



TEACHERS' PANEL

SNCT Teachers' Panel

Representatives of the SNCT Teachers' Panel met via video conference at 1.00 pm on Thursday 6 August 2020.

Present: AHDS – G. Dempster.
EIS – L. Flanagan and D. Morris (Chair),
NASUWT – J. Peckham.
SLS – J. Thewliss
SSTA – F. Dalziel and S. Searson.

In attendance: D. McGinty (Teachers' Side Secretariat).

Apologies had been received from D. Atkinson (Voice) and L. Wilson (Teachers' Side Secretary) .

1. Re-opening of schools August 2020

This was the first meeting of the SNCT Teachers' Panel since the Scottish Government announced in July that schools would re-open fully from 11 August 2020. The meeting considered the Covid Education Recovery Group (CERG) Guidelines and associated documentation. The meeting noted that CERG Guidelines represent what could be agreed within the group and not the totality of what the SNCT Teachers' Panel was seeking.

Following lengthy discussion, the meeting expressed a lack of confidence in several areas and paragraphs in the CERG Guidelines. It was the unanimous view that some of the mitigations did not go far enough and this had increased anxiety amongst Scotland's teachers. The meeting also expressed concern at the number of publicised dates by Local Authorities for pupil return which seem to have minimised the use of the Scottish Government Guidelines on phased return.

The meeting agreed to raise the following issues directly with the CERG.

1.1 Testing

The meeting agreed that pro-active testing of school communities should be in place. Testing should be made available to asymptomatic members in school communities to provide further reassurance and to reduce anxiety levels.

1.2 Face Coverings

The meeting agreed that the CERG Guidance on the use of face coverings was inconsistent, confusing and differed from those arrangements to be observed in other workplace settings and society in general. In particular, further guidance should be given on the use of face coverings by older pupils and by those in vulnerable groups.

1.3 Shielding

The meeting agreed that a much more sympathetic approach was required for those members who had until 31 July been shielding and were now expected to operate in schools normally without the added protections or facility to work remotely, if required, for health reasons.

1.4 Pregnant workers

The meeting welcomed the fact that the guidance is clear that employers should be supportive of pregnant workers. However, the meeting agreed that much more robust and consistent advice was required for these workers particularly those in the third trimester (more than 28 weeks' pregnant) who should be particularly attentive to physical distancing.

The meeting noted that while the general advice for pregnant workers around Covid-19 may have changed, there is extant health and safety legislation around pregnancy risk assessments which remain in force. These are contained in The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and referenced in SNCT Circular 20-74. These Regulations require employers to conduct risk assessments for pregnant workers. The legal requirement should be reflected in the CERG Guidelines.

1.5 Physical distancing

The meeting agreed that the sections covering physical distancing fall short of the expectations of the Teachers' Panel of the SNCT. There are major omissions and inconsistencies between the physical distancing arrangements to be observed in schools compared with other workplace settings and society in general.

2. Next steps

2.1 CERG Guidelines

The meeting agreed that during the recovery phase there was a need to optimise the learning environment while keeping people safe. The meeting also noted that the CERG Guidance would be kept under review and updated when necessary. In order to facilitate a speedy review and update of the Guidance, the meeting agreed to share the contents of the finalised note of this meeting with the CERG at its meeting on Friday 14 August.

2.2 Phased return of pupils to support safe reopening of schools

The meeting agreed that the SNCT should write to ADES expressing concern at the number of publicised dates by Local Authorities for pupil return which seem to have minimised the use of the Scottish Government Guidelines on phased return. The letter would emphasise that for most schools a rapid return would not be feasible, particularly in light of the length of absence from school that pupils have experienced and the need to ensure all the CERG Guidance mitigations are in place and operational from Day 1.

3. AOCB

There were no other items of competent business.