

## **Blended learning**

The following advice has been prepared by Education Recovery Group partners to support practitioners in preparing their models of blended learning for and during the Recovery Phase.

It provides broad expectations to help ensure we all have a shared understanding of what a model of blended learning means for schools and settings across Scotland. Practitioners will be able to apply this understanding to their own specific context and use it as a basis for professional engagement and development.

## **Principles of Curriculum for Excellence**

Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence helps our children and young people gain the knowledge, skills and attributes for life in the 21st century.

While the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has changed many things, our curriculum framework continues to apply. The core principles of Scotland's curriculum and the four fundamental capacities at its centre remain critical in putting learners at the heart of education.

During the [Recovery Phase](#), schools and settings will be adapting their learning and teaching, particularly during the initial phased return with a strong focus on children's wellbeing, good mental health, and engagement. Individual settings and practitioners will continue to be empowered to provide a curriculum that is adaptable and responsive to the full range of learners' needs, reflecting each school community's specific context.

Moving through recovery, the curriculum should include a focus on promoting and developing skills that will increase children's and young people's skills in independent learning, as part of the blended learning approach.

## **What is blended learning?**

Much of the research around blended learning has looked at the blend of face-to-face and online learning which has been utilised in colleges and universities for many years. It does, however, offer valuable insights as we develop our own blended learning approaches. For example, O'Connell (2016) offers seven sample configurations of blended learning activities that can help practitioners design their own approaches. This includes 'The Flipped Classroom', where learners are encouraged to undertake important aspects of learning before a face-to-face session with their teacher.

The Education Endowment Foundation published research by Rudd, et al. (2017) looking at the impact of a flipped classroom approach. They found that the approach led to +1 month of progress across 24 schools and 1,100 learners. This increased to +2 months progress in learners eligible for free school meals. Although this study was conducted within a traditional school model it may provide some helpful considerations for utilising remote learning while maximising the impact of face-to-face teaching as we move through and out of the Recovery Phase.

In a recent report, Doucet et al. (2020) explored pedagogy in an unfolding pandemic. They highlight the importance of prioritising health and wellbeing and the benefits of collaborative partnerships as well as the need to ensure appropriate resources are in place for both practitioners and learners.

It is recognised that a blended model in the context of restricted school time for learners, remains a significant challenge and is no substitute for full-time classroom based learning and teaching; nonetheless, delivered effectively a blended approach can at least mitigate some of the adverse impact of part-time in-school education.

For Scotland during the Recovery Phase, blended learning will not simply be a binary offer of a mix of in-school and online provision. Learners should undertake a blended model of in-school and in-home learning which extends well beyond online learning.

This model of blended learning involves a combination of 'live' interactions between teacher and learners, and also learning which takes place away from the direct presence of the class teacher. The model for blended learning may involve a range of learning experiences which take place in a variety of learning spaces, including outdoors.

Whilst learners will experience online learning, away from the school setting, blended learning will include activities such as research tasks, project work, practical opportunities, discussions and other activities that can be carried out away from a digital device. There should be an emphasis on active learning and children working independently.

Since learners may not have daily contact with their teacher, it is expected that learning at home activities will include provision of opportunities to consolidate learning and extend and enhance learning to take account of and meet the needs of learners and their families. This may be accommodated by providing access to pre-recorded lessons, presentations, lesson notes, diagrams or links to useful websites.

The involvement of a further range of partners, including community and third sector organisations to support beyond school provision has the potential to provide rich and varied learning experiences. Learners could benefit significantly from a range of relevant opportunities for personal achievement as well as deepening their understanding of concepts learned in school through application in real-life situations. Careful planning and good communication will be essential to ensure a coherent approach. Schools and local authorities should explore ways in which they can engage with partners, including those in youth work, culture and sport, who may be able to enrich the learning offer available for learners.

An effective model of blended learning can offer learners:

- significant autonomy over their learning
- a degree of flexibility for learners in where and when they learn
- potential for high quality consolidation of learning
- opportunities to develop and improve their skills in working independently
- increased opportunities for personalisation in learning
- opportunities for improved engagement
- enhanced parental engagement in their child's learning away from school .

