TEACHER PANEL

REMOTE AND ONLINE LEARNING

Purpose

1. This paper is intended to assist the Teacher Panel with its discussion in relation to remote learning.

Summary

2. Since the beginning of January 2021, the majority of learning in Scotland's schools has taken place on a remote basis. This is the second extended period of remote learning since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020. Learners in early learning and childcare to P3, and limited numbers of learners in S4-S6, have now returned to school. As per the First Minister's announcement on 23 February, there is the potential for P4-7 learners to return in March. For now, however, the majority of learners in P4-S3 continue to learn at home.

National support

3. Education Scotland, ADES and e-Sgoil have co-ordinated the National e-learning Offer since June 2020, featuring live, recorded and supported options. e-Sgoil provides a range of live, interactive programmes. West Partnership Online School (West OS) provides a bank of over 1,000 recorded lessons, and Education Scotland collates a range of online learning materials on behalf of practitioner subject networks

4. Glow, the national online learning environment, continues to experience high usage. Usage is higher now than in March 2020. During the month of January 2021, 534,000 unique users logged in to Glow over 15 million times. This compares with 563,000 unique users who accessed the service, logging in over 40 million times during the period March to June 2020 (when schools were closed). Whilst there were much-reported issues with MS Teams in the first few days of remote learning in January, the technical and support systems have generally operated well. During the week commencing 15 February, Glow saw just over 370,000 users, logging in 2.78 million times (a number of local authorities were on mid-term break).

Evidence from Education Scotland engagement with schools

5. In January 2021, the Deputy First Minister requested that HM Inspectors of Education (HMIE) develop a national overview of practice in the delivery of remote learning through engagement with local authorities, schools, parents, children and young people. Seven reports have been published to date.

6. HMIE's findings are as follows:

- Since January 2021, local authorities, schools and parents across Scotland have responded quickly to ensure children and young people continue learning during the period of lockdown.

- Local authorities and schools have built on what they have learned from the first lockdown, and have used the experience to consider, develop and implement new ways of working.

- Schools describe how staff have improved their skills in delivering remote learning, and have increased their confidence in the use of digital platforms.

- There is improved engagement with parents and carers, and this helps parents understand better the delivery of remote learning.

- Approaches developed by schools increasingly take account of remote learning entitlements and expectations.

- There has been a strong emphasis on supporting the health and wellbeing of children and their families. Schools understand the needs of children and young people and their families and focus strongly on pastoral support and monitoring wellbeing.

- Schools recognise the need for, and are taking steps to provide, a balance between online, digital learning and non-digital activities. They describe how the balance of live and independent learning has improved over the course of the current term. However, the balance varies within and across schools and fewer than half of parents believe that their child has a good balance of live learning and independent activity.

- While progress has been made in ensuring a broad range of learning, the breadth and depth of the curriculum remains variable. Schools are experiencing challenges in relation to practical subjects, and ensuring that learning is appropriate for those children and young people with complex additional support needs.

- Schools are using a variety of approaches to give learners feedback. Parents whose children are receiving regular feedback, describe the positive effect this has on their motivation and learning. However, the quality and quantity of feedback on children's and young people's work and progress is variable. Headteachers report that staff find providing appropriate, meaningful and timely feedback challenging.

- There are challenges in relation to the sufficiency and supply of information and computing technology resources, including devices and Wi-Fi access for all learners and staff. Where these exist, local authorities and schools provide families with access to digital devices and 'learning packs' to support children and young people to access remote learning.

- There are concerns about the demands and impact on staff, learners and parents of remote learning. This includes significant concerns about the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people; the long-term effect on children's and young people's education; balancing supporting remote learning with home working/caring responsibilities, and; the workload involved in planning learning, preparing recorded lessons and planning remote delivery.

Points for discussion

The Teacher Panel is invited to discuss the following:

- Reflections on the current experience of remote learning by school leaders, teachers, learners and parents.

- Areas where school leaders and teachers would welcome further support at local or national level.

- Potential opportunities to further develop the approach to remote learning in the post-pandemic environment i.e. the medium to long-term.

Scottish Government Learning Directorate & Education Scotland
March 2021

Additional references
Education Scotland: National e-learning offer
Education Scotland: Remote learning: National overview of practice reports