

ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE 12 AUGUST 2021

EVALUATION OF THE REMOTE LEARNING OFFER

REPORT BY KELLY MCINTOSH, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

ABSTRACT

This report provides Committee with an evaluation of the Remote Learning Offer available across all Angus schools during the periods when our children and young people were learning at home.

1. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Children and Learning Committee:

- (i) Reviews the evaluation of the Angus Council Remote Learning Guidance
- (ii) Notes that all Angus Primary and Secondary schools provided a high-quality remote learning offer.
- (iii) Notes the 'next steps' planned to further develop Angus Council's remote and digital learning offer.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/COUNCIL PLAN

2.1 This report is related to the following local outcomes as stated in the Community Plan 2017-2030:

- Local Outcome 4 – The best start in life for children
- Local Outcome 5 – More opportunities for people to achieve success
- Local Outcome 6 – Improved physical, mental and emotional health, and wellbeing

and in the Council Plan 2019 to 2024: Priority 2:

- We want to maximise inclusion and reduce inequalities

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 In March 2020, following a decision by Scottish Government to close all schools, the majority of our children and young people were required to learn at home. School staff, children, young people and parents very quickly moved to 'remote learning'. At the same time our childcare hubs provided face-to-face support and learning for identified groups of children and young people.

3.2 In January 2021 Scottish Government issued remote learning guidance ([link](#)). Angus Council used this guidance to inform and update local guidance (appendix A). In February 2021 the Angus Council remote learning guidance was reported to the Children and Learning Committee ([Report 39/21](#) refers). Recommendation (iv) of this report requests that:

the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning undertakes an evaluation of remote learning and presents a report of findings once schools have reopened.

4. CURRENT POSITION

In February 2021 Angus Virtual School (AVS) engaged with all Primary and Secondary school leaders to capture and analyse progress made in remote learning and to encourage professional dialogue around how best to utilise new skills and approaches.

DESIGN OF THE REVIEW

- 4.1 The Remote Learning Guidance (Appendix A) provided benchmarks to evaluate the learning experience of all Angus children and young people during the second period of lockdown 05 January 2021 – 22 February 2021.
- 4.2 Structured, reflective discussions took place in the form of TRIAD/QUAD meetings. Each meeting was attended by Senior Leadership Team Members from three or four different schools, a member of the AVS Team and a Digital Learning Officer (DLO). The template for discussion made explicit links to the National Frameworks: [GTCS Professional Standards for Leadership and Management](#) and [How Good is Our School \(4th Edition\)](#)
- 4.3 The rationale for the TRIAD/QUAD meetings was:
- To provide an opportunity to exchange ideas and practice regarding remote learning
 - To ensure that the Angus Remote Learning offer met local and national expectations
 - To identify any further support required to deliver a high-quality remote learning experience for all our learners

The review discussion template allowed responses from each school to be collated and provided a range of both quantitative and qualitative data which was used as part of the evaluation of progress.

- 4.4 For this second period of school closure almost all schools conducted online surveys with their children and young people and parent groups. Others spoke directly with parents. A summary analysis of this survey data from individual schools was also used as part of the overall evaluation of remote learning and is captured in the findings noted below.

FINDINGS

- 4.5 The evaluation of remote learning generated a number of key findings. These findings are summarised below (full position statement see appendix B):

The Learning Offer

- All schools had a weekly timetable for remote learning in place for all learners
- All schools differentiated learning experiences in literacy, numeracy and one other curricular area daily
- All learners were provided with a range of purposeful structured tasks to complete
- All looked after/accommodated children were offered a place in school and almost all who chose to learn remotely, maintained good engagement and communication links with their school
- All Government funded devices were issued to identified families and any spare devices in schools were distributed to ensure equity of opportunity. Angus Council also provided MiFi devices when support was required to reduce barriers in connectivity
- Paper-based learning packs were also made available to learners including key resources children may have required to access their learning e.g. Keys to Literacy characters, textbooks, worksheets and other resources.
- Some Secondary Schools opened their library services to allow young people access to core textbooks and learning materials while others digitised these and made them available via their schools chosen platform e.g. Google Classroom
- Staff consistently showed a willingness to undertake professional learning, working as part of a team to develop their digital knowledge and skills. As part of whole school development some staff completed the M.E.C (Microsoft Education Centre) course and or attained their Google Level 1 & 2 in order to enhance the remote learning offer.
- Some young people accessed e-sgoil digital learning platform, made available by Western Isles Council, to support course work

- Some families accessed the Angus Home Learning Portal, developed by Digital Learning Officers, to support their children's learning and access policies and guidelines.

