

Note of meeting

Consultative Committee with Parents

6.00pm, Monday 3 August 2020

Virtual Meeting - via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Elected Members

Councillors Ian Perry (Convener), Alison Dickie (Vice-Convener), Councillor Calum Laidlaw, Councillor Melanie Main and Councillor Hal Osler.

Parent Representatives

Alex Ramage (Education Children & Families Committee Parent Representative)

Kevin Kealey

Jacob Wilson

Helen Duncan

Jenny Hunt

Karen –

Lee Picken

Deirdre Henderson

Naomi Barton

Jo Beech-Brandt

Rebecca Clacy-Jones

Alison Nicolson

Kate Morris

Tina Woolverton

Officers in Attendance

Alistair Gaw, Executive Director for Communities and Families

Andy Gray, Head of Schools and Lifelong Learning

Arran Findlay, Senior Education Officer

Anna Gray, Senior Education Officer

Bernadette Oxley, Head of Children's Services
Crawford McGhie, Senior Manager – Estates and Operational Support
Lorna Sweeney, Schools and Lifelong Learning Senior Manager
Lynn Paterson, Senior Education Manager, Early Years and Primary Schools
Michelle McMillan, Operations Manager, Communities and Families
Jack Simpson, Senior Education Officer, Communities and Families
Natalie Le Couteur, Committee Services
Laura Millar, Service and Policy Adviser to the Convener and Vice-Convener of Education, Children and Families

1. Note of Meeting

Decision

To approve the Note of Meeting of the Consultative Committee with Parents of 24 June 2020.

2. Pupils' Return in August 2020

Parents were given the opportunity to discuss and ask questions on the arrangements for the pupils' return to school in August. It was agreed that a transcript of the questions and answers would be published online for the benefit of those who could not attend.

On 30 July, the First Minister announced that schools would return 100% in August. Edinburgh schools would return from 12 August under a phased approach with the logistics of this managed at a school level by Head Teachers. By 17 August, the plan was for all children to be back in school full time.

There would be no social distancing in primary schools amongst children. Adults would maintain social distancing between children and other adults. If a child or adult was symptomatic of COVID, the test and protect process would be followed and an isolated space made available for the person until they could leave safely. The school would then arrange for the appropriate level of cleaning, in line with Health Protection Scotland guidance.

For the senior phase, schools would ensure arrangements were in place to allow social distancing without prejudicing education. There would be one-way systems operating in corridors, open doors and windows, alongside revised cleaning arrangements. Parents would receive notification on 5 August concerning the return to school arrangements.

Special Schools would also have a phased return from 12 August with a focus on the wellbeing of pupils. Parents would be notified on 5 August of their return to school arrangements and any individual plans for pupils who would benefit from a softer start. Social distancing was generally not possible in the special school settings, therefore mitigating measures such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) would be in place.

A question and answer Session then followed during the meeting:

School, Support and Blended Learning

Question – What plans are in place should blended learning should be required again?

Answer - The plan for digital learning is continuing as part of the council's adaptation and renewal programme. Each school will take forward digital learning following on from their journey during lockdown. There are budgetary implications for purchasing devices, software and training which need to be considered at a corporate level.

Question - Will there be a consistent model for blended learning across the city under the contingency plan? During lockdown, schools were doing things differently and if blended learning was needed again, the expectation would be for consistency and equity.

Answer - Blended learning is about the appropriate delivery of the curriculum by teachers which we are now prepared for. In the short, medium and longer term, we are committed to ensuring there is professional guidance in place to allow schools to develop digital learning.

Question - What support will be available to pupils to enable them to catch up?

Answer- Following lockdown, children may have developed gaps in their development in wellbeing, literacy and numeracy. If we take a simple example of a P4 teacher meeting their class, they will look to establish a baseline of where individual learners are and will work with the information shared by the pupil's previous teacher. Additional money has been offered by the Scottish Government, this will be used to help release experienced teachers to support catch up and nurture. We will ask each school to tell us their baseline and targets, and how they seek to use the additional resources.

Question - What has been put in place to address pupils' needs psychologically?