**The aim of everyone across Scottish education is that all learners can return to full attendance as soon as it is safe to do so.** As we work towards this it is important to recognise the challenges of delivering a blended learning approach and how we address these. We also acknowledge that the challenges differ across stages and sectors.

**Key principles** for a blended learning model include:

- class teacher retains responsibility for planning and organising children's and young people's learning
- regular high quality face-to-face learning and teaching
- a shared understanding between home and school of the blended learning approach and the respective roles and responsibilities of all involved
- learning opportunities which reflect the principles of Curriculum for Excellence allowing learners to develop their knowledge, skills and attributes in a variety of relevant contexts
- key learning which is available for learners to revisit as often as necessary
- opportunities for learners to progress and extend their learning
- approaches to assessment of learning and providing feedback that support and capture children's and young people's achievements in school and at home
- ongoing dialogue, reflection and feedback with learners in relation to their own learning
- provision of learning activities to ensure engagement for all by considering the age and stage of development of learners who require additional support with learning and any learners who may be particularly vulnerable or disadvantaged
- partnership working with community providers and third sector organisations to support beyond school provision.

It will be important that we continue to build on the strong culture of collaboration that exists across Scotland strengthening this to ensure there are opportunities for schools, local authorities, Regional Improvement Collaboratives and national bodies to work together to support learning during the Recovery Phase.

Careful consideration needs to be given to the respective roles and responsibilities of the school, teacher, local authority and parents and carers. It will also be important to consider what support will be available across the system, including from Education Scotland, Regional Improvement Collaboratives and other national bodies. Aligning and coordinating this support is vital. ( Appendix 1).

## **Challenges of blended learning**

Effective use of blended learning offers both challenges and opportunities for practitioners, learners and parents. Learners may be in the school/setting for only part of the week. Practitioners will only be able to work on a 'live' basis with a proportion of the class at any one time. Given this class-based commitment time for practitioners to develop aspects of beyond school learning is an important consideration.

We need to be mindful of the impact of COVID-19 on our children and young people, many of whom may have suffered loss and trauma as a result. For all learners a key focus during the Recovery Phase needs to be health and wellbeing. It will be essential that blended learning approaches reflect this. Doucet et al (2020) describe the need to consider "Maslow before Bloom" during the first phase of the pandemic when schools closed and most of the learning that took place was remote. As we move into the Recovery Phase this will be no less important.

It will also be important that, given the limited time with learners, a didactic teaching model does not become the norm. Practitioners should have access to professional learning opportunities which supports them to understand and provide blended learning methodologies to ensure they are well equipped to support children's and young people's learning and achievements.

Spending less time in school may have a detrimental impact on progress in learning for some learners. Attention will need to be given to those learners who face disadvantage. Schools will need to carefully consider any steps which they can take to mitigate barriers to learning and engagement.

Practitioners will need to consider how they will plan most effectively for both the 'live' teaching and learning which they will deliver and the learning that will take place remotely. Learners will need to adapt to these new circumstances which may require them to complete tasks prior to working directly with their teacher and following these interactions.

While the nature of collaboration in learning is likely to change due to social distancing restrictions it will be important to explore ways in which learners can safely collaborate. Research by Rienties and Toetenel (2016) has suggested courses that are designed with social elements and communication tasks are significant predictors of academic retention.

## **Parents and carers and blended learning**

Parents and carers want the very best for their children. They are still not expected to be practitioners. Given the uncertainty of our times, it is crucial that parents and carers are as certain as they can be about what blended learning is, what it means for their children and how they can continue to contribute positively and effectively to their children's learning. Doucet et al (2020) highlight that good communication between home and school will be essential. "The method of communication must be one that is comfortable and familiar for students and their parents". It is crucial that

schools and local authorities communicate effectively with parents and carers on what this means in this context.

Crucially, we need to be crystal clear with parents on how blended learning differs from how things worked in schools **prior** to the summer break. It is important that parents are provided with the appropriate advice, support and communication from school in order to assist with learning away from school from August 2020. Engagement with parents and carers and adjustments to fit with their own circumstances and requirements will be important.

