

Your Ref:

Skills, Education and LearningOur Ref: Schools Services\Schools Central
\ESMT\CORONAVIRUS\Parents and PupilsDirectorate
122-124 Irish Street
Dumfries
DG1 2PB

20 March 2020

Any enquiries please contact
Gillian BrydsonDirect Dial 01387 260100
E-mail directorskillseducationandlearning@dumgal.gov.uk

Dear Parent / Carer

You will have heard from the First Minister on Wednesday that all schools in Scotland will close from today until further notice. We recognise how difficult and disruptive this is for you and your families. Public services across Dumfries and Galloway will work together to respond to this public health crisis and we thank you for your patience and understanding.

Many organisations and individuals have volunteered to support the NHS, Health and Social Care Partnership and our local communities – our schools are at the heart of our communities and we will continue to play our part. These are challenging times and we are working across Dumfries and Galloway to respond to the situation as it develops, following official advice, to plan carefully for children and families. This is our priority.

Our headteachers will continue to be the contact point for you and our staff are here to support your child's education. I have written directly to senior phase pupils about arrangements for qualifications and assure all parents that meeting the SQA requirements is the immediate priority for secondary teachers next week.

The Deputy First Minister expects that we ensure that we provide childcare support for key workers in posts which ensure that essential services can be delivered and that cover tasks within the local community which support the vulnerable and aid community resilience. He has provided further details about the nature of provision that will be available to some young people during the period of school closures.

Community Hubs within secondary school buildings in Dumfries and Galloway will open on Thursday 26 March and private nurseries and childcare providers (including childminders) will be open from Monday 23 March to children and young people whose parents/carers fall within the key worker categories as follows:

- Health and Care workers directly supporting COVID response, and associated staff;
- Health and Care workers supporting life threatening emergency work, as well as critical primary and community care provision;
- Energy suppliers
- Staff providing face to face childcare/learning
- Other Health and Care workers
- Wider public sector workers providing emergency/critical welfare services (eg Fire, Police, Prisons, Social Workers, etc), as well as those supporting our Critical National Infrastructure, without whom serious damage to the welfare of the people of Scotland could be caused.

We will also be providing a service for some of our most vulnerable children identified by professionals in a multi-agency approach.

We respectfully ask that other parents/carers do not send their young people to school, as clearly the measures in place are designed to support our critical services and vulnerable young people in addressing this public health crisis. If you feel that your job/role meets the criteria but is not listed, please discuss this directly with your school/ELC. As we move through the next few weeks, the key worker prioritisation may evolve and we ask you to keep in touch with us if you are having difficulty with the current arrangements.

Please note, the service being provided will not be a continuation of normal educational provision and will also be supported by colleagues from other Council teams such as active schools, libraries and leisure and sport. We are grateful to all staff and volunteers who will be providing this childcare programme for key workers. Further information relating to hours of opening, transport and catering provision will be sent via your school and shared through the Council communication channels.

As you will understand, this is a dynamic situation and we expect that arrangements will change as the weeks progress and we understand better the demand on this service and our own staff capacity. May I also reinforce that young people with underlying health conditions or who are currently self-isolating should not attend.

All other children and young people will continue to receive educational input via online platforms such as GLOW and school staff will be providing updates to you. We will also be ensuring that schools and ELCs keep in contact with you and your family via regular communications to maintain the already great sense of community and togetherness in our schools and ELCs.

I hope that this letter will cover most of the questions that you will have at this time, but we also appreciate that you may have further questions. I do not know how long our schools will be closed but please know that we are here to support you and your families at this time. We have always been overwhelmed by the response of our people and our communities in their support of children and young people and I am confident this will continue.

Can I thank you all for your understanding of these circumstances and for working with us to ensure that our critical services can be supported. I would encourage you to follow all of the health advice being published, which is available on our website www.dumgal.gov.uk, so that you and your family can stay as safe as possible during this period.

Our schools and communities are very proud of our children and young people and we will, together, move through this period.

Yours sincerely



Dr Gillian Brydson
Director Skills, Education and Learning