all pupils.

Planning at school level should also take account of the need to ensure regular contact for children and young people with a key adult within the school who knows them well. The Education Recovery Guidance recommends that this should be:

‘to talk about their wellbeing; to share experiences during lockdown, including successes and challenges; to offer compassion and individual support as required; and to support engagement with learning’.

Consideration of how this priority can be delivered will be required. Additional staffing, should it be available, would be one way of approaching

this, by enabling smaller classes and the provision of more one-to-one support by class teachers and/or assigning new staff to this specific role.

Opportunities for children and young people to share and discuss their feelings could also be built into the school day, through talking and listening activities such as, check-in, circle time, bubble time or talk time. Where these activities require one-to-one interaction with pupils, we would recommend that they are conducted in an area in which physical distancing can be applied.

Schools may also wish to consider how access to school counsellors and their partnerships with third sector organisations might assist them in addressing this aspect of children's wellbeing needs in the coming months.

The [Refreshed Narrative for Curriculum for Excellence](#) is a practical tool that may be useful in supporting teachers' planning of learning during the Recovery Phase.

## **Breaktimes and Lunchtimes**

Whilst schools may have made adjustments to school start and finish times in the interests of maintaining physical distancing and may have decided locally to retain these arrangements, it is important that pupil and staff break-times and lunchtimes are at least preserved and possibly even lengthened to enable opportunity for children and staff to engage with peers and colleagues, albeit with arrangements related to distancing, etc. in place; and to allow extra time to help manage physical distancing in relation to toilets, cafeteria, staff kitchen and water-cooler access. This is particularly important with the increased risk of transmission from new variants of the virus.

## **Tackling Inequality, Promoting Equity**

The EIS advises that in planning for all learning activities, teachers should also take account of any information that the school has been able to gather on the equity impact of school closure and lockdown, and the implications of this for learning activities, resources to be allocated and the organisation

of any additional support to the pupils who have been most disadvantaged since the pandemic struck.

This priority is reflected in the Education Recovery Guidance in which schools and teachers are encouraged to recognise that:

‘...children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds may have faced multiple barriers to learning over the period of the school closures. Applying the principle of equity, consider how to provide additional and appropriate support where it is most needed in order to maximise engagement with learning and continue the work to close the poverty related attainment gap.’

Whole-school recovery planning and teachers’ individual planning should feature provision for children which takes account of the poverty-impact of COVID-19.

## **COVID-secure Classrooms**

### **Layout and Seating for Teachers**

In line with wider societal guidance, schools should, whenever possible, retain physical distancing arrangements between adults and between adults and children, though it is recognised that this may be more difficult when working with younger Primary school children or those of any age group with complex additional support needs.

Given the prevalence of the virus, the EIS continues to recommend that 2m physical distancing between teachers and pupils should be observed in all situations, unless a risk assessment has identified other appropriate mitigations that can be safely applied in circumstances where distancing is not possible. This applies irrespective of whether an individual has been fully vaccinated. Vaccination does not change the need to continue to comply with COVID-19 mitigation measures.

With this in mind, teachers should have a designated space within the classroom, physically distanced from all pupils, from where they teach their

classes. Pupils should be clearly instructed not to enter this space and other means of seeking the teacher's attention/ help identified. Younger children and those young people who have greater difficulty remembering/ following instructions will require repetition and possibly further visual reinforcement of this rule. If teachers need to step into the area where pupils are situated, this should be for as short a period as possible and we would recommend that a face covering is worn, if not being worn already.

It may be helpful to tape out the teacher's zone(s) on the floor so that pupils are reminded of the need to distance and can see the space marked out clearly, A good pedagogical approach would be to talk with the children and young people about why this and the wearing of face coverings in some circumstances continues to be important in the context of infection risk and the increased transmissibility of new variants of the virus.

Teachers should maintain physical distancing from other adults in the classroom, whenever possible. In exceptional circumstances when physical distancing cannot be maintained, we would recommend that face coverings form part of the mitigation measures and be worn in such circumstances.

**The Scottish Government guidance makes it clear that anyone (whether a child, young person or adult), wishing to wear a face covering in any part of the school, should be supported to do so.**

Particular consideration should be given to the impact of wearing a face covering on very young children and for children and young people with additional support needs. The EIS believes that transparent face coverings, where considered appropriate, should be supplied by the school or local authority to support learning and teaching and the health and wellbeing of children and young people.

There may also be situations in which staff with a disability, such as a hearing impairment, will require other adults, with whom they are working, to use transparent face coverings. The EIS would recommend that in these circumstances, appropriate adjustments are made and transparent face coverings are supplied to staff to support communication.

Schools should provide clear guidance for staff on how to put on, remove, store and dispose of face coverings to avoid inadvertently increasing the risk of transmission in the setting.

## **Layout and Seating for Learners**

Prior to COVID-19, many classrooms were set up to enable collaboration among learners, with seating either in groups or pairs to encourage this. Scottish Government advice throughout the pandemic is that there is no need to alter this in the Primary school context where, according to the scientific advice, 'there is no requirement for physical distancing between children'. With the prevalence of the virus, we would, however, recommend that consideration is given to ensuring that children are seated side by side, facing forwards, rather than sitting face-to-face.

Aside from the physical positioning of desks, chairs and learning stations in the classrooms, in the interests of creating a calm classroom environment and promoting positive behaviour, teachers should give consideration to where children and young people sit in relation to one another, and in relation to the designated teaching space/zone, within the classroom. Some children benefit from being seated close to/away from particular peers; others benefit from being closer to the teacher, particularly if they have visual or hearing impairment, or if they require regular reassurance from the teacher.

Given the need to ensure appropriate ventilation in classrooms, seating plans could, where appropriate, be designed to accommodate individual temperature preferences of children, young people and staff.

## **Equipment and Resources**

School risk assessments will have determined the extent to which pupils will share resources and equipment, or have sets of resources for their sole use, and any mitigation measures required such as cleaning or enhanced hand hygiene regimes after use.

In some situations where resources require to be shared, pupils should be able to clean those that they have touched after use. Teachers should demonstrate from their teaching spaces/ zones, how this should be done.

With restrictions upon access to the wider classroom space, teachers will wish to encourage pupils to take responsibility for organising any resources that they will use- getting these out and putting them away after use. Such approaches are in common use in many schools and will be familiar to teachers and pupils alike.

Where children and young people need to move about within the classroom to access a shared resource, this should be organised to minimise congregation around the point of access to the shared resource.

Given the need to prioritise health and safety, teachers should give extra-careful consideration to which equipment and resources will be used in their lessons, as they plan for learning. Only those which are essential for the lesson should be used for the time-being, and where disposable materials can be used, this should be considered.

In the early stages of primary where a play-based approach is being adopted, careful consideration should be given to the toys and equipment in use. Resources should be used which are easy to clean and cleaning arrangements in place to ensure that they are cleaned on a daily basis or if in a communal play area, when groups of children change. This will be particularly important as a result of the increased transmissibility of new variants of the virus. Timetabling for access to communal play areas should reflect the cleaning schedule in place.

We would recommend that resources such as sand, water and playdoh should only be used by consistent groupings of children and should form part of relevant risk assessments. Risk assessments should have been reviewed and updated to take account of new variants of the virus.

Whilst children can bring transitional objects from home to school, and this may be deemed necessary to support transition from nursery to primary one or even to support transition between stages, careful consideration needs



to be given to how this can be managed safely. It may be helpful to involve the children in the planning so that they develop their understanding of the importance of the risk mitigation measures being adopted. If the object is visibly contaminated whilst in school or is shared with other children, it should be cleaned appropriately.

