



The Educational
Institute of Scotland

Mr John Swinney
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for
Education and Skills
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

LF/KN/DFM 300421
30 April 2021

By email

Dear John

As you may be aware, the EIS has raised concerns on several occasions since last October about the Scottish Government's intention to collect ACEL data this session, and associated with this, to continue administering SNSAs. It was with some disappointment, therefore, that we learned of Alison Taylor's correspondence of March 23rd to Directors of Education indicating that the position remains unchanged.

The EIS is of the view that this amounts to a significant deviation from the principles of education recovery as laid out by the Scottish Government, particularly around wellbeing. After a second prolonged period of school closure, many EIS members are extremely uncomfortable about the prospect of administering SNSAs to children and young people at a time when so many are emotionally unsettled, and in terms of their learning, require a teacher-led approach rooted in sound formative assessment principles. The professional opinion of our members is that SNSAs will undermine rather than support young people's return to in-person education with school staff and alongside their peers.

As previously highlighted also, teachers are already working well beyond capacity to deliver education and wellbeing support to young people whilst maintaining covid secure learning and teaching environments at this time. To expect *even more* intricate planning of learning, teaching and assessment than has already been required this session; *and* another series of activities with which teachers will be required to support BGE learners, especially P1 and those with additional support needs; *and* the post-assessment analysis and associated bureaucracy that SNSAs and the ACEL collection demand, in the EIS view, is quite unreasonable- especially when we see so little educational value to SNSAs and the ACEL collection in the first place.

The perception among our members of ill-judgement in this regard on the part of the Scottish Government, is acutely held by Secondary teachers who are also heavily tasked with delivering the Alternative Certification Model within a significantly truncated timeframe. PCs and laptops will require to be used by young people in the

Senior Phase who are completing essential items of coursework. Any requirement for SNSA completion by S3s will place strain on limited IT resource.

There has been agreement among stakeholders, including Scottish Government, that all other priorities that are non-essential for Secondaries at this time, require to be stood down to enable the secure delivery of the qualifications for young people. The intention to continue to proceed with SNSAs and to make demands on local authorities to collect ACEL data from schools, and Headteachers from staff, and for the data to be quality assured, frankly flies in the face of the commitments made in a variety of fora with regards to workload alleviation to enable the prioritisation of the ACM whilst minimising the negative wellbeing impacts for teachers.

Aside from workload, there is also the Covid risk engendered by administering SNSAs. Supporting pupils, especially P1s and young people with additional needs, to log on to computers and then to complete SNSAs would be impossible whilst maintaining the requisite 2m distance, this placing both teachers and young people at unnecessary risk of infection.

Once again, the EIS requests an urgent rethink of the Scottish government position with regards to SNSAs and ACEL in the interests of sound learning, teaching and assessment in the context of education recovery that should have the wellbeing of children at its heart; of teacher workload and wellbeing; in the interests of maintaining covid secure schools; and, crucially, securing the trust of teachers that when as a body they share their view informed by professional experience and daily interactions with young people, that it is listened to and appropriately acted upon by government.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Larry Flanagan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L' and a long, sweeping underline.

Larry Flanagan
General Secretary

Cc Graeme Logan, Director of Learning