

Head of Education: Linda McAulay-Griffiths

Telephone: 01563 576126

Email: linda.mcaulay-griffiths@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

**Our Ref:** LMCA/CC

4 June 2020

Dear Parents/ Carers

Can I first of all take this opportunity to let you all know how much we miss your amazing young people and all of you, as their families. I hope that you are all in good health and staying safe.

I also wanted to say thank you to all of our parents and carers for doing their very best to support remote learning during lockdown – we know that this has been a difficult few months for us all. I hope that you all have continued to feel connected to your host schools and centres via the activities and materials provided for our young people, social media and wellbeing check-in calls.

You will be aware that national guidance has been issued around the re-opening of schools, with the finer details of this published on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2020. Since this date we have held several key meetings with Head Teachers, parent representatives, and other services to discuss physical recovery of schools.

I have attached a link to the guidance here :-

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

<https://news.gov.scot/news/safe-return-to-schools-and-nurseries>

### **Schools in June**

In line with the current government advice, we are making arrangements for senior staff to start to return to school during this week and next to enable physical preparations for both the remainder of June and to prepare for August. Further staff will join schools week beginning 15<sup>th</sup> June to join in such preparations.

Week beginning 22<sup>nd</sup> June, some schools may invite young people from transition phases such as S1 and P1 and those young people who require an enhanced transition to attend the school.

Your school will be in touch with you individually if this is the case.

### **August Return Date**

You will also have heard that there has been a national date for return of school set as 11<sup>th</sup> August, and I know that this has been queried with the Scottish Government. There is an awareness that

this will cause concern for families with holidays booked or indeed work patterns and I will be back in touch with you in due course if there is any movement on this.

### **Learning from August onwards**

We are working with head teachers and others to consider how we could phase in-school learning. Safety will always be our overriding concern and it is clear that social or physical distancing will remain as something we should all be practising in the coming months. This will mean we will have to think differently about how we deliver learning. The constraints in place mean that we cannot have all pupils in school on a full-time basis as was the case previously.

We have a huge variation in type and size of building across our school estate and also their access to outdoor facilities and indeed local amenities. Therefore, each school will develop their own plan that supports their school community needs as much as possible, and all schools have been given a consistent range of supports, guidance and assistance to guide their planning. I would urge you to please stay connected to your school and Parent Council during this planning phase.

We are planning for a blended approach of in-school and learning at home. I understand that this temporary way of learning will mean that families need to make adjustments for work and childcare arrangements, we are trying our very best to work on return models to support siblings in families. Our in-school learning is likely to involve smaller groups of children coming in for part of the week and learning at home for the rest of the week.

Outdoor learning will be used wherever possible. Staff will provide tasks/activities to be carried out at home and this will be set by teachers while children and young people are at school as part of their learning experience.

### **SQA**

The deadline for submitting estimate grades for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses was last week and all East Ayrshire schools have submitted the estimates to SQA and I have attached an infographic to this letter to let you see what processes were behind this in reaching estimates. Teachers are now focusing on unit results for courses that do not involve examinations, such as National 3 and National 4 courses and Scottish Baccalaureate courses.

SQA will released results on Tuesday 4th August and I would encourage you to support your child/children to sign up to MySQA to receive their results by text and email. They will still receive a certificate via post however by signing up to MySQA, results will arrive before the post.

Discussions are ongoing at a national level on whether there will be exams in 2021 and I will absolutely make sure that you are kept aware of developments.

### **Critical Childcare**

We will be continue to provide emergency childcare for children where both parents are keyworkers in line with government advice. Our current childcare hubs will need to be reconsidered as space will be required for learning. We are working with out of school care providers and other services in the Council 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 to 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.

### **Ongoing communications and information**

We recognise that there will be further information needed for parents and carers going forward and that this has been a hugely concerning time. I fully intend to issue further communication in advance of the Summer holiday to give you more information, particularly on August return dates.

This period continues to be challenging for us all, particularly as we face an unknown future in regard to lockdown rules and when these may indeed change or adapt, so I thank you so much for your patience and forbearance as we navigate the information available to us.

In respect of school uniform for August, can I clarify at this time that we are so aware of the restrictions on both uniform purchase and its availability and we will simply be so happy to just see our young people in August, so there is no demand from schools that uniforms must be worn at this stage if that is your preference.

Transport will be another key question and once again, your school will guide you as to the availability and configuration of school transport once return plans are fleshed out more fully.

In the coming week, we will send out a parental survey through your app to ensure that all parental voices can be heard in this phase and hope that you will take the opportunity to complete this and influence our renewal journey. We have parent representation on all of our renewal workstreams via our Parent Council Steering Group and they are playing a fantastic role in ensuring we are all pulling in same strategic direction.

A letter for parents and carers with children in our Early Childhood Centres will be issued separately and will include information relating to the allocation of early learning and childcare places. National guidance on the re-opening of early learning and childcare settings will be published mid-June.

For now, can I end by thanking you once more for your amazing work at home with our young people and I cannot begin to express that which will be felt when we first see them again.

Please continue to keep in touch with your school and I hope that this letter has been useful in framing our current position and next steps.

With my best wishes to you and your families.



LINDA McAULAY-GRIFFITHS  
**Head of Education**

20 April

- SQA Released guidance for teachers on 'Producing Estimates'
- Teachers asked to take time to consider this guidance and how it could be applied in each subject area

5 May

- SEM Performance & Assurance and Secondary Head Teachers met for detailed discussion about the SQA guidance and agree consistent approach to develop estimates

5 May to 21 May

- Teachers developing estimates
- Internal school quality assurance and scrutiny of estimates

21 May and 26 May

- Individual school meetings involving Head of Education, SEM Performance & Assurance, Head Teacher and SQA Coordinator to discuss draft estimates. Focus on estimates at teacher, subject, whole school and pupil levels.

29 May

- SQA Estimate submission deadline