For the early stages of Primary, schools may be adopting ELC models of managing children's interactions and mitigations, particularly when adopting a play-based approach.

Further information on the considerations around risk assessments when a play based approach is being adopted can be found in the [Scottish Government guidance](#) for Early Years settings and in the EIS Additional [Advice](#) on managing the risks of Covid-19 for Early Years Teachers.

## **Making Use of Technology**

Some of the practical difficulties posed by physical distancing and, hygiene arrangements might be overcome through the use of technology, though it is understood that the extent to which schools can rely upon this will depend on both the availability of hardware and internet connectivity.

Where provision allows suitable ICT access for pupils, there are a range of digital platforms that might be useful and with which pupils and teachers are becoming increasingly familiar during periods of school closure – GLOW and Microsoft Teams are some of those that are being used by schools across Scotland in line with local authority and school protocols.

Where schools and teachers are using such options, this should be within existing protocols, and should take account of the fact that some children and young people have less experience of using digital platforms than others, many having been unable to participate in this type of learning experience during lockdown because of home circumstances. It should also be borne in mind that teachers have varying degrees of confidence in using this kind of technology and many are likely to require professional learning in this area.

Some schools/ teachers already encourage the use of smartphones by pupils within clear protocols, to aid learning. Such an approach might be helpful in enabling pupil research, peer collaboration and communication with the teacher through class WhatsApp groups and such like. Once again, where such approaches are being considered, thought should be given to equity and the need to ensure that all pupils have full access to the learning activities that are being planned. No child or young person should be unable to participate as a result of not having a smartphone or sufficient mobile phone data. Where either of these is the case, sensitivity and an alternative approach that avoids stigma will be required either for the whole class or for individual children and young people who are at risk of missing out.

Further information about the use of technology in the context of remote learning during periods of school closure can be found below in the section below on **Blended and Remote Learning and Teaching**.

### **Interacting with Pupils**

All interactions between pupils and teachers should be conducted with the appropriate guidance on health, safety, wellbeing and equity, and risk assessment mitigations, in mind. This should be the case in terms of how:

- pupils are welcomed into the classroom and dismissed at the end of the school day
- teachers settle children in the classroom environment
- instructions, explanations and practical demonstrations are given
- additional support is provided
- learning is assessed
- discipline matters are handled.

### **Welcoming children and dismissing them at the end of the school day**

Traditionally, Primary school children are welcomed at the beginning of each school day by their class teacher, bringing their line into the school building. Similarly, at the end of the school day, those children, who are not travelling on school transport, are dismissed by the class teacher into the care of a parent/carer.

Changes to these arrangements may already have been made, to ensure that large gatherings of people are avoided at drop-off and collection times and that physical distancing between adults and children of different groupings could be maintained. The EIS would recommend that these arrangements are the subject of ongoing review in terms of managing the risk of transmission of the virus, particularly in light of the increased transmissibility of new variants of the virus.

Particular regard will also require to be given to safety arrangements around the dismissal of the youngest children in primary schools and sufficient time built into arrangements made, to ensure that this can be done in a calm environment. Clear communication of the rationale behind these altered drop off and collection arrangements will help to reinforce the importance of reducing the potential for community transmission and will help to manage the expectations of parents/carers.

Where pupils are travelling by dedicated school transport, taxis or private hire vehicles, consideration should be given to where the children and young people will go when they arrive at school. Arrangements should be adopted to manage safety and ensure supervision, where appropriate.

Safety arrangements should include a process for children and young people to wash their hands immediately on arrival to the school building, to dispose of temporary face coverings worn during travel to school in a covered bin or to place reusable face coverings in a plastic bag which they can take home. Children and young people should then wash their hands again.

Children in infant classes, as well as children with additional support needs, may require assistance in the safe removal of face coverings, of outdoor clothing and footwear on arrival at school and in preparing to go outside at breaks and the end of the school day. In light of the recommendation to adhere to physical distancing where possible, consideration should be given to how this support can practically be provided. This might involve the assistance of peers or where appropriate, of older siblings within the same setting. Alternatively, consideration could be given to whether it is

necessary to change footwear in the current circumstances. Where teachers and/or support staff are required to provide direct support and where physical distancing cannot be maintained, we would recommend that consideration is given to the use of face coverings, if not being worn already.

For children who attend multiple education settings, bespoke arrangements should be developed around safe travel arrangements, and the adoption of appropriate risk mitigation measures. Risk assessments for such arrangements should be reviewed regularly. If sporadic or linked cases have occurred in one school, we would suggest that consideration is given to temporary suspension or reduction of attendance at other facilities as part of the risk assessment, led by the local Health Protection Team.

### **Settling classes**

In addition to the arrangements for welcoming pupils, the school's arrangements for managing the movement of pupils around the school should be the subject of ongoing review in terms of managing the risk of transmission of the virus. Changes may already have been made and should be kept under review to facilitate physical distancing whenever possible, particularly in light of the increased transmissibility of new variants of the virus.

For example, in circumstances in which a class of children may ordinarily have moved to another classroom to receive specialist input from another teacher, consideration may be given to restricting the movement of the children and instead, moving the specialist teacher to that class. Where this is the case, consideration will require to be given to how teaching resources will be safely transported and to how teaching zones, including teachers' desks, chairs, computers etc will be cleaned after each use.

When adults are moving around Primary schools in corridors, office and admin areas, canteens (except when dining) and other confined communal areas, the expectation is that face coverings should be worn.

Whatever the arrangement, teachers should give consideration to how they will greet their pupils, in the interests of promoting positive relationships and

behaviour at this time and throughout the Recovery Period as many children and young people will be overcoming COVID-related trauma.

It might be that a quick, friendly check-in with each pupil would help here; or a ready wellbeing reckoner using hands-up or thumbs up/thumbs down so that children get the chance to express how they're feeling. The use of erasable whiteboards for this and other purposes could be useful- each pupil supplied with their own, plus markers and wipes. Through means such as these teachers are able to gain quick insight into how pupils are feeling and who might require some extra encouragement or support in the course of the school day.

Gesture, eye contact and where possible facial expression in addition to spoken words of encouragement, or digital messaging if classes are suitably equipped, will be key ways of providing this additional encouragement to individual pupils whilst maintaining physical distance. The role of learning assistants/ support assistants will be important here, also.

### **Giving instructions, explanations and demonstrations**

For the period that teachers are restricted in their ability to move among pupils in their classes, traditional methods of giving instructions will continue to be essential:

- verbally giving instructions and repeating them patiently, whether for the whole class or for individuals until all pupils have understood and followed them;
- writing instructions/ placing symbols on the board or other signposting area to reinforce instructions or make them accessible to pupils with hearing difficulties.

Teachers may also wish to encourage pupils to help their peers to follow the teachers' instructions.

The same advice applies to explanations of concepts and demonstration of skills. Teachers will be required often to deliver these from their

designated teaching spaces/ zones. Where appropriate, the use of visual aids such as props, and images and diagrams projected onto screens might be helpful. Teachers could also consider using audio-video material to help deliver and reinforce explanations under these circumstances.

As far as possible, teachers should avoid reverting to traditional 'chalk and talk' methodology, encouraging active listening and participation among pupils and students through dynamic whole class group work.

Explanations and demonstrations can be peppered with questions as a means of keeping pupils engaged. Questions should be varied in type with higher order, open questions included and posed to pupils on a differentiated basis.

Pupils should also be encouraged to ask questions and could be asked to explain concepts in their own words either to the class or to those sitting close by them following the teacher's exposition. The use of erasable whiteboards and tablets could be helpful in enabling pupils to feed back to the teacher through visual and digital means as explanations and demonstrations are underway.

