



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



Daniel Johnson MSP

Mr John Swinney MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills
Education and Skills
Scottish Government
St. Andrews House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Our Ref: DJ8762

22 June 2020

Dear John

Re: South Edinburgh Parents' Concerns Regarding Blended Learning Plans

We are writing to relay the acute concerns and issues that parents across south Edinburgh have raised with us regarding the “Blended Learning” plans for the next academic year. On Friday 19th June, we held a virtual meeting with representatives invited from parent councils for all the schools across our constituencies. We would ask that you review the points raised and set out how you will address them.

It is almost impossible for schools and councils to reconcile the 50% learning target set with the 2m social distancing rule. Some pupils are being offered just one day a week of classroom teaching.

In summary, the representatives raised serious concerns about adequacy and practicality of the blended learning plans communicated set out by the Scottish Government and Edinburgh Council. Parents voiced frustration that the in-school time was inadequate with significant impacts on attainment for individual pupils and attainment inequality across the school population. Based on the experience over the last 3 months, serious concern was raised concerning the adequacy of at home element of learning, both in terms of quality of content and also effective use of technology. There is significant evidence from the parents that the take-up is small, particularly in the areas where educational attainment is hardest hit.

Finally, serious concern was raised about the lack of consideration for wrap around childcare- parents expressing anxiety about their ability to return to work while restricted schooling was in place.

Daniel Johnson MSP

MSP for Edinburgh Southern

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A full detailed list of the points raised is attached at the end of this letter. There was understanding that developing plans for a return to schooling is not straight forward. However, parents were clear that the council must develop a plan that enables more time in schools and that the Scottish Government must ensure that the resource and guidance is in place to enable this.

Parents do not feel their views have been sought nor taken into consideration we are sure that you will want to correct this situation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniel".A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ian Murray".

Daniel Johnson MSP
Edinburgh Southern

Ian Murray MP
Edinburgh South

A summary of the points raised are as follows:

1. Capacity concerns and the use of alternative additional buildings;
2. Will social distancing guidelines be reduced from 2m to 1m;
3. What about the other 50% of education;
4. Wrap around care for parents, many of whom will be trying to return to work;
5. Will Edinburgh schools now open on Fridays;
6. The need for more standardised quality work and teacher contact;
7. How will teachers cope with maximum capacity in schools and where will they get the time to do the blended learning;
8. Could school transitions be done now in very small groups to help with transition;
9. Worries around vulnerable children, who may need more support;
10. The attainment gap is already a huge issue for many schools. What will be done to address that;
11. SQA exams which have been cancelled but the pupils are expected to sit them next year after only 33% learning with their peers;
12. Why are we not embracing technology;
13. Can the private schools offer any assistance or advice to help in Edinburgh;