
INSPIRE LEARNING – AN UPDATE TO COUNCIL

Report by Director – Education and Lifelong Learning

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

28 October 2021

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provide an update to Council on the work of the Inspire Learning Programme through 2020/21.**

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 I recommend that Council notes the content of this report as an update on the ongoing work and progress of the Inspire Learning Programme through the COVID-19 Pandemic.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Scottish Borders Council approved a planned £16M, 10 year investment in digital education transformation through its Inspire Learning Programme on 28 February 2019. A contract change note was agreed with CGI in April 2019 to jointly deliver the technology required to enable the Council to realise the vision for transformation in education delivery and embed digital at the heart of learning for young people and teachers in the Borders.
- 3.2 Subsequently, the Council's refreshed Digital Strategy was approved by Elected Members on the 25 February 2021. The Digital Strategy highlights the need to enable a workforce empowered with the key skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly digital marketplace. It specifically commits to creating a 'digital edge' for the Council and the whole area, built on continuous education and learning and aligned to future jobs. It also highlights the critical importance of promoting digital skills for our young people.
- 3.3 Inspire Learning, over the last two years, has built a platform of success with the strategic deployment of iPad for every learner from P4-S6, all teaching staff, including Early Years practitioners and the delivery of shared class devices for P1-3. We are already starting to improve outcomes for young people through the provision of equitable access to the best tools for learning, regardless of socio-economic background.
- 3.4 The Council has, to date, won two national awards (LGC) and a commendation from the MJ Awards for its Inspire Learning Programme and has even been lauded as an exemplar by the Deputy First Minister during an interview on national television.
- 3.5 The Inspire Learning Team have shared their expertise in embedding digital technology at the heart of education with LA's and organisations across Scotland, the UK, and internationally with school leaders as far away as Singapore and the USA, as well as being invited to share our learning as digital leaders at UNESCO's world education event earlier this year.
- 3.6 Closer to home, the Inspire Learning Programme has played a critical part in supporting the delivery of learning during the challenging circumstances of the pandemic ensuring that young people in the Borders had access to lessons and staff support throughout the extended periods of lockdown and blended learning.
- 3.7 While the Inspire Learning Programme has successfully deployed the infrastructure to support the transformation in digital education across Borders schools, and has started on the journey to develop enhanced digital skills for teachers and young people, with many successes to celebrate, the journey to delivering the broader vision for digital education in the Borders has really only just started. The Programme continues to strive to "make the Borders the best place in the world to teach, learn and live".

4 Inspire Learning – An update to Council on supporting learning and teaching in the Borders through a global pandemic

- 4.1 Inspire Learning is transforming the way that teaching and learning is delivered in every classroom in the Borders. This transformation is being enabled by the Council's long term commitment to high quality professional development for all teaching staff, alongside upgraded network access in all schools, refreshed classroom audio visual equipment, a personal iPad for learning to all P4-7 young people, a shared iPad for learning for P1-3 and an iPad for all teaching staff.
- 4.2 The digital learning environment in the Borders is currently the most complete example of its kind at local authority level in the UK, focused on Learning and Teaching, Leadership, Environment and Professional Learning.
- 4.3 With the benefit of hindsight, the courage and foresight of Members to embark upon this journey is hard to over-state; especially in the light of the recent global shockwave in education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This commitment has given the Borders a platform to deliver transformation that extends beyond the classroom and impacts on the whole Scottish Borders region, aiming to make the Borders the best place in the UK to live, learn and work.

Home/Remote Learning during the pandemic

- 4.4 The Inspire Learning Programme responded quickly to the changing landscape of delivering education remotely during two significant periods of lockdown since March 2020.
- 4.5 By the start of the first lockdown, iPads had been deployed to all our secondary pupils and staff as part of our planned rolling deployment programme. The Programme Team reacted quickly to make sure the last secondary school device deployment was brought forward and the entire secondary cohort at Jedburgh Grammar Campus were deployed in just one day, ahead of the first national lockdown.
- 4.6 The remote learning opportunities for secondary students that were enabled by Inspire Learning were quickly recognised by staff, parents and students. Primary leaders and teachers were keen to accelerate the delivery to the primary phase. With support from the wider Council workforce, the Inspire Learning Team successfully deployed a new process for remote delivery and support and delivered iPads to all the homes of the primary staff and the P6/7 pupils during May and June of 2020. As a direct result of the pandemic, the scope of the Programme was extended to include one to one devices for P4/5 which were deployed in September 2020. The full device rollout was therefore completed more than 6 months ahead of the planned schedule.
- 4.7 The impact of being able to offer continuity of education and education services at home was significant for children and families. Support services such as Quarriers, Borders College and Skills Development

Scotland were also able to reach young people in the Borders through their iPads.