### **Use of voice**

As far as possible, children and young people should be encouraged not to raise their voices when in the classroom or indoor space in order that the teacher or anyone else who is speaking to the class is audible without having to raise their voice. This is to minimise the number of airborne particles and droplets within the space. Using 'partner' or controlled 'classroom' voices will also help in creating and maintaining a calm atmosphere in the room.

### **Pace**

As children and young people acclimatise to a different version of school life and new routines, it is likely that simple steps may take longer to be followed. Teachers should be comfortable with this and should not feel

pressure to rush their pupils through activities. Learners should be given sufficient thinking time in which to formulate answers to oral questions or approaches to problem-solving. In the interests of wellbeing, in some cases, the usual pace of classroom activity will require to be slower.

Teachers should be confident in applying their judgement in relation to determining the pace of all classroom activities, taking account of current priorities around health, safety and wellbeing, and the needs of individual and groups of pupils within that context.

### **Practical Activities and Subjects**

Practical 'hands on' learning activities, experiments and investigations may not be able to occur on the basis that they would pre-pandemic and teachers may have had to adapt some aspects of their approach to these activities in the interests of safety.

Many such activities are likely to take longer, from planning to take account of any obstacles, setting up equipment, delivery and clearing up and cleaning equipment after use.

Whilst Primary school teachers can continue to plan for children to work together on practical activities, the practicalities involved in conducting such activities may require to be risk assessed and any additional risk mitigation measures adopted to reflect the nature of the activity being undertaken and the increased transmissibility of new variants of the virus.

- Science and Technologies

Following the emergence of the Omicron variant, SSERC produced updated [guidance](#) on carrying out practical work in Sciences and Technologies for Early, Primary and Secondary levels, including links to [resources](#).

The advice promotes a cautious approach to practical activities in science and technology, acknowledging the importance of

maximising physical distancing and highlighting that activities involving blowing (e.g. peak-flow meters) should **not** be carried out in the classroom at this time.

SSERC will continue to keep this advice under review.

- Physical Education ('PE')

The Scottish Government [Guidance now states that 'there are no restrictions on indoor and outdoor ...P.E..... Routine measures should continue to apply in relevant settings where these activities are taking place \(e.g. good ventilation\)'](#).

In light of the increased transmissibility of new variants of the virus, the EIS recommends that risk assessments for P.E. are updated and regularly reviewed to ensure that all appropriate risk mitigation measures are in place. Particular consideration should be given to the mitigations required when P.E. is taking place indoors, to reduce the potential for possible vectors of transmission.

Education Scotland has produced [guidance](#) on safe practice in PE which outlines practical considerations which should be taken into account as part of the risk assessment process and provides advice on aspects of implementation.

**The guidance emphasises that 'the greater transmissibility of the current dominant variants of the virus means that ongoing vigilance is required to minimise the opportunities for spread'. It provides that 'in preventing aerosol transmission, physical distancing and ventilation remain important mitigation measures. For all physical education, particular attention should be paid to ensuring effective ventilation, good hygiene and sanitising of shared equipment'.**

The guidance provides advice on the importance of maintaining physical distancing between adults and between adults and pupils;



the use of changing rooms; the wearing of face coverings by staff; the storage of clothing when changing rooms are not used; the use and cleaning of equipment; appropriate hygiene measures; greater emphasis on ventilation and the importance of reviewing procedures adopted. It highlights that specific consideration should be given to how the risk of transmission can be managed safely in changing rooms, with a key focus on cleaning of surfaces after use and ventilation.

**Risk assessments should be kept under regular review and should also reflect and be adapted to respond to local issues, such as local increases in cases of Covid-19 or local outbreaks.**

Although Scottish Government Guidance provides that parents, carers and family members can attend indoor and outdoor sporting events, visitors are expected to comply with the school's routine measures, such as physical distancing, wearing face coverings and good hand hygiene. In addition, suitable and sufficient risk assessments should be reviewed and updated in advance of these events taking place.

If a teacher, having due regard to the guidance, is concerned about activities permitted or the mitigation measures which have been identified and has concerns about their safety or the safety of anyone else in the setting, they should raise this with the management team and seek advice and support from their EIS school representative or Local Association Secretary thereafter as necessary.

- Home Economics

Education Scotland has produced [guidance](#) on safe practice in relation to the delivery of Home Economics.

Central to the guidance are considerations around the health and safety of children and young people and school staff, with a risk-based approach being adopted.

Before Primary teachers plan to work with food, a detailed risk assessment should be conducted to ensure that full consideration can be given to the level of risk involved, a determination made as to whether the planned activity can take place, taking cognisance of the local setting, and if it can, what risk mitigation measures should be adopted.

In light of the increased transmissibility of new variants of the virus, the EIS would recommend that these risk assessments are reviewed and updated regularly to take account of the current context and local circumstances.

The importance of adhering to physical distancing arrangements between adults and between adults and pupils is emphasised in the guidance.

The guidance also provides that greater emphasis should be placed on ventilation and practical advice is provided in relation to arrangements for the purchase, storage and handling of food items; and the need for enhanced hygiene measures for equipment and resources.

Where teacher demonstrations are necessary, the guidance suggests that this could be done from behind a Perspex screen, or alternatively, through the use of technology, such as data projectors, digital cameras or visualisers.

Additional consideration should also be given to the planning of practical activities for children and young people who require additional support. Where there is a need for staff to be in close proximity to the child or young person to provide support, a risk assessment should be conducted, reviewed on a regular basis and appropriate risk mitigation measures put in place. We would recommend that consideration is given to the use of face coverings as part of the mitigation measures in such circumstances. Measures

may also include enhanced hygiene arrangements before and after contact.

Education Scotland's Guidance refers to the 'costs of food provision within schools'. The EIS is clear that no child or young person should be charged to have access to the curriculum at any time. This principle is even more pertinent when many families will be facing additional challenges from the financial impact of the pandemic. To ensure equity of provision, it is essential that no financial barriers are placed in the way of a child or young person's participation in this, or any other, area of the Curriculum.

- Expressive Arts

The Scottish Government [Guidance](#) provides that 'there are no restrictions on indoor and outdoor drama activity, music, P.E. or dance'. Routine safety mitigations should continue to apply in relevant settings where these activities are taking place (e.g. good ventilation).

#### (a) Music

**In light of this guidance and the prevalence of the virus, it is essential that risk assessments are revisited and that agreement is reached around the safe delivery of Music and Instrumental Music Tuition in schools.**

Whilst the guidance permits the teaching of voice, brass and wind instruments, **the EIS would continue to emphasise the need for rigour in risk assessments in relation to these activities in particular.** The 'increased risk of transmission of COVID-19 ... (particularly when singing and playing wind instruments)' is acknowledged in the Education Scotland [Guidelines on Music](#).

Careful consideration, through collegiate dialogue, should also be given in all cases, to the mode of delivery of vocal and instrumental music lessons. Where group activity is proposed, discussion should

focus on the appropriate size of the group, the prevalence of the virus in the area in which the school is situated and the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures.

The importance of space and well-ventilated rooms when Music is being taught indoors continue to be paramount. As before, consideration may be given to the use of alternative spaces within the school, such as assembly halls, games halls or other general purpose areas, to ensure compliance with ventilation requirements.

In considering these risk assessments, it will be important to ensure that appropriate arrangements are put in place in terms of cleaning between and after use of a room. It should be clear who will be responsible for cleaning and provision should be made to ensure that they have access to PPE in doing so.

