

From mountain to sea

Head Teacher Guidance Blended Placements

Updated 26th June 2020

A “blended placement” is defined as a situation whereby more than one school is involved in the provision of the education of a pupil. This would generally involve a blended teaching, learning and curricular experience between the pupil’s zoned school and the local Enhanced Provision or Community Resource Hub. Pupils are enrolled with the educational establishment in which they spend 50% or more of their time.

A blended placement is distinct from curriculum flexibility. Curriculum flexibility uses the stage 0-3 to determine the most appropriate provision available on a school or cluster level. This might, for example, involve accessing a particular resource at the local Community Resource Hub, such as the swimming pool for one or two sessions per week. In such instances the pupil’s zoned school retains responsibility for the pupil’s education.

A blended placement is also distinct from a learning pathway plus. This is usually a stage 3+ programme, emerging from multi-agency assessment and action planning processes, and involving the commissioning of services. Some pupils may have a learning pathway plus in addition to a blended placement. In exceptional cases a pupil may have a blended placement with an out-of-authority school, which is funded through the learning pathway plus budget.

In Scotland there is a presumption of mainstream education for pupils with additional support needs. Aberdeenshire Council is committed to educating children and young people within their home community.

In some instances, a blended placement may be beneficial to a pupil, in that it can provide the opportunity to access targeted enhanced support whilst maintaining key relationships with peers and school staff in their zoned school. Blended placements can also offer valuable opportunities for teachers to share good practice across schools.

It should be noted that a blended placement is an intensive intervention and may have a number of unintended consequences. It is therefore important that the following questions are considered by the Team Around the Child prior to the

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recommendation of a blended placement. It is also helpful to consider these points during key review points throughout the blended placement.

Inclusion-Centred Planning

1. What needs cannot currently be met in the zoned school through an individualised programme?
2. What can the Enhanced Provision / Community Resource Hub offer that the zoned school cannot?
3. Are there staff training needs in the zoned school that, if met, would negate the need for a blended placement?
4. Would a flexible curriculum that utilises specific resources within the Enhanced Provision / Community Resource Hub meet the child's needs without the requirement for a blended placement?

Child-Centred planning

1. What is the pupil's history of coping with transitions between people and places?
2. How easy is it for the pupil to develop new relationships with teachers and peers?
3. What is the pupil's perception of him or herself as a learner, and what impact might the requirement to access the Enhanced Provision / Community Resource Hub have on this?
4. What is the likely impact on the pupil of missing some of the day-to-day shared learning and social experiences with their current peer group?
5. How will the pupil feel included in both settings (e.g. sports days, school trips, school uniform, Christmas plays etc) in a way that does not overwhelm them?
6. How will the pupil be kept-up-to date with important events / news in each school?
7. How will the pupil's views of the blended placement be meaningfully gathered and incorporated into planning?

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Outcome planning

1. What are the expected outcomes of a blended placement?
2. How will outcomes be measured?
3. In considering the objectives, what would be the anticipated duration of the blended placement?
4. Are the outcomes reflected within the pupil's IEP targets?
5. Which provision is responsible for which aspects of the pupil's IEP?
6. Which IEP targets are shared across the two settings, and how will this be managed? Can ICT be used to support this?

Practical considerations:

1. How will the pupil's teachers share assessment and planning information on an ongoing basis? Can ICT be used to facilitate this, for example using Microsoft Teams?
2. How can opportunities to build capacity in meeting the needs of the pupil be maximised? Would there be opportunities for each teacher to observe practice in the other provision?
3. How can information be communicated between two key teachers and parents in a concise and manageable way? For example, would one home-school book be used by both provisions? Can ICT be used to facilitate this?
4. What would the timetable look like? Is there an expectation of full days in each provision, or will the pupil spend time in both provisions over the course of a day?
5. What factors might hinder a blended placement? For example, how feasible is travel between the zoned school and the Enhanced Provision / Community Resource Hub? How would this be managed?
6. Who is responsible for travel and escort arrangements?

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7. How will the pupil be supported across and between the two settings?
8. Where will review meetings take place? Can ICT be used to ensure all relevant professionals can attend the meetings virtually?

Transport

Where a child or young person is placed in an Enhanced Provision School or a Community resource hub which is not their local school, they may receive free transport, where necessary. *Guidance for the Safe Transport of Children & Young People* for schools is available at <https://asn-aberdeenshire.org/policies-and-guidance/>

The transport referral form, PTU 500, should be completed and in consultation with parents/carers, child or young person (where appropriate) and relevant partner agencies.

Blended Placements during Covid-19 Pandemic

The following guidance is based on the premise that schools will open to all pupils in August, following the Deputy First Minister's statement to the Scottish Parliament on 23 June 2020 which stated that *'If we stay on track, if we all continue to do what is right and if we can further suppress this terrible virus, the Government believes that we should prepare for children to be able to return to school full time in August.'* and that *'we can move away from blended learning'*.

If we have successfully reached Phase 4 of the Scottish Government Route Map in August 2020 and all children and young people return to school full time, then some blended placements may recommence. Overall, however, movement between educational settings should be by exception only at this early stage.

The decision to recommence a blended placement should be a collaborative decision by the Team Around the Child, which should include both education settings. The voice of the child or young person, and the parent should be central to decision-making.

Consultation with the relevant Health Professional **must** take place prior to a blended placement recommencing where a child or young person is known to have an underlying health condition or complex health needs.

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Consideration should be given to the following questions:

1. What are the benefits of the blended placement? Can any of these benefits be replicated to some extent through virtual contact between the pupil and the second placement, at least in the short-term?
2. Are there any risks for the pupil associated with the blended placement not recommencing in August? If so, what are they and can they be mitigated against without the child physically attending the second placement?
3. If the second placement is not a local authority provision, what hygiene, cleaning and equipment sharing protocols are in place to prevent the spread of infection?
4. Is there adequate provision of appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in both settings for pupils who have personal or intimate care needs?
5. Is there adequate space within both settings to allow for social distancing?
6. The risk of infection spread is known to be lower outdoors. To what extent will the pupil's educational experience take place outdoors in the second placement?
7. To what extent do the pupil's needs allow for social distancing at times when PPE will not be used? It is acknowledged that social distancing is not always possible when working with young children or children and young people with complex needs. The less social distancing between the pupil and staff, the greater the risk associated with a pupil moving between different settings.
8. Would the blended placement involve the pupil and/or a member of staff entering more than one setting per day, which is against current guidance?

It is the responsibility of the Named Person / Lead Professional to ensure that these questions are given full consideration and used to risk assess whether the blended placement should go ahead within the context of Covid-19.

Recording and Documentation

The relevant discussions and rationale underpinning the decision as to whether the blended placement will recommence should be clearly documented through Single or Multi-Agency Action Planning processes.



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The decision to recommence a blended placement should be underpinned by a robust risk assessment which explicitly considers the risks associated with Covid-19.

External providers are also required to submit their own risk assessment for that pupil in their setting to the Named Person / Lead Professional.



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