

During the Covid-19 national emergency the 'Education Recovery Year' the main priority for all schools is to support all the pupils who have suffered because of 'lockdown'. This is not a 'normal' school year and many of the tasks that have been expected of schools should be stood down in preference of supporting teaching and learning.

School Priorities

The school priorities during the Education Recovery Year should be directly focussed upon enhancing teaching and learning and the challenges that will be faced this year. The priorities this year should be

- Empowering teachers to focus on teaching and learning by removing bureaucratic and less important tasks
- Embedding teacher professional judgement particularly at national qualification level
- Enhancing ICT capabilities of all teachers including the dedicated provision of the latest IT equipment for all teachers

Continuing Professional Development

Teachers should focus on working towards the school priorities as listed above. The employer should be seeking to ensure a wide range of professional learning development opportunities.

Working Time Agreements

Working Time Agreements (WTA) exist as a tool to help control workload. They are usually negotiated with 190 hours of collegiate time being allocated to a range of essential activities. The SSTA advises that schools should review the existing WTA with the sole purpose of reallocating time to assist direct impact upon teaching and learning within the classroom. This will require a strict review of essential and non-essential duties. The areas for review are:

Staff/Departmental Meetings

All staff and departmental meetings must only take place when genuine professional discussion is required. A meeting should not be used for briefing or the disseminating of information to staff. Schools should use weekly briefing sheets for such purposes. In many cases the number of meetings should be reduced.

Meetings must only take place in areas where 2 metre physical distancing measures have been implemented. Where possible these meetings should be conducted remotely ensuring staff safety. Members cannot be compelled to breach the 2 metre physical distancing requirement. If it is not safe do not take part.

Tracking and Monitoring

Schools should not be seeking to introduce new or enhanced tracking and monitoring arrangements during this school year. Schools should be seeking to reduce the number of tracking and monitoring exercises to allow teachers to focus on teaching and learning.

Pupil Reports

The tracking and monitoring process were introduced to provide sufficient pupil information for parents. Over bureaucratic and time consuming reporting systems should not be carried out this year. No school should be extending the existing report or introducing additional reports.

Parent Meetings

SSTA recommends that due to safety reasons schools should be advising parents that parent meetings (physically or remotely) will not be taking place this school year. Teachers will continue to contact parents by email or telephone should they need to raise concerns regarding their child. Parents will also continue to contact schools should they have concerns.

In-Service Days

Forthcoming in-service day should be focussed on teaching and learning, and planning or implementing arrangements that make schools safer in light of covid-19. Teachers should be empowered to identify areas for development and plan the days appropriately.

Staff gatherings must only take place in areas where 2 metre physical distancing measures have been implemented. Working from home should be encouraged.

Classroom Observations

Observation is not essential to quality assurance and adds unnecessary risk to staff and pupils. Our recommendation is that it takes places only in exceptional circumstances (e.g. fitness to teach procedures) or where there is a requirement to carry out observation in connection with the support and assessment of probationary and student teachers. Strict safety protocols must be in place in such circumstances.

Visitors to Schools

All visitors to schools should be for essential purposes, restricted and be subject to risk assessments to ensure they and the school community remains safe. There should be restricted access to designate safe areas with 2 metre physical distancing and cleaning measures in place. Visitors would include all local authority staff, Education Scotland staff and pupils from other schools as part of a consortium arrangement.

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