

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope that this letter once again finds you and your families well, and can I reiterate a warm thank you for your amazing work with our young people during this period of lockdown. Following my recent communication, I was keen to ensure you were updated in regards to our plan for careful and considered return of our young people and staff to school.

In reaching the following proposals, I would like to express a debt of gratitude to your Head Teachers, your Parent Council Chairs and parents who have formed part of our renewal workstreams in the Council.

In addition, I am deeply grateful to the huge numbers of you who have completed our parent survey, which has had over 3000 responses to date. The plans to return have been jointly developed by a huge number of council services who have worked alongside us to reach this stage, including Facilities Management, Catering, Health and Safety, Human Resources and Transport, to name but a few. In reaching our model, we have considered, at the front and centre of our thinking, the safety and wellbeing of our young people, staff and their families as we are so aware that this will be your prime concern.

To this end, can we advise of some of the following headline measures as being applicable to all of our schools:

- Cleaning patterns and routines have been established for our schools to support the prevention of spread of COVID-19, these are specific to each school
- Shared materials in classrooms have been removed and young people are being issued with personal equipment and stationery that they will be able to take home to support blended learning. Where young people have to share materials, e.g. practical subjects, this is addressed specifically using cleaning routines.
- Transport has clearly been a very detailed issue and working capacities have been changed to ensure social distancing on all forms of school transport, schools will provide separate communications to those requiring transport.
- Risk assessments for pupil and staff return have been carried out and are in place, given that we already have some staff and pupils attending in June.
- Social distancing of 2m has been a pre-requisite for the setup of classrooms and other spaces that your child will use, in addition child-friendly communications and graphics will be present in all of our schools. Some schools will adopt a “social bubble” approach, this will be made clear in the school specific communication you will receive.
- Individual schools have planned for the safe arrival and pick-up of pupils in a measured fashion and this too will be communicated to you in school-specific communications.

Pupil Attendance in all schools

The attendance model for all schools in East Ayrshire has been agreed at a

consistent level to ensure equity for all of our learners, and we have also clearly ensured that our children who are more vulnerable have been appropriately considered. Due to the particular needs of young people in our specialist sector schools, these arrangements will be communicated on a school by school basis. Guidance on re-opening early childhood centres has just been released this week, thus further details will be forthcoming in this regard.

Primary School Pupils

Your child will attend primary school two days per week (or equivalent), in a pattern that will be released by your school via the school app or other means. The limited attendance is governed by the current social distancing requirements which restricts the number of young people we can have in our schools at any one time. Some young people may attend on further days, this is a matter delegated to the school, in regards to young people in a vulnerable situation.

Secondary School Pupils

The attendance model for secondary schools in East Ayrshire is clearly more complex, due to significant differentials in school roll, capacity and available staffing in regard to specific subjects. We are therefore taking a phased and measured approach to ensure the safety of the full school community, and also protect the wellbeing of young people in operating initially with lower numbers as they return, and adapt to what will be very different circumstances.

This model will operate as follows:-

Wednesday 12th - Friday 28th August: 1 day per week for all pupils (or equivalent), with added time enhancement for senior phase to be released by individual schools. This permits secondary schools working on a two week rotation model to see a full run of their timetable and address any concerns before upscaling pupil attendance.

Subject to review, all pupils will begin attending 2 days per week, again with added time enhancement for senior phase w/b 31st August.

Clearly this situation is completely dynamic and we will continue to be guided by government and public health guidance and advice, and where we can safely increase attendance, this will absolutely be the case.

I am also very aware that the proposed pattern, when released by your school, will not meet the needs of everyone, and I ask you to bear with your school as they answer queries specific to individual family circumstances. A position has not yet been reached by the Scottish Government in regards to the provision of childcare for keyworkers for August, I therefore ask for your understanding that we cannot answer any questions in this regard until the position is declared nationally.

In addition to many aspects of pupil return, we know that parents and carers will have many questions, and we hope that some of these may be answered in some of the statements below:-

- Children do NOT require to wear uniform if any family have been unable to access this due to lockdown or other circumstances. Our priority is absolutely having our young people back with us.
- We have asked schools, where possible, that siblings who attend the same school, attend on the same days.
- Government guidance advises that young people may not leave the premises at lunch to access home lunch or outside catering, we ask for your understanding on this during this return phase. Children are welcome to bring a packed lunch and free school meals and paid catering will be provided on a trolley service to classrooms, this has also freed up extra capacity to house more young people in our schools.
- Transport should still be applied for in the normal way and you can check entitlement and apply for free school meals and footwear & clothing grants here:
<http://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/clothing-grants-free-school-meals>

It is important that parents enrol for our Parent Pay system as cash will not be handled in schools. You can find out more about this here. [Parent Pay](#)

- If your family have booked a holiday for the week including 12th August, the absence of your young person will be authorised given the unanticipated change to the Summer break. [Summer Holidays](#)
- Information on emergency childcare over the forthcoming Summer holiday has already been sent to all parents and carers who are already registered for this provision, as this childcare will change over the Summer break.

Blended learning

Clearly face-to-face teaching is only one part of a rigorous blended learning approach, we are preparing supplementary information for all parents and carers, as we move into a new phase of learning, this will be made available to parents and carers in the new school term.

Next steps

I am meeting again with your Parent Council Chairs on Wednesday 24th June where we will have further discussion around the safe recovery of schools and discuss the findings of the parent survey as we move into our new phase of learning. These will also be shared with your individual schools to influence provision on a local level.

Can I please ask for your understanding in working with your schools over the last week of term as they move towards the Summer Holiday, your Head Teachers have put an incredible amount of time and thought into their return models and they too appreciate that parents and carers are incredibly anxious about school return and patterns of attendance. I ask that this is borne in mind in any discussions you may require to have with your schools going forward.

Finally, can I advise that, as has been the case throughout this crisis, that there will

be a separate release of information for our young people returning to school, they too have been part of an authority-wide survey and have met in their pupil council groupings in all schools over the past weeks, as an integral part of our thinking as we return.

Can I wish you and your families a very happy Summer, and please know that our central education team will remain in place over this time should the situation change in any way that would see us able to implement a further return of young people as intimated.

With all my best wishes to you and your families at this time.

LINDA McAULAY-GRIFFITHS
Head of Education