Answer – Edinburgh's Mental Health and Wellbeing resources are sector leading, there will be a briefing to Senior Education Leaders and Headteachers on the support available before schools return.

Question - What will be the arrangements to manage social distancing?

Answer – There will be no social distancing between children. There will be limitations on contact with other children beyond the immediate class and initially the focus will be for pupils to feel comfortable in their cohort.

Question – What is the policy on music, PE and other peripatetic staff?

Answer- We are committed to making the very best use of visiting teachers and plan to include them in the development of digital resources.

Question- Is there an update on Active Schools?

Answer -There will be more information on active schools at a later stage however we are committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of our pupils. Using council buildings for active schools at this time would put additional pressure on cleaning which must be prioritised for normal school day activities.

Question – Is there a policy for non-teaching staff visiting schools such as social workers, family liaison officers, visiting authors or artists?

Answer- We will be looking at electronic ways for non-teaching staff to engage with pupils, at present schools will accept essential visits only.

Question- What will happen with shared textbooks and science resources?

Answer- We are not encouraging sharing of textbooks due to evidence suggesting the virus can live on surfaces for a period of up to 72 hours. We will be encouraging children to wipe down their own resources. Teachers will still be able to demonstrate science experiments as safely as possible.

In terms of the cleaning regime, we have looked at providing the normal daily cleaning as well as increased disinfection of common touch points. Electrostatic cleaning, which is used by many local authorities, will have been carried out in all our schools and early years settings by the weekend. There will be a rolling programme of electrostatic cleaning until the end of the year.

Question - If textbooks cannot be easily shared, how will schools manage this, and will a budget be available?

Answer – Our priority is safety over cost. Arrangements are in place for schools to avoid sharing of resources between pupils and any additional costs will be managed centrally.

Question - Will uniforms need to be washed daily?

Answer – No, the Scottish Government Guidance states that there is no need to wash uniforms daily.

Question - Will adult learning continue in schools?

Answer - We will not be delivering adult learning until further notice to avoid bringing additional people into school settings.

Question - Will children require their PE kits in the first week back?

Answer - Normally the children would not have PE in the first week, headteachers will be in touch with the class timetable. PE will continue in schools but differently than before and outside where possible.

Question- Are pupils expected to socially distance when not in schools?

Answer – Out with school pupils would be expected to adhere to Scottish Government Guidance of using masks in shops or on public transport, and to not attend mass gatherings. We would expect all pupils to have a common-sense approach.

Question- What are the plans for exams in 2021?

Answer - We are awaiting guidance from the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)and when we get this information, we will share this with parents.

Questions – What items can children bring to school?

Answer – The Scottish Government Guidance issued on 30 July detailed risk controls that could be put in place concerning personal property. Aside from gym shoes, there is no need for children to bring anything in as all the resources are provided in school. All personal items are to be kept in school bags and children will be asked to keep any resources they have brought from home to themselves. We understand this which goes against children's desire to share things with friends however a communication will go out to explain to parents.

Question- What will be the group sizes?

Answer – As per Scottish Government Advice, there will be no groups bigger than 50.

Question - What support will be in place for teachers during the transition period?

Answer- Our staff are well prepared, trained and supported. There is guidance and a range of groups within the organisation that staff can refer to, as well as a mentoring and support helpline. We are also running sessions on health and wellbeing.

Question - What are the plans for schools should there be any spikes in the infection rate?

Answer - Virtual sessions are being run for Headteachers, Business Managers and other staff on how to respond to any spike in the infection rates. We have been working closely with Health Protection Scotland who are responsible for test and trace.

Question - How will the needs of self-isolating families be met now that shielding has come to an end? There will be parents who do not feel comfortable for their children to be in school.

Answer- As shielding has now paused in Scotland, there is the expectation that children will be returning to school. There will be individual risk assessments undertaken and if children have a specific health concern, this will be sensitively assessed on a case by case basis. There will be a small number who choose not to send their child back to school and we want to ensure that these families can access the support they need. If parents want to discuss moving to home education, please contact Arran Findlay (arran.finlay@edinburgh.gov.uk).