Although not all learning at home will be online or require the use of a digital device support will be digital, additional funding will be available for schools to support families that do not have digital devices or access to the internet.

It is essential that parents/carers receive information from the local authority and school regarding the plans they are putting in place, including access to online learning so they and their children know what to expect.

### **Advice for practitioners when planning for a blended learning approach**

The [Refreshed Narrative for Curriculum for Excellence](#) is a practical tool that will support schools when planning for a blended learning approach with the four capacities remaining at the heart of learning. Focus on learning across literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing will be the initial priority with increasing learning experiences across the four contexts. Cross-curricular linked themes, interdisciplinary learning (IDL) and play-based approaches will enrich the curriculum and be a useful bridge between learning in different spaces.

What constituted high quality learning, teaching and assessment six months ago and what constitutes high quality learning, teaching and assessment now has not changed. The professionalism of our workforce remains. We all remain committed to children's and young people's rights and positive relationships. We want our learners to be eager participants in their learning. Learning should be motivating, meaningful and enjoyable. It should also be well matched to children's and young people's needs and interests. It still remains important that learners understand the purpose of their learning and assessment remains integral to learning and teaching.

What has changed in this period is the way in which we are seeking to attain high quality experiences for our learners. It is vital that we adjust and tailor our approaches to help ensure the very best for all of our learners.

The [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Curriculum for Excellence in the Recovery Phase guidance](#), published on 5 June 2020, supports practitioners and other professional practitioners in preparing their curriculum offer for and during the Recovery Phase.

Helpful advice for planning online aspects of learning can be found in Education Scotland's [Learning and Teaching Online: Advice for Practitioners \(May 2020\)](#).

As is always the case, the class teacher retains responsibility for planning, organising and delivering children's and young people's learning. This new model of learning places demands on the class teacher. What requires greater clarity is how that learning which takes place away from the classroom will be planned and organised effectively. It is important that the class teacher is supported in aspects of planning and delivery by schools, local authorities, other professionals, Regional Improvement Collaboratives and national bodies.

## Organising learning

A good starting point when planning for learning is to consider how you might organise learning in a typical classroom situation i.e. under 'normal' circumstances. Where, in a classroom setting, the teacher is not working directly with a group of learners, what sort of activities would be planned for them? For example, many classrooms feature learning stations. In blended learning, can these 'stations' take place remotely, either online or through practical activities?

### More specifically:

- Which elements of this learning should be delivered face-to-face? Why?
- Which aspects of learning would be best suited to take place independently, away from the school/setting? Why?
- Are there activities and learning that can be done prior to face-to-face sessions to help learners become familiar with the topic or concepts, like the flipped classroom approach described earlier? Are there resources that can assist practitioners in this?
- Are there activities and learning that can take place after the face-to-face sessions to deepen understanding, reinforce and consolidate learning? Are there resources that can assist practitioners in this?
- How can we ensure learners, parents/carers and other professionals know what is expected in learning beyond the school?
- What resources can be provided that will help learners to revisit, apply and deepen their learning?
- Can carefully planned IDL challenges engage learners and enrich learning experiences?
- Can the benefits of play and outdoor learning be maximised to offer opportunities both in terms of engagement and wellbeing?

When considering the above it will be important to ensure activities are appropriate to the age and stage of learners . [Realising the ambition: Being Me \(Nation practice guidance for early years in Scotland\)](#) encourages practitioners to consider learning spaces, interactions and experiences. The same considerations can be helpful when planning learning for older learners.

Appendices 2 and 3 provide some scenarios.

## Personalised learning

Just as in classroom learning, activities, support and resources to be used away from the school/setting should be differentiated to meet the needs of learners. Where these offer the opportunity to build on, extend and apply previous classroom learning, this is likely to be more successful.

