

Workforce Issues Group members



Your ref:  
12 January 2022

Dear Colleagues,

## **VENTILATION IN OUR LEARNING ESTATE**

The purpose of this letter is to raise the important issue of ventilation in our learning estate and to seek your assistance in identifying and addressing any ongoing or new issues that your members are encountering whilst trying to ensure a balance between fresh air and levels of warmth in schools during winter.

It is vitally important our pupils and all staff feel safe and as comfortable as possible in our schools. As you are aware, good ventilation is a vital aspect of controlling the spread of Covid.

The [guidance on reducing risks in schools](#), which is informed by the latest expert scientific advice, was updated just prior to Christmas. It sets out strategies to ensure fresh air can enter indoor spaces while balancing the need to maintain levels of warmth in schools during winter.

To support ongoing decision-making by staff about these issues, Local Authorities are continuing to undertake CO2 assessments, and are now asked under guidance to undertake a minimum of one assessment of all learning, teaching and play spaces in Scotland per week, or more often in areas of persistent concern. The guidance notes that some Local Authorities may need time at the start of term to procure and distribute additional CO2 monitors to achieve this strengthened commitment, recognising the different challenges that will be faced by schools depending on their individual estate. It also makes clear the exceptional circumstances in which air cleaning/filtration devices may be appropriate, and reflects the expert advice from groups including SAGE and the Health and Safety Executive which indicates that air cleaning/filtration devices should never be used as a substitute for efforts to improve ventilation. We have therefore sought to be clear that air cleaning/filtration devices cannot be seen as a solution on their own to the challenge of balancing temperature with the ongoing need for natural ventilation – deploying such devices would not remove the need to open windows or doors, or to ensure appropriate mechanical ventilation.

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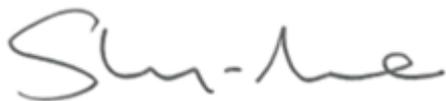
Through our recent engagement with stakeholders, we are aware of persistent anecdotal concerns being raised about isolated instances of staff and pupils having to work or learn in environments where guidance on ventilation is not being implemented appropriately, reportedly leading to unacceptably cold and/or unsatisfactory conditions. We are also aware that similar concerns in the abstract have been raised by Unions at the Workforce Issues Group (WIG), though details of areas or schools affected have not been shared.

Both the Scottish Government and COSLA have consistently offered to help resolve these issues with local authority partners if provided with further detail – specifically, the nature of the problem, the schools/local authorities concerned, and confirmation that the usual local processes for raising concerns have been fully followed and exhausted without satisfactory resolution.

To date, the details which would enable us to support efforts to resolve issues have not been provided to officials. We are therefore writing to you jointly to formalise that offer. If you are willing and able to provide us with specifics of the kind set out above, we will work collaboratively with Local Authorities to help support and address these matters wherever possible.

I hope you will recognise that we remain fully committed to ensuring that appropriate support and assistance is available to all school staff and local authorities to take whatever action is necessary to mitigate against the impacts of Covid, and would be grateful for your support in taking this forward as necessary.

Yours sincerely,



**SHIRLEY-ANNE SOMERVILLE**



**CLLR STEPHEN MCCABE**

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