Additional Guidance on Managing the Risks of Covid-19 has been produced by the EIS for Instrumental Music Teachers. Aspects of this guidance in relation to ventilation and hygiene protocols, in particular, may be helpful when conducting risk assessments for the delivery of music education activities in the Primary context.

**Risk assessments should be kept under regular review and should also reflect and be adapted to respond to local issues, such as local increases in cases of Covid-19 or local outbreaks.**

If an IMT/Music Teacher, having due regard to the guidance, is concerned about activities permitted or mitigation measures which have been identified and has concerns about their safety or the safety of anyone else in the setting, they should raise this with the school management team and seek advice and support from their EIS school representative or Local Association Secretary as necessary.

(b) Drama

**In light of the updated Scottish Government Guidance and the prevalence of the virus, it is essential that risk assessments are**

**revisited and that agreement is reached around the safe delivery of Drama lessons in schools.**

Education Scotland's [Guidelines on Drama](#) provide that 'young people should only engage in Drama when robust risk assessments are completed and appropriate mitigations put in place'.

We would recommend that careful consideration is given to the size of groupings when group-based activity in Drama is proposed.

Particular consideration should be given to the use of well-ventilated rooms or outdoor spaces when planning Drama activities and time built in to ensure that appropriate cleaning and hygiene measures can be adopted.

Technology and digital platforms, where appropriate, may facilitate the delivery of teaching and learning in Drama.

**Risk assessments should be kept under regular review and should also reflect and be adapted to respond to local issues, such as local increases in cases of Covid-19 or local outbreaks.**

If a teacher, having due regard to the guidance, is concerned about activities permitted or the mitigation measures which have been identified and has concerns about their safety or the safety of anyone else in the setting, they should raise this with the management team and seek advice and support from their EIS school representative or Local Association Secretary thereafter as necessary.

(c) Dance

**In light of the Scottish Government Guidance and the prevalence of the virus, it is essential that risk assessments are revisited and that agreement is reached around the safe delivery of Dance lessons in schools.**

Education Scotland [Guidelines on Dance](#) provide practical advice on safe practice in Dance. They highlight that particular consideration

should be given to the use of large well-ventilated spaces or outdoor areas when planning Dance activities and time built in to ensure that appropriate cleaning and hygiene measures can be adopted.

Specific consideration should be given to how the risk of transmission can be managed safely if changing rooms are being used, with a key focus on cleaning of surfaces after use and ventilation in these areas.

We would also recommend that teacher demonstrations and explanations should be delivered from an assigned areas to allow for physical distancing from pupils.

**Risk assessments should be kept under regular review and should also reflect and be adapted to respond to local issues, such as local increases in cases of Covid-19 or local outbreaks.**

If a teacher, having due regard to the guidance, is concerned about activities permitted or the mitigation measures which have been identified and has concerns about their safety or the safety of anyone else in the setting, they should raise this with the management team and seek advice and support from their EIS school representative or Local Association Secretary thereafter as necessary.

#### (d) Art and Design

Education Scotland [Guidance](#) on 'Learning and Teaching in Art and Design and Photography' adopts a precautionary, risk based approach.

Health and safety considerations for children, young people and staff are paramount and are central to decisions around the safe delivery of activities in this area of the curriculum.

Risk assessments should be conducted to identify and assess the level of risk which the activity presents and to consider the adoption of appropriate risk mitigation measures.

Ventilation remains key and particular consideration should be given to the processes around the relevant activity, with additional time allocated as part of the planning process for set-up and clean-up time.

Where equipment or resources are to be shared as part of an activity, we would recommend that they are cleaned before and between use by each pupil. The guidance makes it clear that:

‘close attention must be paid to good hygiene, cleaning of surfaces and physical distancing between adults and between adults and children and young people.’

During lessons, children and young people should be encouraged to clean their own equipment. Instructions on how this should be done should form part of the teaching of classroom routines. Additional consideration should also be given to access to sinks and to controlling the numbers of pupils present at the sinks at any one time. Where sinks are shared with other classes, access should be timetabled to avoid cross-contamination and sinks and taps cleaned regularly.

The guidance provides a number of suggestions for the delivery of Art whilst maintaining physical distancing. It suggests the use of visualisers, the use of blended learning approaches where initial sketches and developmental work can be conducted at home, and the use of online platforms.

Additional consideration should also be given to the planning of Art activities for children and young people requiring additional support for learning.

## **Peripatetic Staff and Visiting Professionals**

The updated Scottish Government Guidance removes the restrictions on peripatetic staff and visiting professionals entering schools and provides that they will be expected to comply with the school’s routine measures and arrangements for managing and minimising risk.

Peripatetic staff and visiting professionals must, therefore, be considered within all school risk assessments. We would recommend that where a peripatetic member of staff or a visiting professional is attending more than one school, risk assessments should be jointly prepared between, and regularly reviewed by, the schools, the staff member and the trade unions involved. Relevant risk mitigation measures should then be implemented.

Risk assessments should be reviewed regularly and **should reflect and be adapted to respond to local issues, such as local increases in cases of COVID-19 or local outbreaks.**

### **Outdoor Learning**

In the interests of risk mitigation and wellbeing, schools may wish to consider the increased use of outdoor space, as advised by the Scottish Government guidance.

Suitable facilities may include school playgrounds, local greenspaces and/or community areas. Risk assessments should include any activity that will take place outdoors. Any use of outdoor spaces should involve coordination of activities to ensure there is sufficient space for all pupils at any one time.

On days when the weather allows, teachers may wish to take their classes outside to work on activities that would normally be done indoors but which could easily be transferred outside. Alternatively, lessons could be planned that use the outdoors as a stimulus and basis for the learning. Such learning activities may be less dependent on fine weather as long as children and young people- and teachers- have the necessary clothing.

For any outdoor learning that requires it, an appropriate cleaning regime should be introduced along with appropriate bins for disposal of any rubbish and hand washing stations/sanitiser to ensure hygiene. If outdoor equipment is being used, we would recommend that schools consider appropriate cleaning between groups of children using it.



In planning for outdoor learning, consideration should be given to the needs of children and young people who may require additional support to ensure that they are not disadvantaged.

Education Scotland has produced a [summary of outdoor learning resources](#), relevant policies and related professional learning which may be helpful in planning activities.

[The Outdoor Learning Directory](#) also provides links to a variety of resources that can be filtered by subject area and curriculum level. Support and guidance on risk assessment can be found on the [Going Out There framework](#) .

The Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education ('SAPOE') has launched an online resource, 'Teaching Learning Outdoors'. The course is designed to support the development of teachers' knowledge, skills and confidence in taking learning outwith the classroom. The TLO course can be accessed [here](#) and more information is available on the SAPOE [website](#) .

## **Teaching about Coronavirus**

It is always important for learners to understand the context in which they live and learn.

Teachers should give consideration to the opportunities that there may be for children to learn about the behaviour of the COVID-19 virus, transmission of the infection, and about the measures that are in place to reduce transmission, such as physical distancing, cough and hand hygiene, and the wearing of face coverings and handling and disposing of them correctly.

Learning around these areas could feature in Science and Health and Wellbeing activities; parallels could be drawn with other global pandemics and their impact in History; and the subject matter could be approached creatively through Writing, Music and Art activities.

## **Differentiation**

As under normal circumstances, teachers should consider how learning activities will be tailored to be inclusive of all learners and differentiated accordingly by stimulus; or by the level of support given in terms of scaffolding of learning, additional instruction, peer support or learning support; or by outcome.

## **Providing Support in the Classroom**

In the current conditions, teachers will require to consider how follow-up support to their whole-class/ whole-group explanations and demonstrations can be provided.