## References:

O'Connell, A. (2016). *Seven blended learning models used today in higher ed.*

Rudd, P., Villaneuva, A., Aguilera, A. B., Elliott, L. and Chambers, B. (2017). *MathsFlip: Flipped Learning Evaluation report and executive summary* Retrieved from [https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Projects/Evaluation\\_Report\\_s/Flipped\\_Learning.pdf](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Projects/Evaluation_Report_s/Flipped_Learning.pdf)

Doucet, A., Netolicky, D., Timmers, K. and Tuscano, F.J. (2020). *Thinking about Pedagogy in an Unfolding Pandemic An Independent Report on Approaches to Distance Learning During COVID 19 School Closures* Retrieved from [https://issuu.com/educationinternational/docs/2020\\_research\\_covid-19\\_eng](https://issuu.com/educationinternational/docs/2020_research_covid-19_eng)

Rienties, B. and Toetenel, L. (2016). *The impact of learning design on student behaviour, satisfaction and performance: a cross-institutional comparison across 151 modules. Computers in Human Behaviour, 60pp 333-341* Retrieved from <http://oro.open.ac.uk/45383/>

## Appendix 1

Different support available through all levels of the system to help learners experience consistency in teaching and learning provision.

### Classroom

- Adapt medium term planning models to align with attendance model of learners/classes to reflect blended learning approaches with models to assess learning and impact.
- Develop learning activities to consolidate new concepts/skills before and/or after initial face to face teaching.
- Ensure a strong focus on health and wellbeing, literacy and numeracy.
- Develop and design IDL projects to ensure longer term learning outcomes are available to underpin and extend learning tasks.

### School

- Develop a curriculum which is aligned with **Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence** in the Recovery Phase.
- Maintain an overview of learning to ensure consistency in the range and quality of activities for learning at home.
- Deepen and extend multi agency community partnerships to create a beyond school offer for vulnerable learners.
- Produce clear communication to parents on school model and offer for learners/parents.

### Local authority

- Develop a local authority offer to support localised blended learning models.
- Deliver local materials/platforms for to support curriculum and learning.
- Develop a multi agency approach for the most vulnerable learners and those who require additional support.
- Extend focus of targeted and individual support for schools to develop blended learning support as appropriate.

### Regional Improvement Collaborative

- Use collaborative networks to support leaders and practitioners.
- Extend regional curriculum support materials.
- Develop regional offer/platform to share best practice in blended learning.

### National

- Extend national webinar offer to support professional learning, share best practice and support leadership.
- Extend joint webinars across national bodies on key aspects of the range of available pathways, including NQ courses, units and apprenticeships over session 2020-21.
- Extend Scotland Learns to provide a resource bank of learning at home activities for literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, and themed/IDL to support teachers deliver a blended model of learning for broad general education.
- Establish a shared project offer with the Lego Foundation to support creative learning beyond school.
- Launch national ESgoil/Education Scotland/ADES e-learning provision to support in-school and remote learning planned through local authorities and schools within the blended learning environment during the Recovery Phase in session 2020-21. Initially focused on senior phase, with live, interactive lessons complementing the work of teachers and schools.
- Continue to support the delivery and assessment of SQA qualifications through use of existing teacher support materials on the Understanding Standards Website and develop additional materials as required through use of SQA Academy.
- Promote and extend SQA Ushare - open learning resources.
- Share on a national platform effective practice in supporting a blended model of learning.



## Appendix 2

### Some possible scenarios

#### Scenario 1

Millie is in Primary 3 and is learning to tell the time using half past, quarter past and quarter to using analogue and digital 12 hour clocks. Her teacher has provided a study pack for Millie to use at home which makes use of some of the learning activities from Scotland Learns. Millie writes down a list of the times she sees on various clocks around her house and local area and brings these to school with her. Her teacher works with Millie's group to discuss the different ways in which time can be displayed explaining that some clocks use a 24 hour format and the relationship between digital and analogue times. Children work together to change the digital times to analogue and vice versa. Following her in-school learning, Millie continues with activities from the study pack and creates a timetable for her dream day displaying times in both analogue and digital. Millie's teacher uses this as part of her assessment evidence to plan future learning.

#### Scenario 2

Bikram is an S1 Pupil who has been identified as having dyslexia. He has been given access to a Chromebook and his parents have been shown how to use some digital 'teachnology' such as Immersion Reader so he can access these tools at home as well as in school. He has been developing his listening and talking skills. At home, he logs on to his class website. He watches a pre-recorded lesson from his English teacher which provides video clips of persuasive speeches. The video offers opportunities to pause and take notes. Bikram uses web links which his geography teacher has provided to research the topic of climate change. He drafts a persuasive talk on climate change and emails this to his English teacher for feedback. He practices his persuasive talk at home with his parents and later attends class and delivers his talk. He receives feedback from his teacher and classmates.