Engagement with Children, Young People and Families

- Almost all staff felt that communication with families had improved
- Almost all learners had at least weekly opportunities to take part in live interactions with their teachers, to discuss lessons and tasks, gather feedback and ask any related questions.
- A representative from the Senior Leadership Team across all schools called vulnerable families to 'check in' and offer additional support. In secondary schools this was often undertaken by a Principal Teacher Pupil Care and Support.
- In all schools staff worked in partnership with colleagues in social work and health; and third sector organisations to ensure that families received additional support as required.
- Almost all schools conducted digitised surveys to gain insight into the views of families and some created weekly community bulletins to keep everyone updated around ongoing changes
- In all schools class teachers monitored learner engagement on a weekly basis and contacted/supported families where engagement was low
- All Senior Leadership Teams monitored the quality of learning provided

Views of Stakeholders

- Almost all children in Primary schools reported missing their friends and teacher during lockdown
- All learners, who responded, asked stated they liked going on the 'live' meets
- Almost all parents/carers who responded, positively acknowledged the work done by teaching staff
- Almost all parents who responded, commented positively about the on-going feedback provided to their children via electronic platforms such as MS Teams, Google Classroom, Seesaw and Class Dojo
- A few parents expressed appreciation on the provision of specialist resources such as robots to support learning for children with additional support need
- Almost all learners felt they had been provided with the resources they needed
- Almost all learners who responded stated receiving feedback from their teachers increased their motivation to learn

CONCLUSION

- 4.6 The evaluation suggests that, the learning offer across Angus Schools improved in quality from the initial lockdown period. Staff had meaningfully reflected on what went well and what required improvement to better meet the needs of all learners.

Staff highlighted the benefits of a flipped learning approach, i.e. where learners could access teaching inputs prior to being with the teacher. This enabled valuable teacher time, being used to explore topics in greater depth and create meaningful learning opportunities with a focus on feedback.

- 4.7 AVS responded timeously to requests for support from schools. The DLO Team, currently funded by Tay Regional Improvement Collaborative (TRIC) monies, were an integral and a highly impactful part of the support offered to schools. As well as on-going support to school leaders and class practitioners they developed a YouTube video on, 'Providing Effective Feedback to Learners Online' which was accessed by range of school staff. Children and Young People commented that they felt a higher level of appreciation and motivation to learn due to the increased teacher feedback, specifically when this was delivered verbally.

- 4.8 Education Scotland conducted a National review of practice in remote learning. Angus Council's approach to assuring the quality of remote learning was recognised as good practice and published as a [Case Study](#) on Education Scotland's National Improvement Hub

NEXT STEPS

- 4.9 Angus Council is committed to the further development of our remote learning offer as we move beyond our response to the pandemic. At the time of writing, schools are scheduled to reopen in full in August 2021, however digital learning and teaching remains a key element of curriculum delivery. Angus Council will work with TRIC colleagues to develop a Tayside-wide

digital learning strategy. The Council's DLO Team will contribute to the delivery of the digital learning strategy in session 2021/22, including professional learning opportunities for all school staff.

- 4.10 The Scottish Government has confirmed a commitment to provide a device for every child and young person attending school. At this time no further details are available regarding this offer however once information becomes available staff in the ELL Directorate will work closely with colleagues in the IT service to progress this. There are a number of implications linked to this offer, including the actual supply of devices and the ability of existing internet infrastructure to support a significant increase in the number of devices being used in school.
- 4.11 All schools will continue to engage with all learners and families to ensure that their remote learning offer meets the needs of all.
- 4.12 The AVS Team will continue to support schools to continuously evaluate the quality of digital learning through the effective use of the locally produced quality indicator 2.3 Learning, Teaching and Assessment rubric.

5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Children and Learning Committee review the evaluation of the remote learning offer.
- 5.2 It is proposed that the Children and Learning Committee notes that all Angus Primary and Secondary schools provided a high-quality remote learning offer.
- 5.3 It is proposed that the Children and Learning Committee notes the 'next steps' planned to further develop Angus Council's remote and digital learning offer.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The DLO Team is funded for session 2021/22 using monies from the TRIC.
- 6.2 There will be financial implications linked to the implementation of a device for every child and young person attending school. At this time no further details are available. An update will be provided to the Committee once further information is available.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried and is attached.

