

Supporting the quality and effectiveness of the delivery of remote learning

Introduction

Before Christmas 2020, the First Minister announced that most school pupils would learn remotely, rather than in school, until Monday 18 January 2021. On 4 January 2021, the First Minister confirmed that school buildings will close to the majority of pupils until 1 February 2021. Arrangements for the period from Monday 1 February onwards will be communicated at the earliest opportunity following a review which will be undertaken on Monday 18 January.

Since March 2020 schools, local authorities and national bodies have been working to help ensure successful delivery of remote learning. Covid-19 has challenged everyone and the move to remote learning will provide its own set of challenges. As schools move into a further period of remote learning the shared national endeavour to ensure children

and young people access and participate in learning which is motivating, engaging and meets their learning needs remains. Continuing to work collectively to support practitioners to deliver high quality remote learning is paramount.

Education Scotland worked with partners and stakeholders to develop and publish national expectations for remote learning on Friday 8 January. This includes entitlements for children and young people during the period of remote learning.

To further support and improve the delivery of high quality and effective remote learning further work will be undertaken. This will include developing a national overview of practice. The purpose of the national overview is to:

- Learn what is working well and share this widely to celebrate success and support consistency in the quality and effectiveness of delivery of remote learning.
- Surface the challenges and/or issues so that these can be addressed either locally or nationally, as appropriate.
- Identify what further assistance is required to continue to improve the delivery of remote learning so that relevant support can be provided at local and/or national level.

In addition, there is also an opportunity to learn from the evidence about the delivery of high quality remote learning in the current context to help shape how we deliver remote learning experiences beyond Covid-19.

As remote learning evolves so too will the national overview of practice. It will be iterative and updated on an ongoing basis so that a picture of practice is built up over the duration of remote learning delivery.

Approach

A phased approach will be taken to creating the national overview of practice. Engagement with the system will adapt and develop in response to the strengths, areas for improvement and challenges that become apparent. Outlined below is the detail related to the first phase.



PHASE 1: 11-29 JANUARY 2021

Engagement with local authorities

Local authorities have the statutory responsibility for ensuring the quality of education provided by schools in their locality. As outlined in Educational Continuity (No.7) Direction:

‘Each education authority is required to provide education by way of remote learning to pupils who normally attend schools (except nursery schools or nursery classes) under the management of the education authority from 11 to 29 January 2021.’

Local authorities have already undertaken significant work to develop and put in place advice, guidance and support for schools to deliver remote learning. The local authority guidance will provide valuable information about the approach each local authority is taking to the delivery of remote learning and set the context for discussions and engagement with individual schools. Therefore, it makes sense that this is the first aspect to be explored as part of the national overview.

HM Inspectors of Education (HMIE) will engage with local authorities and review local authority planning and guidance for the delivery of remote learning during the week beginning 11 January 2021.

The focus of the review will be:

- to draw out common themes;
- exemplify approaches being used to address local need including local authority support; and
- identify any further support and any areas for improvement required.

The national overview report will be finalised and published by Friday 22 January 2021.

Engagement with schools

Schools have responsibility for planning, organising and delivering remote learning which meets the needs of all children and young people. Schools will be evaluating and reviewing their plans and practice on an ongoing basis to ensure that the delivery of remote learning is aligned to national and local guidance and the quality and effectiveness meets the needs and circumstances of learners. They will be taking action to secure continuous improvement in remote learning as they adapt practice and respond to feedback from learners and parents.

HMIE will start engaging with schools week beginning 18 January 2021.

The engagement will be brief online/telephone discussions about the delivery of remote learning. These discussions will focus on the following three aspects:

- talking about what is working in their own context;
- listening to concerns and any challenges; and
- learning what further support is needed.

The national overview report will be finalised and published by Friday 29 January 2021.

Further information about HMIE engagement with schools is contained within Appendix 1.

Engagement with parents and learners

It is crucial that we also gather views from learners and parents. National bodies will gather the views of learners and parents as part of phase 1. This may be through surveys, focus groups and information already gathered and/or being undertaken by local authorities as part of their own quality assurance arrangements. Further detail on this aspect will be developed over the next week.

The national overview report will be finalised and published by Friday 29 January 2021.

It is important to make best use of the findings to help support and improve the delivery of remote learning, as required. Following phase 1 the findings will be reviewed. The outcomes will direct the areas of focus of successive phases, should remote learning continue. This could, for example, be a role taken forward by the remote learning group currently being set up.

Actions may be based on particular areas identified through phase 1 such as:

- taking a closer look at the implementation of local authority planning and guidance; or
- exploring in more detail how the expectations and entitlements of remote learning set out in the advice published on 8 January 2021 are being embedded in practice.

Appendix 1

Principles of HMIE engagement with schools

There is clear acknowledgement that, right now, schools need to maintain their focus on planning, organising and delivering and evaluating remote learning for children and young people. As such, engagement with schools will be undertaken in a way that seeks to minimise burden and supports and enhances approaches to providing high quality learning experiences.

The following key principles apply to engagement with schools:

- HMIE will engage with a 5% sample of schools in all local authorities. This will include a combination of primary, secondary and special schools. Schools will be agreed in advance with local authorities.
- Engagement will be undertaken online or by telephone and will last between 30 - 45 minutes.
- There will be no ask of schools to provide anything, including documentation in advance or as part of the discussion.
- Engagement will comprise of professional dialogue and reflection with school leaders and, if possible, practitioners.
- The focus will be on the delivery of remote learning. The three areas that will be covered in the conversation are: what is working in your own context; what are your concerns and any challenges; and what further support do you need.
- There will be no direct observation of learning episodes or lesson delivery.
- It is not an inspection of an individual school and there will be no grading or individual school report.
- Evidence will be collated into one national overview report.
- Where effective practice is identified, HMIE will work with the school and local authority to capture this and share it more widely.