

**Education and Learning Directorate**

The Bridge  
Glasgow Road  
Dumfries  
DG2 9AW

11 February 2021

Dear Parent / Carer

Last week, the First Minister announced her intention that all children from nursery to P3 would be returning to full-time education from 22 February 2021. Some senior phase pupils would also be returning part-time to allow in-school practical work that is necessary for the completion of national qualification courses. These plans will be confirmed if sufficient progress in tackling the virus has been achieved. We await the First Minister giving a further update on 16 February.

Since the announcement, our schools have been planning for welcoming some of our teachers and pupils back into classrooms. Free school meals will also be provided to all our Primary 1-3 pupils when they return to school. Our Headteachers have been working on arrangements to make their schools as safe as possible, following national guidance whilst recognising what would work best for everyone at their school. As well as teaching, they have been confirming cleaning, catering, transport and support arrangements so that when we open our schools again on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, parents can have absolute confidence that their school will be operating safely.

For those pupils who will not be returning to school full-time, remote learning will continue. We are now five weeks into the school term and feedback has been positive as learners and their families continue to access activities, information and tasks that are being provided by their teacher, in line with the curriculum and meeting the expectations of our teachers, pupils and parents. Feedback has shown that a more structured approach to remote learning during this lockdown period has enabled learners to plan their approach to the work set and engage directly with teachers. More information on what parents can expect from our schools is available on our Council's website: <https://supportdg.dumgal.gov.uk/article/21879/Delivering-Remote-Learning-and-Teaching> I'd like to thank you for your continued support to help us deliver remote learning.

To allow our key workers to continue with their important roles within our communities, we are continuing to provide critical childcare for families who require it. Our Headteachers will manage the childcare within schools as well as the return to classrooms for some pupils. These will be treated as two distinct groups and will be kept separate to minimise contact and ensure social distancing practices are adhered to.

We must all continue to play our part in suppressing the virus. That is why the Scottish Government is introducing a COVID-19 asymptomatic testing programme for all members of our wider school staff and for senior phase pupils who will be attending school. This testing programme is being put in place as part of the package of

coronavirus risk reduction mitigations in schools across Scotland. Regular testing of staff will help to further reduce risks in the school environment. It will do so by helping to identify asymptomatic individuals in school environments at the earliest possible opportunity and asking them and their close contacts to self-isolate, thus minimising the likelihood of them passing on the virus. As we bring staff and pupils back to our schools, we all want our school communities to be as safe as possible. Information on the COVID-19 asymptomatic testing programme is available on our website: <https://supportdg.dumgal.gov.uk/LFDtest>

Friday sees the start of our mid-term break. Schools are closed for all pupils from Monday 15 February – Friday 19 February. There will be no critical childcare provided over the course of this holiday and in-service week.

Bringing our youngest and oldest pupils back to school later this month is a positive step – we are beginning to see some light towards the re-opening of our school buildings to be physical centres of learning - full of energy and positivity.

I hope that all manage to have time away from remote learning and enjoy spending time together during the mid-term break. Stay safe and look after one another.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gillian Brydson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr Gillian Brydson  
Director Skills, Education and Learning