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**Children's Services**

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Your Ref:

Dear Parents and Carers

## **Information to all Parents and Carers: Children and Young People returning to Schools, Full-Time, August 2020**

On Friday 26 June, I wrote to you to inform you that the Scottish Government would make a final decision on whether schools would reopen full-time for children and young people on the 30 July. As you may now be aware, the Scottish Government have confirmed yesterday that, as a result of the continued suppression of COVID-19 in Scotland, all Scottish schools will reopen full-time in August.

The First Minister did outline a number of measures to reduce the risk of transmission and ensure the health and safety of children, young people and staff on their return to school:

- There should be an increased emphasis on hand hygiene and surface cleaning. Hand washing/sanitising should be required for everyone on every entry to the school and there will be additional cleaning provision in schools.
- As close as possible to zero tolerance of symptoms should be in place, and there must be strict compliance with the Test and Protect system.
- In both primary and secondary settings, the preference should be to avoid large gatherings and crowded spaces and, as much as possible, to keep pupils within the same groups for the duration of the school day.
- Sharing of equipment/utensils/toys/books should be minimised; and smaller groups and more outdoor activities should be put in place where possible.

The government also confirmed that there is no requirement for physical distancing between any children and young people in primary schools. However, there is additional guidance for secondary schools, and particularly young people in the senior phase of their learning, secondary four to secondary six, which suggests some additional measures that may be taken so long as they do not compromise capacity levels and prevent a return to full time education for all pupils.

Moreover, the two metre physical distancing should remain in place wherever possible between adults in schools, and between adults and children.

There was also confirmation that school transport should be regarded as an extension of the school estate and physical distancing measures between pupils on school transport is not necessary. Where public transport is required for school-aged children to attend school, the general advice and guidance from the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland should be followed. This currently includes the mandatory use of face coverings and 1 metre physical distancing where possible.

Following the Scottish Government confirmation of the full-time return, Children's Services are currently finalising arrangements for the first week of the new term after the In-Service Day on Monday 10 August.

We appreciate the length of time children and young people have been away from school and that many children will be starting out in a new school. Therefore, we are planning for what is called a '**soft-start**' to the new term, which will mean a **gradual and phased, return of children and young people** into our schools from the 11 August to the 14 August, as opposed to all children and young people returning on the one day. This will support children reconnect with staff, their peers, and the school environment as a whole, and enable staff to go over important safety procedures and arrangements with the children.

As far as possible, all children and young people will be back in school full-time by Monday 17 August.

**Your child (s) school (s) will write to you, confirming the specific arrangements in their setting for the first week of the term, early next week.**

Please be reassured that the health and wellbeing of all our children and young people, and our staff, continues to be at the absolute forefront of our planning for the resumption of face-to-face learning and teaching.

There is an expectation that all children on the school roll attend school when settings reopen in August, and all our schools are absolutely committed to prioritising the health and wellbeing of our children and to respond to their needs on their return.

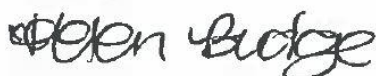
In addition, all our schools will continue to communicate information around the safety measures that will be in place, including arrangements for dropping off and collecting your children and for parents and carers entering the school.

In order for pupils to continue to receive Free School Meals from Monday 10 August, parents must reapply for this entitlement. Further information and the application form can be found online at: <http://www.shetland.gov.uk/education/ClothingGrants.asp>.

Further information on Transport Implications will follow from Children's Services next week.

Please contact your child's school in the first instance if you have any concerns about their resumption of full-time education in August.

Yours sincerely



Helen Budge  
Director of Children's Services