Teachers can, of course, repeat explanations verbally, as appropriate. Where children and young people have access in school to digital hardware such as tablets and PCs, they could be directed to further audio-visual material for the purposes of revisiting or reinforcing concepts.

Where pupils have specific additional support needs, appropriate supports will require to be in place taking account of the child's individual needs and in accordance with the outcomes of all relevant risk assessments.

Where adults- either teachers or support staff- are unable to maintain physical distancing from pupils who require additional support with their learning, then we would recommend that the use of face coverings is considered.

Where children and young people with more complex additional support needs require staff to be in close physical contact, for example in the provision of personal care, the wearing of PPE may be required.

## **Additional Support for Learning**

Children and young people with identified additional support needs will require continued support with their learning. Arrangements for providing this should be carefully considered in light of public health measures, with risk assessments being updated as necessary and appropriate mitigations put in place to protect children with additional needs and any adults who will be supporting them.

Where necessary, in seeking to prioritise need and the allocation of resources, including staffing, consideration should be given to the extent to which individual children and young people have been impacted by school closure and lockdown, periods of disrupted education and any associated gaps in their learning. Given the high correlation of poverty and incidence of additional support needs, the equity principle will be important here.

Where class teachers are working with learning/support assistants or ASN/SfL Teachers, consideration should be given to how they will physically distance from one another whenever possible and how physical distancing or other mitigations will be maintained to enable young people to receive the support that they need.

In some circumstances, the use of ICT may be of benefit to children and young people with additional support needs as an alternative or partial alternative to one-to-one support.

### **Peer Learning and Collaboration**

Pupils can also be encouraged to support their peers with their learning in the Primary context in the usual ways through paired and group work. Messaging apps on tablets, PCs and smartphones where such use is permitted, could aid this process.

### **Assessment and Feedback**

The usual close working between teachers and pupils where teachers sit with or stand beside pupils to coach them in their learning, assess

their progress and provide feedback, cannot occur as it usually would at this time.

This requires to be considered in planning how assessment will be built into sequences of learning and alternative methods of assessment and providing feedback identified where physical distance cannot be maintained between teacher and pupil.

With this in mind, teachers should think about using verbal means where possible in order to gauge how learners are progressing- for example, asking for oral rather than written explanations from pupils, or by encouraging pupils to read out shorter pieces of their writing to the teacher, and verbal feedback as appropriate provided to the pupil rather than written feedback in jotters.

Where written work is essential, consideration could be given to this being produced and sent to the teacher digitally as occurred during the period of school closure and lockdown. This would require schools to be adequately equipped with digital hardware and internet connectivity.

Pupils could also submit jotter work for teachers to assess, following adoption of the appropriate risk mitigation measure identified for this purpose in the school risk assessment. Similarly, on returning jotters to pupils, the appropriate risk mitigation measure identified in the school risk assessment should also be adopted. School risk assessments should be updated to consider the impact of the increased transmissibility of new variants of the virus on these arrangements. Any contact with pupils' jotters or other hard-copy assessment evidence should be preceded and followed by thorough hand-washing.

### **Self and Peer Assessment**

As per good formative assessment practice, learners should also be taught and supported to self-assess their work using the agreed success criteria. Such an approach deepens learning by encouraging metacognition, gives learners greater ownership of their learning and promotes independence.

This could be done at key stages throughout the learning activity, with opportunities provided to tell/show the teacher their progress using erasable whiteboards or other visual signal. Coloured card or paper could be used to traffic-light learner's progress through a learning activity as judged through self-assessment.

The same principles of formative assessment apply to peer learning. Pupils can also be encouraged to look at one another's work and provide feedback either orally, in writing or using symbols, based on the success criteria for the activity. The use of technology could enable this in some circumstances; in others, pupils could read parts of their writing to peers and verbal feedback could be provided; in others, pupils might read the work without touching the page and provide verbal feedback.

This approach benefits both the peer assessor who learns more deeply in the process, and the learner whose work is being evaluated who will often find advice and explanations from peers very helpful in enhancing their understanding of ideas, concepts and skills development and application. The value of helping one another is also critical to promoting positive relationships and behaviour and to fostering a sense of community in the classroom and the wider school on the basis that education is a social, collective endeavour.

### **Responding to Interruption to Learning**

Schools and teachers continue to monitor children and young people's progress with learning and the impact of any interruption caused by the pandemic. Literacy and Numeracy, in addition to Health and Wellbeing, continue to be prioritised.

This, together with the principle of equity should be borne in mind when decisions are being made about how resources, including any additional resources such as staffing, are to be allocated and deployed.

Teachers may wish to make use of a range of learning resources prepared by Education Scotland- originally for the purposes of [Blended](#)

[Learning](#)- to help address the impact of any interruption in learning caused by the pandemic. These resources could be used either in class or at home as appropriate. Further information about these resources and [additional resources](#) produced by the EIS Education Department, including a webinar on blended and remote learning, can be found on our website.

Education Scotland have also compiled a list of helpful resources for remote or blended learning to support learners with complex additional support needs which can be accessed [here](#).

The EIS is of the clear view that ACER's 'Scottish Formative Online Assessments' should not be used as the means to assess the impact of school closure on pupils at this time. Neither can SNSAs perform this function singularly. Where schools are considering the use of SNSAs for this purpose, this should be the subject of collegiate discussion in light of the wellbeing imperatives as laid out clearly within the current Scottish Government and Education Scotland guidance.

### **Promoting Positive Behaviour and Relationships, and Managing Discipline**

Schools should have reviewed their policies in relation to promoting positive relationships and behaviour, and managing discipline in the context of aiming to make the school environment COVID-secure.

Practices which would have commonly occurred pre-COVID such as close one-to-one Behaviour Support coaching, will require rethinking and other methods of supporting young people to achieve positive behaviour and good relationship with peers and staff, identified.

We would recommend that one-to-one interactions with pupils will need to be conducted at a safe 2m distance. Consideration will require to be given to how and where class teachers, PTs/DHTs/ HTs and Pupil Support staff can manage this. Larger, less confined spaces such as corridors, empty classrooms, larger offices could be used.

In using techniques such as 'Behaviour Cards', teachers can still discuss targets and progress with young people. If teachers are writing targets in such resources, good hand hygiene arrangements should be in place for both teachers and pupils. In some cases, children may be instructed to fill in cards themselves having been directed by the teacher as to the content and under physically distanced supervision. Other possibilities might be the use of SEEMIS or other digital platform to track the behaviour of pupils who require additional support throughout the day, with a view to this being texted or emailed to parents daily. Phone calls by PTs/ Pupil Support/SMT would be another possibility.

Given that the Scottish Government guidance places a focus on health and wellbeing, and play and socialisation have been acknowledged as critical to recovery, detention either during the school day should be very carefully considered and where alternative sanctions are possible, these should be considered.

## **GIRFEC, Guidance and Pastoral Care**

The strong emphasis on wellbeing means that there is likely to be much GIRFEC-related activity in schools and with multi-agency teams.

All associated arrangements should be risk assessed with public health imperatives in mind, both regarding one-to-one meetings and conversations with children and young people, and meetings with other professionals such as Educational Psychologists and Social Workers.

Physical distancing arrangements should be maintained, whenever possible, between pupils and teachers who are providing them pastoral support. If for any reason this is not possible, we would recommend that face coverings are worn where they are not being worn already.

Where physical distancing cannot be comfortably maintained for larger meetings, virtual meetings should be considered.

The Scottish Government Guidance also recommends that face coverings should be worn by parents and all visitors to school settings.