NOTE: The background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) which were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report are:

- [Report 39/21](#)
- [National overview of practice in remote learning – Education Scotland](#)

REPORT AUTHOR:

EMAIL DETAILS:

List of Appendices:

- A) Remote Learning Guidance
- B) Remote Learning Position Statement

APPENDIX A



Schools and Learning Remote learning guidance for schools January 2021

In support of the national move to learning at home commencing on 11 January 2021, this document highlights the updated key expectations which have been added to the Blended Learning guidance produced by the AVS team in June 2020. The key expectations have been informed by feedback from learners, parents and staff and aim to support continuous improvement and consistently high standards across all schools.

The arrangements in each school will vary depending upon the context and in some cases will exceed the key expectations outlined below. Other schools may need to work towards meeting these expectations and where this is the case Head Teachers should encourage staff to access the resources and exemplification signposted below and should contact the Digital Learning Team for support (dlo@angus.gov.uk).

Definitions

Remote Learning: the term used to describe when learners and teachers are not physically present together in the traditional classroom environment. Most children and young people will learn at home for the duration of the lockdown period while others will spend some or all their time in school.

Delivery of learning at home: teaching staff will deliver all learning plans and approaches as agreed at school level. Other school staff may also be part of the planned support to pupils at home.

Delivery of learning in school: pupils who are accessing schools will be supported by designated staff to access the same remote learning offer as their peers. This will be organised at school level depending on individual school circumstances.

'Live' teaching: Google Classroom/Meet and Microsoft Teams can be used through the Glow portal to support blended learning. This allows teachers to share materials/ presentations on their computer with learners, as they talk through key concepts.

Pre-recorded lessons: lessons are recorded and shared with pupils online e.g. Adding narration/video to an existing PowerPoint presentation.

Resources

[#AngusDigiLearn](#)

This site is for staff and contains support videos for each of the platforms to be used for remote/blended learning.

[Angus Home Learning](#)

This site is available for parents/carers and students.

[West OS tile](#) - An online teaching resource has been added to all launchpads and permissions updated for teaching staff and students. A 'how to' guide has been created and uploaded within the #AngusDigiLearn site for staff.

<http://www.e-sgoil.com/covidprovision/> - resources available for senior phase.

Key expectations – Primary/ ELC

- All learners and parents have a timetable for remote learning which provides a weekly overview of the planned learning
- Daily literacy, numeracy and one other curricular area
- Lessons may be delivered 'live' **or** include pre-recorded teaching inputs using video, narrated PowerPoint/slides or similar. Advice on 'live' delivery can be accessed on the Glow/AVS/Teacher Professionalism tile
<https://glowscotland.sharepoint.com/sites/AngusCouncil/AVS/TP/SitePages/Home.aspx>
- Lessons include a task which may vary between websites/ games, written work, discussion and activity (age and stage appropriate)
- Regular interaction between learners and teacher to discuss the lessons/ tasks and related questions/ feedback
- Staff should be supported to *work towards* a weekly 'live' interaction (video or audio only) where appropriate
- Weekly feedback to each learner to acknowledge the learning they have undertaken, to offer support and to identify goals.
- Class teachers monitor learner engagement and make early contact with families to offer support where engagement is low
- SLT monitor planned learning and the delivery of remote learning

Key expectations – Secondary

- All learners and parents have a timetable or weekly overview for remote learning
- In secondary schools this could be the usual class timetable or an adapted version depending on the school arrangements
- Lessons provided for each subject or curricular area
- Lessons may be delivered 'live' **or** include pre-recorded teaching inputs using video, narrated PowerPoint/slides or similar. Advice on 'live' delivery can be accessed on the Glow/AVS/Teacher Professionalism tile
<https://glowscotland.sharepoint.com/sites/AngusCouncil/AVS/TP/SitePages/Home.aspx>
- Lessons include a task which should vary between online tasks, written work, discussion and practical activity
- Regular opportunities for interaction between learners and teachers to discuss the lessons/ tasks and related questions/ feedback
- Teachers should be supported to *work towards* a weekly 'live' discussion (video or audio only) where appropriate for the subject and learners
- Weekly feedback to each learner to acknowledge the learning they have undertaken, to offer support and to identify goals
- Class teachers monitor learner engagement and report any concerns to PT/SLT/PCS at an early stage in line with each school's arrangements
- SLT monitor planned learning and the delivery of remote learning

REMOTE LEARNING IN ANGUS: POSITION STATEMENT

Background

The Covid-19 pandemic has required teachers to plan how to educate children and young people at a time when schools were closed to most learners. There were two lockdown periods (March - July 2020 and January – March 2021), where schools were closed, with only vulnerable children and the children of key workers permitted to attend.

