

Skills, Education and Learning

Your Ref:

Directorate

Our Ref:
Schools Services\Schools Central \ESMT\
CORONAVIRUS\Parents and Pupils

122-124 Irish Street

Dumfries

15 June 2020

DG1 2PB

Any enquiries please contact

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Dear Parent / Carer,

Reopening of Schools in Dumfries and Galloway – 12 August 2020

I am writing to keep you up to date about the arrangements for reopening our schools and early learning settings across Dumfries and Galloway in August. The decisions we have made are based on the current government guidance and whilst this may change in the future, I want to give parents as much information as I can based on what we do currently know.

Firstly, I would like to thank all parents and carers for doing their very best to support learning at home or in our hubs since March; we know that this has not been easy. I hope that your family has felt in touch with your school during lockdown through your child's teachers, the activities provided online and on paper, by telephone and social media.

The new term for pupils will start on Wednesday 12 August 2020. This will be the same date across Scotland, and it means that we have had to change our term dates and school holidays for the year. You can view the updated school term and holiday dates on the Council's website:

www.dumgal.gov.uk/article/15239/School-term-and-holiday-dates

Keeping people safe in our schools

It is expected that social distancing will have to continue over the next few months. This means that some changes will need to be made to how learning is provided. Our schools will have to manage pupil numbers/ratios and capacities. Like other schools across Scotland, pupils will receive a combination of in-school teaching and learning at home.

This will be very different for all of us and I understand that this temporary way of learning may mean that families need to make some adjustments for work and childcare arrangements.

Our approach

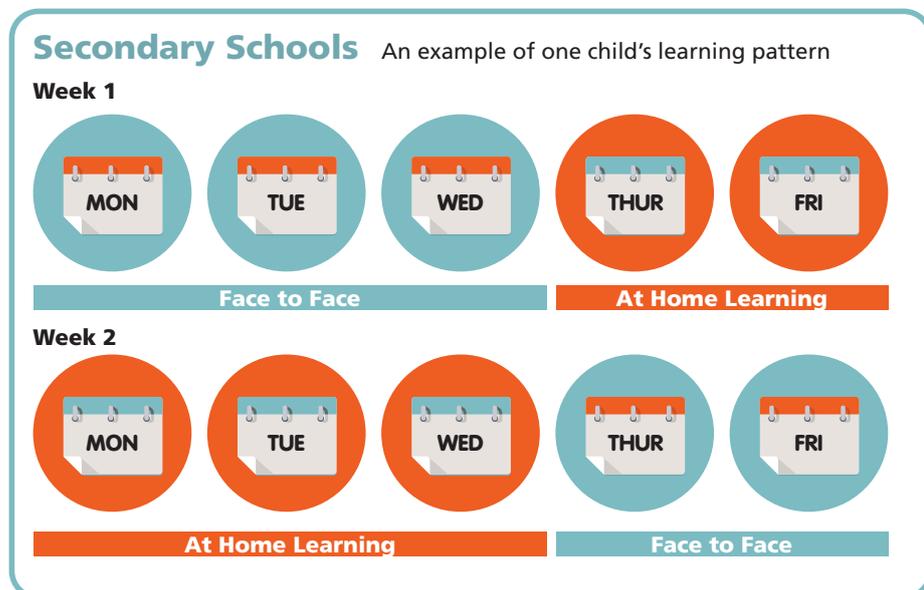
Initially in August, it is expected that pupils in our primary and secondary schools will be in school two or three days each week. Pupils will receive in-school learning with smaller groups coming in for part of the week and learning at home for the rest of the week. Outdoor learning will be used wherever possible.

What the weeks will look like

Secondary Schools

All sixteen secondary schools will have the same approach for pupils returning to school in August. Secondary pupils will be divided into two groups with alternate school days. This will mean that pupils are in school for face to face lessons for 50% of the time and 50% of the time they will be required to engage in home learning.