## **Homework and Out of School Learning**

The key priorities of the Recovery Curriculum – wellbeing, equity, and health and safety, should be borne in mind in relation to decisions around homework- whether it should be given at all; and if it is to be given, what and how much.

Some questions to consider:

- Should homework be a priority at this time?
- How well will it benefit children’s wellbeing and learning at this time?
- Are families in a good position to support children with homework at this time?
- How will children from disadvantaged backgrounds be able to engage with the homework activities? Can they participate equally to their more affluent peers?
- How will feedback on homework be provided safely and meaningfully?
- Will the setting, collection and provision of feedback on homework take up valuable class time?
- Are there activities which can be encouraged which require little resource and upon which class lessons are not dependent?

Teachers are advised to discuss such questions with their colleagues, ideally in arriving at a whole-school, collegiate decision about an approach to homework during the recovery period that sensibly and fully takes account of the current context and priorities.

## **Blended and Remote Learning and Teaching**

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the emergence of new variants of concern, schools have adapted to a variety of circumstances using a range of approaches to deliver learning and teaching. This has included situations in which children and young people and/or teachers



may be self-isolating or shielding; where teachers with particular health vulnerabilities are working from home; or where schools require to move to a blended or remote learning model.

The EIS is clear that learning and teaching occur most effectively when teachers and pupils work together face to face in classrooms. This is acknowledged in Education Scotland's advice on [remote learning](#) which states that 'remote learning will not replicate face to face in school teaching – in style, approach or hours of delivery'.

Teachers may wish to provide access to online learning as an addition to classroom-based learning and teaching but only in exceptional circumstances should online modes of learning be considered as a substitute for face to face learning and teaching.

The Education Scotland advice is clear and the EIS agrees that 'Whilst remote learning is not a substitute for full time classroom-based learning and teaching, effective remote learning can mitigate some of the adverse impact of a reduction in face-to-face learning' in a variety of ways.

### **Maintaining Professional Boundaries**

To accommodate these circumstances, teachers might be asked to deliver lessons from home, either pre-recorded or on a 'live' basis. Where this is the arrangement, teachers may use their own computer devices and smartphones for online communication with pupils as part of the school's agreed approach to continuing education delivery and through agreed official channels only- i.e. work email addresses, GLOW or other local authority-endorsed digital platforms. It should also be understood that teachers are not compelled to use their own digital devices, should they not wish to do so. In these circumstances, the onus is on the local authority to provide any devices as necessary to support remote teaching.

Employers' policies, guidance and protocols relating to online learning should be shared with teachers and strictly adhered to; and the EIS

Social Media Policy and the GTCS Professional Guidance on Electronic Communication and Social Media should be borne in mind.

Members are advised, however, to be mindful of safeguarding private personal details. Teachers should not share, or be asked to share, personal phone numbers, email addresses, or social media IDs with pupils or their parents.

Where it has been agreed that live-streaming of lessons will feature as one part of a school's approach to the delivery of remote learning, this should proceed only where secure platforms, such as GLOW, can be used and according to agreed protocols, including those in relation to the roles and responsibilities of parents in supporting their children with remote learning generally and specifically to access any live lessons.

Where lessons are being streamed or video recorded for sharing as saved digital files with pupils, teachers should take all appropriate measures to protect their personal privacy and safeguard their professionalism, for example, by ensuring neutral backgrounds and appropriate dress.

Teachers should not engage in any phone or video-calling with parents unless this has been arranged through the school in accordance with LNCT agreements, and with the knowledge and/or participation of the appropriate line manager and the consent of the teacher involved. In the event of a parent seeking to engage a teacher in discussion about their child's learning in the course of planned online engagement with the child, they should be directed to the school office/website where all relevant contact details can be provided/should be clearly available.

Teachers should not feel pressure to respond to any parent/carer comments, requests or complaints made through online channels which have been set up for the purposes of maintaining learning at home amidst the current public health crisis.

Teachers should be aware that nothing that is shared online is private.

Any school which is delivering learning online must have protocols in place to protect staff and safeguard pupils. No teacher should be expected to carry out any online teaching with which they feel uncomfortable, or in the absence of agreed protocols. Such protocols should include measures for handling incidence of pupil behaviour which is disrespectful of others, including the teacher, or is disruptive of learning; and for responding to incidences of inappropriate parental intervention.

Teachers should not routinely be in phone contact with children and young people who are learning at home, for the purpose of checking progress with learning activities. To support the emotional wellbeing and learning needs of young people who are particularly vulnerable, a degree of regulated contact, maintained by staff who are experienced in pastoral care, and within clear protocols which safeguard both pupils and teachers, would be appropriate.

Where phone contact is judged necessary on the basis of an evaluation of pupil need and subsequent identification of pupils for whom wellbeing considerations are significant, this should be done by staff who are well experienced in making phone contact with home in relation to pastoral care matters.

In the Primary setting, any phone calls to pupils deemed necessary should be made by Primary PTs and DHTs. Main Grade teachers should not normally be involved in making such phone calls directly to pupils and parents at home. If asked to do so by the school, this should be in accordance with agreed protocols.

Further information in relation to Maintaining Professional Boundaries, both online and during phone calls can be found in the [EIS Working at Home Advice](#).

## **Teachers' Use of ICT**

As far as possible where digital technology is being used to support learning and teaching at home, this should be familiar both to teachers

and pupils. Teachers cannot be expected to be adept at using digital learning platforms without the requisite training, nor can they support such learning without access to the necessary devices.

Where schools/ local authorities use other digital platforms for the delivery of teaching and learning, the associated learning should be made available. Where teachers are unable to access this learning, alternative activities should be agreed. These might include a different means of supporting contingency education delivery at this time; or carrying out manageable curriculum development work; or engaging in additional professional learning.

Where teachers have concerns about the use of particular software, for example, in relation to the capacity of companies to access and harvest personal data, these should be raised with the SMT with a view to alternative possibilities being explored.

The classroom environment for many has extended into a virtual space which can be accessed by multiple users. Whilst it may be appropriate in some circumstances for colleagues to work together on providing remote learning for pupils, the use of digital platforms for the purposes of quality assurance of learning and teaching in the context of any contingency arrangements, is not appropriate and should be resisted.

Whilst it is understood that senior managers have a responsibility to quality assure learning provision, this should be done on the basis of collegiate, professional dialogue with teachers. All staff should be involved in collegiate discussion about what the school's remote learning offer will be and opportunities for professional dialogue among colleagues, including senior managers, should be created ongoingly throughout the period of remote learning and teaching. It is not acceptable for quality assurance processes to be in the form of observation of live virtual lessons.

### **Learning and Teaching in the Blended or Remote Context**

The principles of Empowering Teachers and Teacher Agency should

apply to remote working and digital learning contexts in all aspects of learning and teaching.

As would be expected when working in the normal environment of school, teachers should be involved in all decisions about the curriculum – in this case, the activities that children and young people will be offered while learning at home. What is provided by teachers should be by agreement following a collegiate, professional dialogue with the senior management of the school or line manager as appropriate. Collegiality rather than instruction and prescription is key.

As in the classroom context, teachers know the children that they teach well and are therefore best placed to decide upon the nature, volume and frequency of the learning activities provided.

An appropriate range of learning activities should be considered, particularly in light of the fact that many children and families still do not have sufficient access to digital devices or internet access. Education Scotland has advised that 'Remote learning can be delivered in a variety of ways. It may include reading, doing, creating and inventing, playing, problem solving, observing and investigating with some of the best learning examples not requiring technology at all, although in the current context, digital and online approaches will be commonly used.'

