



Your Ref: Our Ref: AMcC/CA

If telephoning please call: 01294 324413

16 February 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

### **Phased Return to In-School Learning**

We would like to say a huge thank you for all you have done to support your child's learning throughout this continuing period of remote learning. Our schools and centres are grateful for all you to do in supporting their work. We know how challenging this time will have been for many of you and we hope that you have found the communication and advice from your school to be supportive.

We have seen lots of evidence across social media platforms of the great work being done by your children and we have heard from the schools how good the response has been to the work they are providing.

We met with the chairs of the parent councils recently and were glad to hear how positive they all were about their experience of remote learning. As we move towards this next new phase, we have asked our schools to keep you up to date with developments.

The First Minister confirmed in Parliament today that in-school learning would return on a phased basis from 22 February, beginning with early years and Primary 1–3, who will return full time, and small groups from the senior phase (S4-S6), who will have access to school buildings to undertake essential practical work. Guidance documents have been published by Scottish Government on Friday and today. Schools are now working on specific arrangements for their establishment. This letter sets out the general arrangements applicable to all schools/centres.

<b>STAGE/GROUP</b>	<b>ARRANGEMENTS FROM 22 FEBRUARY</b>
<b>Early Learning &amp; Childcare - schools, centres and funded providers</b>	Full time return for all children on 22/2/21, based on previous attendance patterns. There will be a phased approach for those children who were scheduled to start for the first time after Christmas. As before, children will form “bubbles” where they are grouped together to minimise interaction and reduce infection transmission risks. Head Teachers and Heads of Centre will contact you with specific information in the coming days.
<b>P1-P3</b>	Full time return for all children on 22/2/21. As before, children will remain in their class groups with interaction between groups kept to a minimum, again to reduce infection transmission risks
<b>P4-S3</b>	Continue with remote learning at home for the time being. Plans for the next phase of the return to in-school learning will be announced by the Scottish Government in the weeks ahead.
<b>S4-S6</b>	All pupils will continue with remote learning at home. In addition, for small groups at a time, access to the school building will be arranged only to complete essential practical work as part of national qualifications. The

STAGE/GROUP	ARRANGEMENTS FROM 22 FEBRUARY
	Scottish Government has capped attendance at a maximum of 8% of the school roll on any one day. Individual schools are currently working on detailed plans for limited access to school buildings for senior phase pupils. Head Teachers will contact you with specific information in the coming days.
<b>Children of key workers / vulnerable children P4-S6</b>	Continue to access school as before, following the same pattern as previously. For key workers the principle remains that, in line with government advice, this facility is only to be used in exceptional circumstances, on days where families have no alternative option.
<b>Children and young people at the highest clinical risk</b>	<b>Children and young people at the highest clinical risk (individuals on the shielding list) have also been advised by the Chief Medical Officer not to attend school or regulated childcare services during lockdown.</b> Parents can consult with their child's secondary care (hospital) clinical team who may advise that an individualised risk assessment could be undertaken with the school or childcare provision and arrangements put in place which may allow your child to continue to attend when establishments re-open.
<b>Small Schools with under 25 pupils and only one class</b>	Where small primary schools with under 25 pupils have one class taught by one teacher, arrangements will be made for the return of all pupils in that school, regardless of stage. This affects two of our schools on Arran. The Head Teacher will write to affected parents with further information.

Clearly, whilst the situation is improving gradually, the virus has not gone away and as such we need to be more vigilant than ever in continuing to take steps to ensure we keep transmission levels as low as possible. The paragraphs below set out the general arrangements which will be applicable to all parents with children returning to school from next week.

## Health and Safety

Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our pupils and staff remains paramount. Risk assessments for all establishments are being revisited and updated in light of the newly published guidance. In all establishments there will be 2m physical distancing for all adults. In secondary schools, 2m physical distancing will apply to everyone in the building, including pupils. As the phased return begins next week, we will again reinforce with pupils and staff the key messages about the current effective mitigations to control virus transmission: face coverings for adults and senior phase pupils; regular hand washing routines and good ventilation. Additional health and safety walk-rounds have been planned to ensure these key mitigations continue to be observed by everyone. We appreciate your support in ensuring that your child does not attend school if they are displaying COVID-19 symptoms. We ask for your support in reinforcing these messages with your child at home.

## Drop off and pick up

As before, schools may implement staggered start and finish times, to safely manage drop off and pick up times. Given the ongoing stay at home message for the rest of the country, we would ask that, if possible, only one parent/carer comes to the school/centre at drop off and pick up times. In line with government advice, we would ask you to maintain 2m physical distancing with other parents at the school gates. All establishments will continue to restrict access to their grounds and/or buildings. As before, face coverings should continue to be worn by all adults (unless exempted) when they go to the school/centre.

## Staffing

Our staff continue to be focused on supporting your child to make progress in their learning, whether in school or at home. We would like to thank our staff for their dedication, flexibility and resilience in these challenging circumstances and for their commitment to educational continuity

in uncertain times. To support the phased return to schools, additional staffing will be in place in many of our schools.

## **Catering**

Full catering menus will be available for all children and young people who return to in-school learning. Food vouchers for eligible children and young people from P4-S6 will be issued weekly from the week beginning 22 February 2021.

## **Transport**

Transport will be provided as normal to all eligible pupils returning to school. In secondary school transport, 2m physical distancing will be observed as an additional mitigation measure. Face coverings should be worn by all children and young people aged over 5, in line with the government position on public transport. Car sharing with someone from another household continues to be strongly discouraged at this time.

## **Asymptomatic home testing for staff and senior phase pupils**

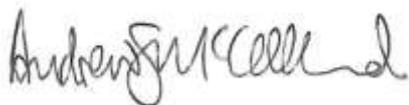
As part of the range of COVID-19 risk reduction mitigations in schools, an asymptomatic testing programme is being made available to all staff and senior phase pupils. Participation in the programme will be encouraged but voluntary. Over the next week, home testing kits will be issued to all staff and senior phase pupils who will be attending school regularly and who want to participate in this testing programme. The test kits will allow participating staff and pupils to do a home test twice a week and will allow Public Health to monitor and understand the extent to which the virus is spread by people displaying no symptoms. Head Teachers will write to parents of senior phase pupils with further details about this programme.

## **Testing of close contacts**

Beginning this week, close contacts of anyone who has tested positive for Covid-19 will be asked to go for a test. This will not affect the period of isolation, regardless of the result. In a similar way to the regular testing programme outlined above, the testing of close contacts will help Public Health to understand the extent of asymptomatic community transmission. We ask for your support in this area by following any advice you receive from Public Health or contact tracers.

Finally, we acknowledge that the weeks ahead will probably present a number of challenges for everyone. Like you, we are hopeful that if we are careful and continue to take every step to limit the spread of the virus, we will be able to take further steps towards a full return to in-school learning before too long. In the meantime, if your child is scheduled to begin the return to in-person learning from next week, you will shortly receive further specific arrangements from your child's Head Teacher. Should you have any questions about the phased return to in-school learning, please contact your child's Head Teacher.

Yours sincerely



Andrew McClelland  
**Head of Service**



Caroline Amos  
**Head of Service**

## **Additional Support**

Please note the following links which provide further support and advice for parents:

[Parent Club Website - Coronavirus advice](#)

[Parentzone Scotland Website](#)

[National Parent Forum of Scotland - Blended learning in nutshell](#)

[National Parent Forum of Scotland - Learning at home in lockdown](#)

[National Parent Forum of Scotland - Online safety - information for parents and carers](#)

[Young Scot - Going to School During the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Pandemic](#)