Supporting pupils and parents with learning at home
Guide for Early Learning and Childcare Settings and Schools
Updated December 2021

What schools can do to help

Improving outcomes for children and families remains a key focus for everyone during COVID-19. Education Scotland, Scottish Government, local authorities, third sector organisations, practitioners and partners involved in learning at home continue to work in close partnership on progressing this. It is really important that during the current COVID-19 crisis, practitioners are able to target their efforts towards approaches which will continue to have positive benefits on children's learning. This is particularly important when considering how best to support vulnerable and disadvantaged families in the community.

Schools are likely to be using a mixture of existing, adapted and new approaches to supporting parents to help their child's learning at home. Many of these approaches will already be having a positive impact on learning.

Early learning and childcare settings and schools may wish to consider the following suggestions when planning and reviewing their approaches to learning at home during COVID-19.

Communicating with pupils and parents

Early learning and childcare (ELC) settings/schools will already have existing methods that they used to communicate with parents and families. Continuing with existing platforms may not be possible.

ELC settings/schools should liaise with their Parent Council to identify the best platforms to communicate with pupils and parents to ensure they can access information and learning at home activities.

Online environments which are welcoming, positive, non-threatening and easily navigated can help increase parental engagement. Having numerous platforms may be confusing for parents.

Language and communication are common barriers to parental engagement. If a parent has English as an additional language or is not confident in literacy or communication, they may not be able to access a school or practitioner's attempts to engage them via letters, reports, newsletters or phone calls.

In addition, the language of education may be a barrier itself for parents and especially where families have different educational or cultural backgrounds.

ELC settings/schools should discuss and agree with their Parent Council, the approach to be taken to learning at home during COVID-19.

Keeping a log of children engaged in their learning will enable practitioners to follow up anyone who is unable to do so and put appropriate alternative arrangements in place. This may involve contacting agencies already involved with the family who may be better placed to help. Communications with parents to ensure they are kept informed of updates is important given the frequency of change in what can be challenging circumstances.

Many children have parents who live separately either through divorce or separation, or who never lived together. It is important – where possible – for parents to continue to share in supporting their child's learning during COVID-19.

Settings and schools are likely to take different approaches to meet the individual needs of their pupils. Ensuring families feel valued, understood and listened to is a vital component to developing and maintaining effective relationships.

**Supporting pupils and parents with learning at home
Guide for Early Learning and Childcare Settings and Schools
June 2020**

Supporting learning at home

ELC settings/schools should consider providing learning at home activities for pupils in a range of formats.

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to have easy access to devices such as laptops, tablets, iPads, Chromebooks or internet access. This greatly limits their ability to continue their learning at home.

Some families may have access to digital technology but not items such as pens, pencils, paper etc. ELC settings/schools should consider alternatives such as resource packs for any pupil who would benefit from this approach and/or who is unable to access their learning online.

ELC settings/schools should be aware that parents and families are dealing with a vast amount of information on a wide range of topics about COVID-19. Being a key work or balancing working from home along with supporting their child's learning at home can be overwhelming for many families.
Parents should be informed that they are not expected to take on the role of their child's teacher(s). Engaging in their child's learning can make a

big difference to how well they do.

Family learning and/or Community Learning and Development teams who already work with the families, may be able to assist with this.

Learning at Home can consist of one or more of the following:

- Play and physical activity
- General everyday family activities
- Worksheets
- Activities suggested by the teacher eg make something from recycled materials
- Food preparation and cooking
- Curriculum related activities
- Talking to other family members
- Reading and sharing books
- Learning outdoors, for example, pavement games, nature walks

Providing strategies to help parents support their child's learning according to the different age groups can help.

For younger children, this might include:

- Promoting activities that can be undertaken together such as reading or playing with letters and numbers
- Setting learning activities that can be easily managed by parents
- Encouraging parents to make their home a positive place for learning and leisure. Where pupils

do not have the item(s) they need to undertake they learning, parents should be encouraged to contact the ELC setting/school.

For older children this might include:

- Providing information to signpost parents to further information should their child need support with their learning.
- Encouraging the child to speak with their teacher(s) or peers regarding work they may be unsure about.

Supporting pupils and parents with learning at home
Guide for Early Learning and Childcare Settings and Schools
June 2020

Reporting to parents

Reporting and communicating with parents helps them to understand and be able to discuss their child's progress and share in their learning.

During COVID-19, it is particularly important for ELC settings/schools to identify and develop effective methods of reporting and communicating with parents and the wider parent forum (Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 Guidance).

Reporting to parents should be based on robust assessment, moderation, monitoring and tracking and continually look at improving the child's progress across the curriculum. During COVID-19, schools may be able to use the information they have until March along with their professional judgement to report to parents on their child's progress.

Consideration should also be given to methods of reporting to parents with additional support needs, literacy challenges, language barriers, disabilities and parents who do not live together.

Reassurance should be given to parents that once children start to return to school, their teacher will:

- spend time helping them to settle into the new routines; and
- work out where their child is in their learning and build from there.

School Improvement Planning

Schools and local authorities across Scotland will be at different stages in achieving the priorities set out in their 2019-20 improvement plans. These priorities may remain relevant for establishments and can be rolled forward.

It is essential that planning for 2020-21 focuses on recovery and continuity of provision under these changed circumstances. As with any planning, the views of interested parties including teachers, young people and parents should inform the planning process.

A significant focus of recovery planning will be the management of risk to support early learning and childcare settings and schools to reopen safely.

Settings, schools and local authorities will also need to focus on issues such as:

- supporting pupil and staff health and wellbeing;
- transitions at all levels;

- the impact of tragedy in communities;
- identifying gaps in learning; and
- a renewed focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap.

In particular, there should be a focus on what settings, schools and local authorities will seek to do when they re-open (in whatever form) to remedy any impact there has been around the widening of inequalities of outcome experienced by children and young people.

Supporting pupils and parents with learning at home
Guide for Early Learning and Childcare Settings and Schools
June 2020

In taking forward improvement in a new context, it will be important that recovery planning priorities are manageable, measurable and linked clearly to achievable outcomes for learners.

Staff will need to be supported to work in new ways, and it is essential that they are given the space and time to manage this in their local context.

As with any planning, recovery plans should build on where schools are now, using self-evaluation approaches to move forward.

During this crisis, it is clear that schools have been taking steps to keep in touch with, and seek the views of, interested parties including teachers, young people, and parents.

Schools and local authorities can use any feedback they have received to inform the planning process.

Further information for Early Learning and Childcare Settings and Schools:

Engaging parents and families: A toolkit for practitioners - https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/engaging-parents-and-families-a-toolkit-for-practitioners/

Learning at Home wakelet - https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/glowblogs/digilearn/remote/learning-at-home/

Family Learning Wakelet - https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/glowblogs/digilearn/remote/family-learning/

Parentzone Scotland website - https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/learning-at-home/covid19/