It should be borne in mind that in addition to the issues related to digital inequity, many children may struggle simply to have a quiet space to study / work. For further information in this regard, members can access the [EIS Briefing on Digital Poverty](#).

Learning activities should suit the age range and capabilities of the children and expected outcomes should be flexible. A good strategy is to set learning activities that enable differentiation by outcome, that all pupils in a class, including those with additional support needs, can complete with some degree of success, with extra and more stretching activities for progression.

It can be beneficial to provide a list of possible activities that cover different areas of the curriculum and which allow learners to choose the activities that particularly interest them and with which their parents might be better placed to help.

Offering a variety of learning activities, covering a range of subject areas and involving different skills, is recommended. Creative activities involving music and dance, art, writing stories, songs and poetry, and making things are likely to motivate and be a welcome distraction for learners, particularly in the current worrying climate.

Work that can be done by pupils in bite-sized chunks is more likely to be completed than longer tasks. If there are projects, suggest how these could be broken down.

Learning activities should be centred on ground previously covered in class, and as far as possible which learners can make progress with independently. Overly complex tasks including those that seek to introduce new learning should be avoided in these circumstances, especially where young people have additional support needs.

Many parents are also trying to work from home, and some parents might struggle to assist with schoolwork for a number of reasons besides. Expectations of young people and their parents need to be realistic and fair, as would also be advised when in normal circumstances, approaches to homework are being considered.

Given that there has been a commitment made to continue to provide education on a contingency basis during any period of school closure, and given the inequalities that already exist arising from socio-economic factors, local authorities and schools should be live to this and continue to take account of and address socio-economic disadvantage and digital inequality in terms of the remote learning that they offer.

Provision of feedback on pupils' learning at home should be concise, focused, bureaucracy-light and given through the agreed channels. Feedback should be given in line with good formative assessment

practice with a view to ensuring that any feedback provided is meaningful for children and young people. With this in mind, teachers should also be free to use their professional judgement in determining the amount, nature and frequency of feedback that they give their pupils. It should also be borne in mind that good formative assessment practice involves a balance of teacher, self and peer assessment.

### **Workload in the Blended or Remote Context**

Workload control measures are still operable in the context of working at home, whatever the reason teachers might be doing this. Management of teachers' working time should be within the parameters of the 35-hour working week, and collegiate discussion and agreement around the use of collegiate time in the current circumstances. A common-sense approach should prevail and should take account of the very challenging conditions in which all are working.

In accordance with the Scottish Government Guidance on Education Recovery, priorities should be centred around the wellbeing of teachers, as well as of children and young people, and be agreed on a collegiate basis. Teachers should be mindful of their own health and wellbeing and the need for an appropriate balance of priorities in this regard.

Adjustments to the balance of normal pupil-contact time are recommended for digital learning contexts - neither children nor teachers should be engaged for the duration of the normal pupil day in screen-based learning and teaching. This would be an excessive and unhealthy demand to place upon pupils, is pedagogically unsound and is not conducive to maintaining good health and wellbeing among teachers working in relatively restricted conditions at home and without the usual supports from colleagues and senior management being in place.

This view is shared by Education Scotland in their [advice](#), referred to above, which states that 'Learners should not engage in online learning for the entirety of the school day. Learning may include activities such

as research tasks, project work, practical opportunities, discussions and other activities that can be carried out away from a digital device’.

Teachers who are attending school for the provision of education to children and young people should not also be asked to provide online learning experiences for their own classes on days when they are rostered for this provision.

The main priority of teachers, as when working in school, should be learning and teaching. When working at home, time spent on work-related activities of a bureaucratic nature that contribute little or nothing to the quality of learning and teaching, should be minimal to zero.

If a teacher, when working at home, has a concern about workload, this should be raised with the management of the school setting in the first instance. If necessary, the EIS School Rep and/ or Local Association Secretary can assist in helping the setting to reach a collegiate and bureaucracy-light solution.

The EIS has developed a range of resources, including a webinar delivered in partnership with Education Scotland, to support members in the delivery of remote and blended teaching. Resources to assist teachers preparing online learning can be accessed [here](#) and on the Education Scotland website. The Education Scotland website includes [a single landing page](#) for all guidance and practical support on remote learning.

Resources to support remote learning to complement arrangements and support in place at a local level have been developed through [the National e-Learning Offer](#).

Resources to support members’ health and wellbeing whilst working at home can also be accessed [here](#).



Further EIS advice on Blended and Remote Learning and Teaching during the COVID-19 Pandemic can be accessed [here](#).

## **Reporting to Parents/Carers**

Parental involvement and engagement play a crucial role in a child's education. There is a strong body of evidence that active and supportive parental involvement in schools is crucial in delivering the best opportunities for all pupils and is one way of seeking to address the poverty related attainment gap. In the context of the Recovery Curriculum, parental engagement continues to play an important role and is likely to have a pivotal impact on the successful re-engagement of the child or young person with education.

However, to facilitate this engagement and ensure that a collaborative approach is adopted, sufficient time and resources must be allocated to this activity, to avoid any further negative impact on the workload of teachers who, over the course of this academic session, are already working beyond capacity.

Important health and safety considerations, particularly in light of the prevalence of the virus, should also be factored into any decisions about how best to communicate with parents on a child or young person's progress.

In considering arrangements to be adopted for reporting to parents, it is advised that collegiate discussion involving all teaching staff should take place to consider and reach an agreement on how best to proceed locally. Approaches adopted should reflect a joint commitment to reduce bureaucracy and teachers' workload.

### **(a) Parental Consultation**

The updated Scottish Government Guidance now states that there are no restrictions on parents, carers and wider family members entering school buildings, although they will be expected to comply with the school's routine measures. It then adds that there are, therefore, no restrictions on 'in person' parent/carer evenings.

The EIS is clear that decisions around the re-introduction of 'in-person' parent/carer evenings should be based on collegiate discussion, with Headteachers continuing to work jointly with the trade unions to reach agreement regarding the arrangements for, and timing of, such events under the Working Time Agreement of the establishment.

In addition, suitable and sufficient risk assessments should be reviewed and updated in advance of these events taking place.

#### (b) Report Writing

Consideration will be turning to the drafting of end of year reports in Primary schools. All such reporting arrangements, including any alternatives to written reports, should have been factored into the school's Working Time Agreement.

Where it has been agreed that preparing written reports will serve good purpose at this time, discussion and agreement should also have taken/take place regarding an appropriate format and level of detail that can, in the circumstances, be included, such that the reports are meaningful for parents and learners.

Any decision reached in relation to the provision and format of such reports should take full account of and be balanced against other current working time priorities.

#### **Practical Considerations: managing collaboration among job-share and part-time teachers**

Where classes and associated reporting responsibilities are shared between/among teachers, there could be challenges at present in enabling the requisite professional collaboration on report-writing.

Where it has been agreed that written reports are to be prepared for pupils, consideration should be given to how collaboration will be facilitated safely.

### **Practical Considerations: access to technology**

In addition to time, such collaboration may demand availability and reliability of the requisite technology, internet access and software. Not all teachers have this, with some having to share these resources.

This is a barrier which would need to be overcome by the school/local authority to enable the safe completion of electronic reports by their teaching staff.

### **Practical Considerations: distribution of reports**

Should there be an agreement that written reports are to be issued, consideration should also be given to how they will be distributed to parents. If reports are to be distributed in paper copy, consideration should be given to highlighting the importance of good hand hygiene after handling the report. If reports are to be issued in electronic format, then account must be taken of the fact that not all parents will be able to access emailed reports and alternative solutions adopted to ensure equity of access.

