

**Education, Children and Young People Committee**  
**Attainment inquiry visit to Sidlaw View Primary School**  
**Monday 21 February 2022**

**In attendance:**

Kaukab Stewart MSP  
Willie Rennie MSP  
Michael Marra MSP

6 pupils from P2-P7

The pupils involved in the session have a diverse range of additional support needs and have accessed Aberlour support. This ranges from sibling sessions to support effective relationships, sessions for growth groups focussing on change and transition, 1-1 sessions focussing on understanding of health needs or family circumstances and building of strategies to support emotional regulation and understanding of emotions.

The session was led by the pupils as much as possible and focused on some preparatory work they had done together in advance.

**Note of discussion:**

The pupils chose to begin with the question 'What do you think about school?'

Some felt that during the pandemic it was really confusing and hard to get their heads around what learning during lockdown was like. There was some help from the school to make it less confusing.

Others liked the quiet the lockdowns provided, it wasn't as rowdy or disruptive as being in class. This made them feel better and able to get on with their work.

Being back in school feels noisier and distracting again. Aberlour has helped with this, for example by providing ear defenders. Being in lockdown has made some of the pupils realise they need quiet and peace to be able to get on with learning.

The school used Zoom and SeeSaw during the pandemic to continue learning and to communicate with pupils and families. Most pupils found this helpful, especially being able to direct message their teachers.

One pupil thought it was much better being able to work at their own pace during the pandemic, and not have to wait for classmates to finish their work before moving on.

Pupils said they were offered devices to take home with them to help with school work. One said they had to get help from a friend to learn how to use their device. All the pupils agreed devices are useful for learning but shouldn't be the only way.

Pupils thought there was more work to catch up on now they are back in school but they all agreed they feel ok about it.

The pupils also talked about the support they receive from Aberlour. They spoke about how the staff from Aberlour have helped give them tools to be able to regulate their emotions, such as anger and frustration. The pupils demonstrated techniques they use such as slow breathing, kit bags and 5 senses to help them calm and shift focus. Pupils mentioned that some teachers don't like them using the kit bag in class because it's distracting.

Pupils spoke about how these techniques have prevented them from getting in fights, or from becoming angry and frustrated with getting answers wrong in their work. One pupil spoke about tearing their work up and storming out of the classroom. Now, they can calm themselves, rub out the wrong answers, and try again.

Support from Aberlour is both 1-2-1 and in small groups or pairs. Pupils spoke about going with other people to begin with but building up to going on their own. They have set days and times they meet with staff from Aberlour, but there are some adhoc sessions and the length of time of each session varies. Pupils like having someone to talk to who listens and helps give them ways to deal with things that are going on.

Pupils spoke about how the techniques they have learned in school with Aberlour are also helpful when coping with home life, such as when they feel angry or are not getting along with siblings.

Pupils mentioned the classroom having a 'calm corner' where they can go to help them focus on their learning and get rid of distractions.

At the end of the discussion, the pupils were asked for a star and a wish – something positive they get through support from Aberlour, and something they wished was better. Stars were that they are helped to feel calm when they are upset or angry, the kit bags and the good support they get from Killy and Jade (Aberlour staff). Wishes were about being able to see Jade and Killy more often and get more support from them when they need it.