In June 2020, [Blended Learning: A Guide for Schools in Angus](#) was created by Angus Virtual School (AVS) and shared with all schools. This was updated in December 2020: [Blended Learning: A Guide for Schools in Angus](#) and includes: [Remote Learning Guidance for Schools](#). The guidance aligned with national guidance issued by Education Scotland. It provided clear expectations and exemplification regarding blended learning and sought to promote a consistent approach across all schools in Angus. The document recognised that:

“Digital Learning is an important aspect of Curriculum for Excellence; therefore, schools will continue to build on the development of digital skills to enhance learning in the long term”.

AVS engaged with all schools in February 2021 to capture and analyse the progress made in remote and blended learning and to encourage professional dialogue around how best to utilise new skills and approaches developed during this challenging time.

Methodology

Structured, reflective discussions took place in the form of TRIAD/QUAD meetings. Each meeting consisted of 2-4 Senior Leadership Team Members from different schools, a member of the AVS Team and a Digital Learning Officer. The template for discussion made explicit links to National Frameworks: **GTCS Professional Standard for Leadership & Management** and **How Good is Our School (4th Edition)**

The rationale was shared as follows:

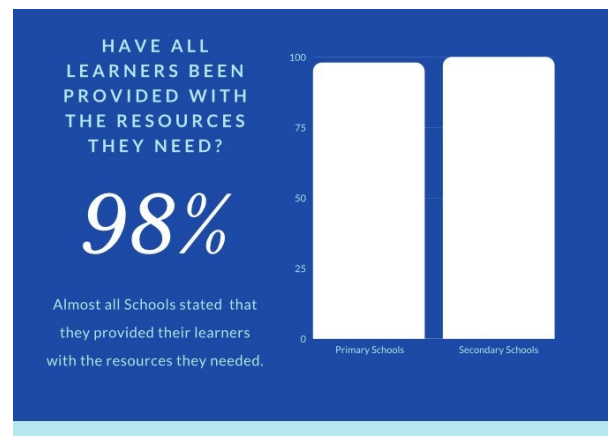
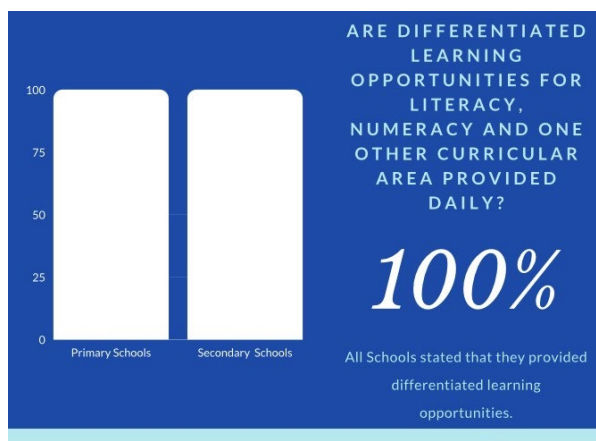
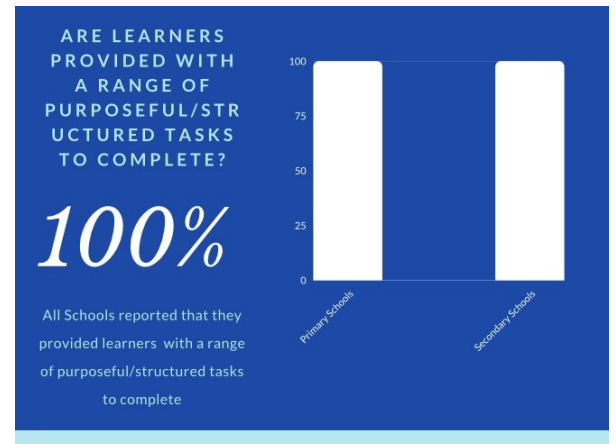
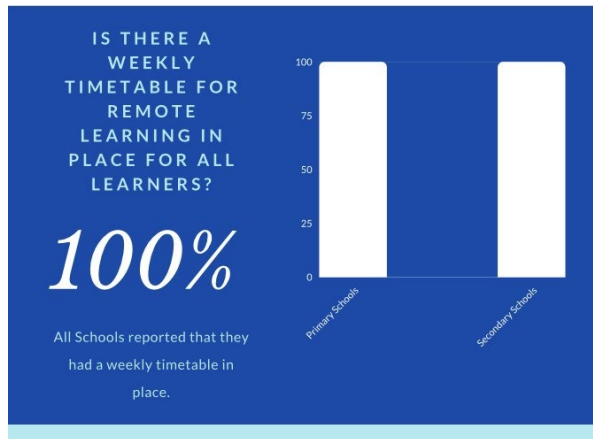
- To provide an opportunity to exchange ideas and practice regarding remote learning
- To ensure that the Angus remote learning offer meets local and national expectations
- To identify support required to deliver a high-quality remote learning experience for our learners