### **Working Time**

Given the very challenging contexts in which teachers are working currently, there is likely to be additional strain on weekly working time within the parameters of the 35-hour week. Clearly, if report writing is to be prioritised, it may not be possible for teachers to undertake other activities.

Should any member believe that unrealistic or unsafe arrangements are being put in place around parental reporting (both in relation to parental consultations and report writing), they should raise the matter in the first instance with the School Rep and/or the Local Association Secretary as appropriate.

## **Assemblies**

The Scottish Government Guidance states that there are no restrictions on school assemblies taking place, although routine measures will continue to apply (e.g. good ventilation, regular cleaning, etc.).

The EIS would recommend that decisions around holding whole-school assemblies are informed by collegiate discussion and the outcome of an updated risk assessment.

Where the assembly is taking place, then all appropriate mitigation measures should be adopted, ensuring that the size of the room or space is sufficient to allow adequate ventilation for the numbers attending the gathering. Measures should also include physical distancing between adults and between adults and children, whenever possible.

The Scottish Government Guidance recommends that face coverings should be worn by staff in indoor communal areas and when moving around the school building. Given the communal nature of an assembly, the EIS believes that face coverings should be worn by adults attending such events.

## **Extra-curricular Activities**

Risk assessments and consideration of the priority principles of equity, wellbeing and focus on Literacy and Numeracy, should occur in deciding

whether to resume or set up lunchtime or after-school activities for pupils.

Where such extra-curricular activities have been resumed or established, schools should consider the need for additional or out of hours cleaning when determining the scheduling of these activities.

## **School Trips**

- **Non-residential Trips**

Day visits can take place. Appropriate risk assessments should be conducted, reviewed and updated, taking full account of new variants of the virus and the routine protective measures referred to in the Scottish Government Guidance. All identified risk mitigation measures should be adopted.

The Scottish Government Guidance provides that ‘schools and site venues should continue to have contingency plans and risk assessments for pupils and staff becoming symptomatic’. We would recommend that as part of this process, consideration is given to appropriate arrangements for isolation and to transport pupils and staff home, if necessary and to any associated child protection or safeguarding implications which may arise as a result.

- **Residential Visits**

Residential educational visits can take place, without restrictions on overnight room/tent occupancy or on the expedition group size, provided suitable and sufficient risk assessments have been conducted.

The EIS would recommend that, through collegiate dialogue, careful consideration is given to whether a residential trip is necessary at this time or whether the educational objective can be fulfilled by some other means.

Where it is agreed that the residential element of the excursion is key to teaching and learning, then risk assessments should be conducted, and reviewed prior to travel, between the school and the residential visit provider to ensure that the routine protective measures outlined in the Scottish Government Guidance and all identified risk mitigation measures are in place to keep children, young people and staff safe.

The Scottish Government Guidance provides that ‘schools and site venues should continue to have contingency plans and risk assessments for pupils and staff becoming symptomatic’. We would recommend that as part of this process, consideration is given to appropriate arrangements for isolation and to transport pupils and staff home, if necessary and to any associated child protection or safeguarding implications which may arise as a result.

In the Primary context, the age and stage of the children, including any additional support needs, should also be considered and factored into the assessment of risk.

- **Cross border visits within the UK**

Cross border day or residential visits within the UK are permitted provided suitable and sufficient risk assessments have been conducted, reflecting the routine protective measures outlined in the Scottish Government Guidance, and with all identified risk mitigation measures being adopted.

The Scottish Government Guidance provides that ‘schools and site venues should continue to have contingency plans and risk assessments for pupils and staff becoming symptomatic’. We would recommend that as part of this process, consideration is given to appropriate arrangements for isolation and to transport pupils and staff home, if necessary and to any associated child protection or safeguarding implications which may arise as a result.

The age and stage of the children involved, including any additional support needs, should also be considered and factored into the assessment of risk.

The EIS would recommend that collegiate discussion and the outcomes from the risk assessment process should inform decisions taken about cross border visits. Particular regard should be taken of the increased transmissibility of new variants of the virus and factors such as COVID prevalence at the proposed destination. If a teacher is concerned about the decision taken or the safety of anyone involved in the proposed visit, they should raise this with the school management team and seek advice and support from their EIS school representative or Local Association Secretary.

## **International educational visits**

International school visits and trips can take place provided suitable and sufficient risk assessments have been conducted, reflecting the routine protective measures outlined in the Scottish Government Guidance, and with all identified risk mitigation measures being adopted.

The Scottish Government Guidance provides that 'schools and site venues should continue to have contingency plans and risk assessments for pupils and staff becoming symptomatic with repatriation arrangements where appropriate'. We would recommend that as part of this process, careful consideration is given to appropriate arrangements for isolation and to transport pupils or members of staff home, if necessary, and to any associated child protection or safeguarding implications which may arise as a result.

The age and stage of the children involved, including any additional support needs, should also be considered and factored into the assessment of risk.

International school trips should also comply with [international travel guidance](#) and with the COVID requirements in the host country.

With the prevalence of the virus internationally, the EIS would urge extreme caution before international school trips and visits are recommenced. Through collegiate dialogue, careful consideration should be given to whether an international trip is necessary at this time or whether the educational objective can be fulfilled by some other means. The outcomes from a rigorous risk assessment process, taking full account of the increased transmissibility of new variants of the virus and factors such as COVID prevalence at the proposed destination, should also inform the decision taken. If a teacher is concerned about the decision taken or the safety of anyone involved in the proposed visit, they should raise this with the school management team and seek advice and support from their EIS school representative or Local Association Secretary.

## **Arrangements for In-service Activity**

### **In-service activities**

In-service activities are an important part of teachers' work as they can support professional development and collegiate working. It is important that in-service activity continues to take place during the pandemic, with priorities for such activity agreed locally.

### **Current Scottish Government Guidance on Working from Home**

With infection levels remaining high as a result of new variants of the virus, Scottish Government Guidance continues to encourage hybrid and flexible working practices, to support wellbeing and help to control transmission of the virus.

### **Working in communal spaces**

Schools have several workspaces where teachers meet during the pupil day or on in-service days which are defined as communal spaces under the Scottish Government Guidelines.

Physical distancing between adults and between adults and pupils is recommended in communal workplaces in schools. The Scottish Government Guidance continues to recommend the wearing of face coverings by adults in communal areas.



In light of the increased transmissibility of new variants of the virus, we would recommend strict adherence to physical distancing arrangements in communal areas, such as staff rooms, canteens, bases and offices. We would also recommend that where this is insufficient space to support distancing, risk assessments should be carried out and consideration given to the adoption of mitigation measures, such as limiting the number of adults in any one area at any one time, staggering staff breaks, or creating additional staff working or welfare areas.

### **Local negotiation on in-service day arrangements**

During in-service days, as the pupils are not at school, the EIS believes that Local Authorities and schools should engage with teachers' unions to agree on appropriate in-service activities and arrangements that take account of health and safety considerations and of agreed priorities for recovery.

Given the importance of minimising the risk of transmission of the virus, the EIS is clear that during in-service days the default should be home-working for teachers with virtual meetings where practicalities require it.

Where agreed specific practical tasks require in-person attendance in school and are considered necessary at this time, these should be arranged with robust risk assessments having been carried out and thereafter appropriate safety protocols in place. Teachers' in-person attendance under these circumstances, in the interests of limiting transmission of infection, should only be required for the duration of time necessary to carry out the task, with teachers working from home during any remaining time before or after the agreed school-based activity.

### **Action for Representatives**

The EIS advises representatives to engage with their school/Local Authority to reach agreement in relation to such in-service arrangements in the current context of the pandemic and heightened risk of infection as a result of new variants of the virus.