4.8 This ability to continue teaching and supporting young people in the Borders was noted in the recent pupil and parent survey – the majority of young people who responded favoured live video lessons as their first choice for remote learning and noted that regular feedback was available throughout the remote learning periods. Below are a few examples of the feedback received from Students, Parents and Staff related to learning and teaching through the pandemic.

Pupil Survey (extract)

8. Did you have regular live lessons using Teams meetings

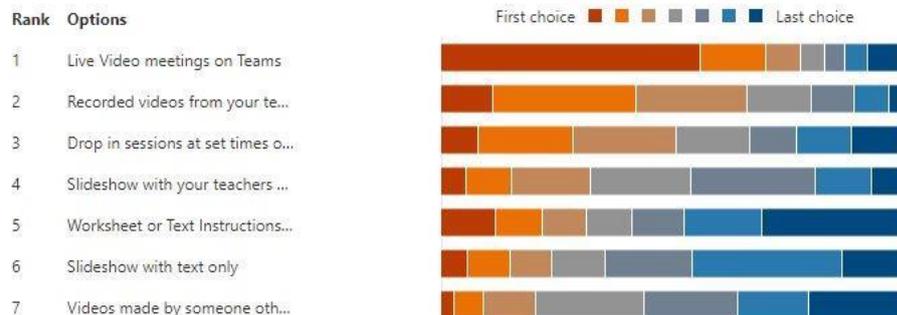
[More Details](#)

Yes	1266
No	125



15. Rank from top to bottom the way you prefer to learn

[More Details](#)

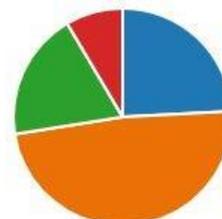


5. When I was working at home, I had regular feedback on my work that helped me to improve

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[Insights](#)

All of the time	336
Most of the time	672
not very often	265
Not sure	118



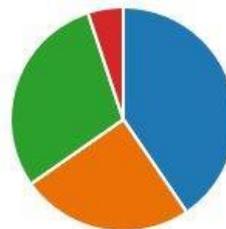
Parental Survey (extract)

11. Did your child had a daily live learning opportunity?

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[Insights](#)

Yes	471
No	288
Sometimes	345
Rarely	59



15. Was your child able to access the technology (where required) to support their learning at home.

[More Details](#)

Yes	1085
No	78



Supporting Curriculum delivery – staff feedback example

"This session Kelso High School had difficulties with recruiting staff in RE and physics. The impact was that at least three certificated exam classes did not have a teacher to deliver these qualifications. Using the technology that Inspire [Learning] offers us, these pupils were able to remotely join other classes in Hawick and Earlston high schools. The result is that all these pupils have successfully passed their qualifications."

Professional Learning/Initiatives

- 4.9 To date the Inspire Learning Programme has focused on developing the skills of teaching staff, school leadership and the wider school communities across the region. There are many examples of how the programme is doing this. These include:
- Five SBC teaching staff have gained the prestigious Apple Professional Learning Specialist accreditation with three more primary teachers complementing the team this year. This gives Borders the highest number of Apple accredited trainers of any local authority in the country.
 - Two secondary schools, Selkirk and Kelso High Schools have been recognised this month, as Apple Distinguished Schools. This accreditation is a recognition of high quality learning and teaching

using Apple technology and puts them in a group of the world's best digital schools.