Discussion questions included:

- What is going well?
- What is everyone's experience of remote learning?

- How is the remote learning offer quality assured?
- What additional support would be helpful?

Findings and Examples



The guidelines provided clear expectations for all schools and this positively impacted on the learning offer across Angus Schools. It was clear that progress had been made in the engagement of learners and the quality of learning since the initial lockdown period. Staff reflected on what went well and what could be improved during the first lockdown, making appropriate changes to better meet the needs of all learners. Staff highlighted the benefits of a flipped learning approach where learners could access teaching inputs prior to being with the teacher. This enabled valuable teacher time, being used to explore topics in greater depth and create meaningful learning opportunities with a focus on feedback. Children commented that they felt a higher level of appreciation and motivation to learn due to the increased teacher feedback, specifically when this was delivered verbally.

'Forfar Academy used a weekly model where learning was posted on a Monday, including something to watch, something to touch base with, something to hand in, a follow up and feedback.'

'Grange Primary School provided a consistent timetable for those learning at home and in school. It was coordinated by year groups so that siblings who were sharing devices did not have connectivity problems.'

All schools reported that learners were provided with a range of purposeful, structured and differentiated learning opportunities. In Primary Schools, daily tasks relating to literacy, numeracy and one other curricular area were designed. This learning was shared with all families in the format of a weekly timetable. In Secondary Schools all families and learners were able to access their learning timetables via the schools' chosen IT platform. These were arranged by either curricular areas or year groups. Almost all learners throughout Angus Council were provided with the resources they needed. Schools used Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, Seesaw or Class Dojo to communicate with children during remote learning. Government funded devices were issued to identified families, spare school devices were also distributed to ensure equity of opportunity. Additionally, Angus Council provided MiFi devices to reduce barriers in connectivity. Paper-based learning packs were also made available to learners. These included key resources that children may have required to access their learning. Some Secondary Schools also opened their library services to allow pupils access to core textbooks and learning materials while others digitised these and made them available via their school's chosen platform.

Staff showed willingness to undertake professional learning, working as part of a team to upskill their digital knowledge and skills. Head Teachers highlighted this as a cause for celebration recognising the collaborative effort put in by their staff. 70% of schools reached out to the DLO Team to arrange personalised live training sessions or to be signposted towards online pre-recorded/live training. As part of whole school development many Head Teachers asked staff to complete M.E.C (Microsoft Education Centre) courses and or attain their Google Level 1 & 2.

'During Inservice Day, Arbroath High School offered the opportunity for all staff to attend two digital workshops. These were led by champions and covered a wide range of software, such as; OneNote, ThingLink, Padlet, Kahoot!, Immersive Reader, OneDrive, SharePoint, How to Record a PowerPoint and sharing experiences of 'live' lessons. The model was very helpful for staff and will be repeated for ASN.'

Almost all schools felt that communication with families had improved. Senior management teams called vulnerable families to 'check in' and offer additional support. Many schools offered a drop in helpline to give guidance regarding connectivity. Other schools conducted digitised surveys to gain insight into the views of families and some created weekly community bulletins to update around ongoing changes. There were a few examples of wider community engagement activities which encouraged families to learn with their children and spend quality time together.

As recommended by the Angus guidelines, schools reported that almost all learners had weekly opportunities to take part in live interactions with their teachers, to discuss lessons and tasks, gather feedback and ask any related questions.

'Websters High School expected learners to be in their class Teams at specific times to complete their learning so that if the class teacher could see an impromptu session would be of benefit, the learners were able to instantly join the lesson and receive assistance/feedback.'