Getting to/from School and the Playground

Question- How will staggered start times for pupils be managed?

Answer - Individual schools will make arrangements with parents to ensure that people do not arrive at the same time.

Question – What will be the arrangements for P1 and P2 who require to be delivered to a member of staff?

Answer- P1 will be the priority as they will be feeling great excitement and tension around their new settings. Teachers and Headteachers will be aware of pupil safety.

Question - How are Headteachers going to manage the phased return and how will playgrounds look at playtime?

Answer – In playgrounds the guidance is no more than 50 people are allowed to gather, headteachers are considered staggered playtimes. We understand some children like to run around and we will look to manage this in the first instance to limit cross over with other children. Part of test and protect is about knowing who your children have come into contact with but it is understood that no plan in this regard will be perfect.

Question - What will be the arrangements for wraparound care?

Answer – We anticipate that children in the breakfast clubs will be the first to arrive in school. Schools will work with their providers to ensure staggered arrival times.

Question - What safety measures will be put in place for children who are being transported to school by the driver and escort?

Answer - PPE is not mandatory however there will be enhanced cleaning of the vehicles.

Question - Is there a process where parents can express concerns with their transport arrangements?

Answer –Parents can contact Anna Gray (anna.gray@edinburgh.gov.uk) directly to discuss any concerns with individual transport plans

Question - How can parents best support teachers and pupils during pick-up/drop-off times?

Answer - Parents can avoid gathering at the school gates, follow the traffic management arrangements and not double park outside the school. Management of expectations on what is no longer possible and sharing any issues via the parent council would be helpful. We are happy to help with any bigger issues at an authority-wide level.

Question - The roads within urban wards are not easy to manage without support. Can there be traffic wardens around the schools for the first few days to prevent inappropriate parking by parents?

Answer- Alistair Gaw will speak to transport colleagues to see if this is possible.

School Construction Projects

Question- Is there an update on nursery construction and procurement following the insolvency of CBC?

Answer- There is a procurement exercise ongoing for the projects affected by the collapse of CBC with an outcome report forthcoming. Realistically a new contractor on site by October would be a good outcome.

Question- Is there an update for the extension at Boroughmuir?

Answer- The tenders for this project were completed before the outbreak, and a report will be presented to Committee to agree the contract award. There is a delay of 6 to 8 months with the delivery looking likely for academic year 2021/22. Contingency arrangements will be put in place.

Question – Can you provide an update on the school construction projects?

Answer:

Broomhills Primary School – Valley Park Community Centre is ready to be used for P1, the new school will be ready in 2021.

Liberton Primary School – The temporary unit village will be onsite and ready for the return of pupils on 12 August.

Liberton High School – The building warrant is in place and officers have applied for planning permission for temporary units. There is no exact date for completion or delivery as yet but the school will be kept updated.

Queensferry High School is open, the school team are in the building setting up.

Fox Covert RC Primary School – There will be a delay in the planned rising rolls extension however the school will be able to manage this in the interim.

Royal High School – The temporary units will be delayed by 8 weeks, Drumbrae Hub has been set up as a contingency measure with transport in place from the school.

New primary school at Canaan Lane – We are hopeful the build will be complete for August 2021 and are awaiting the final detail from contractor. Refurbishment to Deanbank will not be completed within the expected timetable so this will require management within the school communities.

Bangholm Project – This was due to go out to tender before the outbreak and has therefore been delayed. We have agreed to progress with this project and a report will come to Committee for approval of the contract following the tender process

Question – When is the date of next meeting for Consultative Committee with Parents (CCWP)?

Answer- When the Education, Children and Families Committee recommences (presently paused due to COVID), we will set a date for the next CCWP to coincide with this. Should you feel a need for us to meet again sooner, please make Alex Ramage aware.

A vote of thanks was provided by Councillor Ian Perry for parents giving their time and feedback during this meeting. If there were any further questions, these were welcome to come to officers directly.

Decision

To agree a transcript of the questions and answers would be published online for the benefit of those who could not attend.