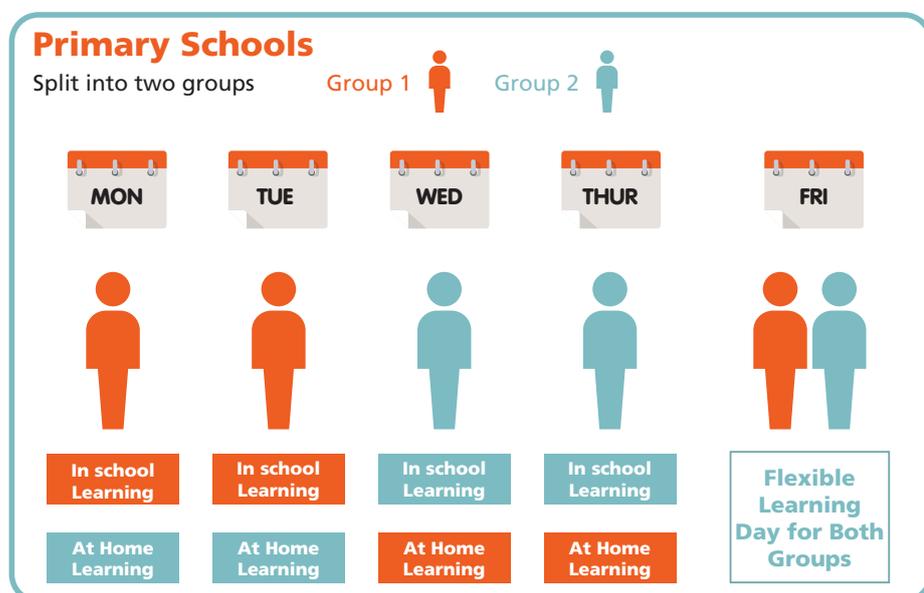
What this will look like:



Your school will advise you on how this affects your child and when they should attend school. This will provide S1 to S3 pupils with access to both the full curriculum of subjects and their usual classes and, in terms of senior phase options, qualifications and college courses. Where possible, schools are planning that young people from the same household will attend school on the same days.

Primary Schools

Our primary schools will also divide pupils into two groups. All pupils will be expected to attend school for two days and participate in home learning for two days each week. Primary pupils will also have a flexible learning day where the school will make every effort to provide activities and digital group work to be carried out at home or at another location. Where possible, the flexible learning day will be facilitated by school staff or professionals from other Council departments and Third Sector organisations, however this will not take place within the school.



Transport

In this rural region, around a quarter of pupils are eligible for school transport. Buses will only be able to take a smaller number of passengers now because of social distancing and so we know that we will not always be able to transport pupils to and from school. An initial survey has been sent to all parents of pupils who normally use school transport to understand their future needs in relation to transporting their children.

Emergency Childcare

In line with government advice, we will continue to provide emergency childcare once we begin the new academic year from Wednesday 12 August. This provision will only be available to families where both parents are key workers, or for single parent households where the parent is a key worker as part of the COVID response. Parents will have to apply for this. We will issue information on how to do this soon.

It is likely that it will not be possible for this emergency childcare to take place in our school buildings so we are working with out of school care providers and other partners to consider how and where this can best be delivered. As our plans develop, we will keep you informed. We will also be appealing to employers to work with their employees to consider flexible working patterns that enable parents to care for their children on the days they are not in school. The advice remains that, where possible, children should be cared for at home when not in school. This helps us provide the most education in school for all children.

The way forward

I hope that these arrangements will be short term and when it is safe to do so, pupils will be able to increase their attendance at school. I understand that this will mean some continued disruption for families, however it is not possible for all pupils to return to school and ensure we are following the Scottish Government guidance on social distancing. The approach we have outlined above aims to provide a fair approach to learning for all students across Dumfries and Galloway.

Each school will develop more detailed plans to support their school community needs as much as possible.

Once again, we would like to acknowledge the way families have adapted and supported their children throughout this time. I hope this information provides you with re-assurance about what the next term will look like for your children.

If you would like to read the current government guidance on the re-opening of schools you can see it online at:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-re-opening-schools-guide/>

I will continue to send out more information and updates to all families as our plans develop and I will give you as much notice as possible. Please be assured that more detailed information about your child's schooling arrangements will come direct from your school.

Thank you again for all your support; we could not have done this without you and we look forward to working with you over the coming weeks.

Your sincerely,



Dr Gillian Brydson

Director Skills, Education and Learning