'Inverbrothock Primary School used daily 'live' interactions to host emotional check ins, reading groups, maths help desks and learning feedback sessions.'

Schools noted that almost all learners shared how much they enjoyed and felt motivated by hearing their teacher's voice in some capacity with regards to their learning.

In all schools, class teachers monitored learner engagement on a weekly basis and contacted/supported families where engagement was low. Almost all Senior Leadership Team colleagues monitored the quality of learning provided and ensured consistency across the whole school. All looked after/accommodated children were offered a place in school and almost all who chose to learn remotely, maintained good engagement and communication links with their school. Social Work colleagues were made aware of children/families with low engagement, closely monitoring their situations and offering support. Almost all learners were asked for feedback, linked to their experience of the school's remote learning offer.

'Arbroath Academy school captains and house captains attended a meeting every Friday to represent the views of others within their year group. This highlighted how they were getting on with home learning and provided useful feedback for teachers.'

'Maisondieu Primary School produced Sways to support learners and parents to ensure that those receiving interventions prior to lockdown, continued to do so. This was in the form of 'live' feedback for tutoring, support and emotional wellbeing.'

'Montrose Academy welcomed e-mails from pupils and parents to share their feedback regarding home learning. They could share suggestions or ideas to improve remote learning experiences.'

'Inverkeilor Primary School provided digitised questionnaires for pupils and parents to gather a well-rounded view of home learning. This allowed them to tailor their delivery to suit the needs and interests of the children.'

Impact

Analysis of the TRIAD/QUAD meeting discussions highlighted several emerging key themes. Through encouraging pupil voice, it was clear that teacher feedback was the most meaningful experience during lockdown and resulted in increased engagement and motivation to learn.

Almost all schools adopted a flipped learning model as they recognised the importance of flexibility in learning. This resulted in the teaching input moving from a group learning space to an individual one. The result of this shift allowed the group space to be transformed into a more dynamic, interactive

learning environment where the teacher facilitated and scaffolded discussions to promote deeper learning. It also allowed learners to go back to prior learning/teaching inputs as and when required.

Additionally, almost all schools reported higher engagement levels with families during the second lockdown period. Many schools referred to their appreciation towards some of the strongest relationships they have ever developed with families.

A common theme from the Triad/Quad meetings was the recognition of the increased digital skills of all teachers and the overall commitment of staff during lockdown. Staff upskilled in a short period of time with Head Teachers acknowledging their ability to rally in a time of need. Staff collaborated with each other and made high quality learning happen under extenuating circumstances.

Feedback from Parents/Carers and Pupils

'I missed my friends and my teacher, but I got to see and talk to them every week on our Teams meetings.' (Child at Arbirlot Primary School)

'Remote Learning this time was like night and day from last year; it was structured and I knew what my child was learning and what they would be doing each day.' (Parent at Arbirlot Primary School)

'We can go on to Google Jamboard now. I liked going on the 'live' meets with my friends and my teacher.' (Child at Tannadice Primary School)

'I believe the school has worked very hard at not letting the children fall behind and there has been a large amount of support if required. I am very happy with how the school had dealt with such a turbulent year and has had the children's best interests at the forefront throughout.' (Parent at Tannadice Primary School)

'I liked the Google Meets best because you got to see your friends and speak to the teacher.' (Child at Inverbrothock Primary School)

'Loved live videos and instructions directly from the teacher.' (Pupil at Inverbrothock Primary School)

'I remember the teachers hurrying around trying to get everything ready for online learning and to give us the best experience they could and it was a really good experience.' (Child at Brechin High School)

'I think teaching staff are doing a tremendous job in very difficult and different circumstances.' (Parent at Brechin High School)

'The live lessons are good and help break up the day.' (Child at Monifieth High School)

'Learners have benefitted from their commitment and patience. Young people have also become more skilled using technology.' (Parent at Monifieth High School)

Next Steps

- All schools are eager to maintain or improve their digital approaches to learning in school
- Some schools would like to sign up for additional CLPL provided by the Digital Learning Officers, to further enhance their understanding
- Schools must continue to be open to the involvement of parents in the work they do and they should consider ways of providing information that helps parents engage with school and their children's education
- To make use of the flipped learning model to provide constructive and personalised feedback to individuals
- Officers of Angus Council will support the development of a TRIC Digital Learning Strategy and use this to embed digital learning as part of the pedagogy that underpins good learning and teaching
- To support schools to identify funding streams and appropriate devices to best meet the needs of their learners