- (c) Our online platform for professional learning, built in August 2020 to support teaching staff during the period of remote learning, is called SchoolHouse. In less than a year almost all teaching staff across Scottish Borders Council are actively engaged in professional learning as part of SchoolHouse. We have delivered more than 140 key professional development sessions and host weekly 'drop-in' support times for staff to offer help and support. Schoolhouse is now our key platform for delivering professional learning to staff.
- (d) Over lockdown we have also begun an Inspire Parent Ambassadors Programme and been working with 15 Parent Council representatives from across the Borders who have volunteered to become parent ambassadors for the Programme.
- (e) One of the wider initiatives for the community has been the starting of the 'Digital Skills Cafe' which we have streamed on YouTube and which is aimed at parents and carers - these sessions cover key topics and skills which will enhance the Inspire Programme for parents.
- (f) To further support parents and carers we have delivered the '30 Days of Creativity' Programme which offers parents a way to work with young people to build and develop digital skills, supported European Code Week and shared some unique '12 Days of Christmas' activities for all parents.
- (g) "Friends of Inspire Learning" has seen the Inspire Programme engage in meaningful projects with a number of our key partners. This has included development work on the 'Everyone Can Code' Programme with Apple and digital art initiatives and interactive lessons delivered by the creators of Procreate (a professional art app available on SBC's iPads) which were delivered live from Tasmania into Borders classrooms! We have also delivered training and support activities with Showbie, and professional development sessions for staff from BookCreator and SumDog. Many of these events have been hosted virtually during the recent period of remote learning.
- (h) We have had representation from Inspire Learning on the UNESCO World Teacher Day panel, at the Scottish Learning Festival and at the international BETT Show in London. We have also played host to education leadership from Adobe Education Worldwide and the Apple Worldwide VP for Education, Doug Beck, who visited the Borders to see and take part in an Inspire Learning Deployment Day in person.
- (i) We have hosted a number of 'Visit Days' to the Inspire Programme over the past two years. Originally this was a face-to-face visit where we welcomed Falkirk Council and Bradford City Council, as well as executives from Apple and shared the background and vision

for the Inspire Programme. During COVID-19 we have continued to host visits virtually and welcomed Dundee City Council, North Ayrshire Council, Midlothian Council and Inverclyde Council to hear from the Inspire Team and school staff and young people about their experiences with digital transformation in the Borders.

- (j) We have held meetings to share our experience with school leaders in Singapore and New York City and will shortly host a virtual visit to the Borders for Blackpool Council, including their education leaders, MPs and representation from the DfE.

- 4.10 These visits and discussions locally and internationally have, and continue to highlight the impact of Inspire Learning on education in the Borders, and raise the profile of Scottish Borders Council as a leader in best practice use of digital technology in education.

National Awards and Recognition

- 4.11 The Local Government Chronicle Awards are prestigious UK-wide awards given to transformational projects from local authorities across Britain. Scottish Borders Council's Inspire Learning Programme won two awards in 2020 and were the only Scottish winners. The award for Public/Private Partnership category recognised the unique partnership working with CGI to offer world-class learning opportunities for learners and staff in the Borders while the award for Future Places recognised Scottish Borders Council for working creatively with technology to make the area more prosperous, liveable and resilient in the face of social, economic, demographic, political and environmental trends. The fact that Inspire Learning achieved both these awards at such an early stage in the Programme, and prior to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, illustrates the strategic importance of the Programme and the place Scottish Borders Council hold at the forefront of such innovation across the UK.
- 4.12 In 2021, the Inspire Learning Programme was commended in the digital transformation category at the Municipal Journal (MJ) Awards.
- 4.13 We anticipate entering Inspire Learning for future awards as the programme continues to build on its successful delivery to date.

Measuring Success

- 4.14 The first of the planned annual reports designed to measure the broad impact of the Inspire Learning Programme through a wide range of metrics is ready to be published. Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the delivery of teaching and learning over the past two years, there are already measurable signs that the transformation enabled by and delivered through the Inspire Learning Programme is having a positive impact across a wide array of empirical measures. The full report is included in Appendix 1.
- 4.15 The Inspire Learning Programme continues to build on the successes to date. Focus is very firmly on continuing professional development for

staff, ensuring that the best digital tools are embedded at the heart of the learning experience for our young people, and growing the reach of the Programme with local business and beyond to ensure that young people in the Borders are furnished with digital skills that are in demand, now and for the future.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no costs attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

As the purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Inspire Learning Programme to Council, there are no risks identified as a result of this report.

5.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

As this is an update to Council, no IIA has been undertaken specific to this report.

5.4 Sustainable Development Goals

There is no impact on UN Sustainable Development Goals as a result of this report.

5.5 Climate Change

There is no impact on climate change as a result of this report.

5.6 Rural Proofing

Not applicable.

5.7 Data Protection Impact Statement

No additional DPIA impacts are noted as a result of this report.

5.8 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There are no changes to the Scheme of Delegation as a result of this report.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Director (Finance & Corporate Governance), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted in the production of this report.

Approved by

Lesley Munro

Director – Education & Lifelong Learning

Signature

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Background Papers: NA

Previous Minute Reference:

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Catherine Thomson can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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