



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE

John Swinney MSP  
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for Education and Skills

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Dear Deputy First Minister,

Thank you for giving evidence at the Education and Skills Committee on 3 February 2021 on both additional support needs and the impact of coronavirus on education. The Official Report of that meeting can be read here:

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=13103&mode=pdf>

The Committee has agreed to follow up a number of issues with you, both in relation to additional support needs and in relation to the impact of coronavirus on education. As you will know, the Committee will be publishing a legacy paper before the end of the parliamentary session, and it is likely that the Committee will reflect on both of these issues as part of this paper.

### **Additional support needs**

During the meeting, Ross Greer MSP asked about the possibility of school staff working with pupils with additional support needs being prioritised for vaccination. You confirmed that you had “written to directors of education to ask them to identify the staff who support young people with complex needs, including through tasks that are equivalent to health and social care types of activity, so that they can be included in the group of staff who, under JCVI criteria, are already eligible for vaccination”. The Committee would welcome confirmation of how you and the Education Recovery Group will monitor the interpretation of this guidance across different local authority areas to ensure that those staff are identified and vaccinated in line with JCVI criteria.

The Committee would also welcome confirmation of whether the OECD is looking particularly at additional support needs – including the findings of the Morgan Review – as part of its ongoing wider review of the curriculum for excellence.

## **Coronavirus and education**

The Committee would welcome confirmation of how many tutoring partnerships, including both group tutoring and one-to-one interactive tutoring partnerships, have been set up with pupils through the national e-Sgoil scheme.

The Committee acknowledges that timelines may change depending on the course of the pandemic. However, the Committee asks for a provisional timeline, based on what is currently anticipated, of the key dates for Senior Phase pupils studying towards National Qualifications this year. In particular, the Committee is keen to understand how the dates for the provision of estimates, publishing of results and the anticipated timeframe for appeals fit with the admissions processes for further and higher education places.

During the evidence session, Alex Neil MSP asked about measures being taken to support P7 pupils in their transition to secondary school. The Committee would welcome any information that can be provided on how pupils making the transition from P7 to S1 this year will be supported, as well as confirmation of any work underway to understand and address the potential long-term impact of the disruption caused by the pandemic to learning in primary education.

Finally, for your information, the Committee has written to the SQA to ask for confirmation of when the full suite of guidance for Higher and Advanced Higher subjects will be published, and how the guidance will clearly communicate both to staff and to pupils the methodology for assessment, as well as asking for more information on the scheduling of practical work for assessments.

We ask that a response is provided by Tuesday 2 March to inform the Committee's final meetings before parliamentary recess.

Yours sincerely

**CLARE ADAMSON MSP**  
**CONVENER**