#### Scenario 3

Tommy is an S6 pupil with complex needs. He is preparing to leave school and is engaging in a range of transition activities. With the support of his parents, he explores a range of photos and videos of his future college destination. Back in school, his teacher helps him to make a journal which documents his achievements in school and together they create a social story about leaving school to read and talk about at home. He uses a chat board to convey his feelings about his next steps. These activities contribute to his SQA Professional Development National Course.

#### Scenario 4

Amir is an S5 student studying higher physics. He has a comprehensive course outline provided by his teacher and attends class for two periods per week. During these lessons his teacher works with him to develop his core skills. Home learning activities are planned via a digital platform where assignments are posted and there are opportunities to engage in class discussions. Regular feedback is provided as well as opportunities for one-to-one support.

## Scenario 5

As part of an activity with community learning and development (CLD) staff Elena and her group take photographs at the local park. They use these photographs in class with their teacher to explore the characteristics of living and non-living things. Their teacher provides a study pack for them to use at home allowing them to revisit their learning. As part of her home learning Elena completes a poster categorising living and non-living things using her photographs. During her next lesson she presents her poster to her group and receives feedback from her teacher and her peers. These activities contribute to her SQA accreditation.

## Appendix 3

A possible approach to organising learning used the approach by The Education Endowment Foundation

**Focus:** Numeracy and mathematics - shape, position and movement - first level timescale 2/3 weeks

### In-school learning activities

#### Activate

Activities and discussions take place to check prior knowledge and understanding. For example: can children sort shapes according to their properties - straight, round, flat and curved.

#### Explain

Discussion which focuses on prompting the names of 2D shapes and classifying the properties, recognising these shapes in different contexts. This can be done in the classroom or outdoors

#### Practice

Provide opportunities to practise and demonstrate knowledge before a period of learning at home. Depending on individual needs some children will require additional support or challenge. This will help to determine what children will need

#### Home kits

Consider the materials that will be needed to practise these skills at home – paper, pens, reflection log or learning journey folder.

Consider how to support children that will need extra support/extra challenge. This might include working with peers/a check-in call at home from support staff/online resources/concrete materials to take home.

### At home learning activities and reflection

Practise the strategies and skills at home, develop independence, encourage creativity and personalisation and choice.

#### Home challenge – creating a collection of shapes

Children might choose just one shape or several. They might choose to present their findings as a poster, a shape diary, a series of photos or create a collage from natural materials or from art materials. They might look for shapes in nature/in their environment/in magazines or books.

#### Watch at home - BBC Numberblocks Series 3: Flatland

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b0bp2qlb/numberblocks-series-3-flatland>

A 5-minute programme consolidates the names and properties of 2D shapes. Follow up activity might be to encourage learners to draw the shapes they have seen or to look for them around their homes.

### **Outdoor learning – looking for 2D shapes in garden, street, park**

Children could make a tally of the different shapes of windows they can see when outdoors – how many are squares, rectangles, circles ?

They could gather together sticks, leaves, bark to make their own 2D shapes (take a photo or draw in journal)

Children might want to access additional activities

<https://creativestarning.co.uk/c/maths-outdoors/> for more ideas

### **Shape challenge**

Children could create your own shape challenge in preparation for discussing/playing with their peers for when they are back in school. This might be drawing shapes and asking peers to name them, making cards for shape snap, a quiz.

### **Reflect**

At home children could reflect on what went well, what were the challenges, what they would do differently. They might want to record in reflection log or learning journey folder with parent/carer. This could be shared with the teacher and discussed when back in school.

### **Back in school –learning activities**

#### **Reflect**

Children share successes and challenges with staff or peers as recorded in reflection log.

#### **Practice**

Children take part in the shape challenges created by their peers.

#### **Review**

Staff and learners add comments to reflection log or learning journey folder/learning log. Together create next steps.