

Head of Education: Linda McAulay-Griffiths

Telephone: 01563 576126

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

Our Ref: JH/CC

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Dear parent/carer,

School Opening Arrangements January 2021

Further to our communication to you on Sunday following the First Minister's announcement on the 19th of December, we have now been provided with guidance by Scottish Government and are in a position to update you.

In East Ayrshire, schools and Early Childhood Centres (ECCs) will now reopen on **Thursday the 7th of January** but only for the children of key workers and the most vulnerable children. This arrangement will be in place until at least Friday 15th of January with remote learning in place for all other school pupils from **Monday the 11th of January**. Please note that this is a change to the previously published reopening date of 6th of January as the Scottish Government have granted an exceptional closure day for pupils on the 6th of January. School/ECC staff will return on the 6th to plan and prepare for the safe return of these children on the 7th and for the remote learning arrangements from the 11th.

The current expectation is that from **Monday 18th January onwards**, schools will be open to all staff and pupils for in-person teaching and learning as normal, and operating within the existing guidance on reducing risks in schools and strategic framework protection levels. Similarly we expect all ECCs to reopen to all children from 18th of January. We will provide you with updates on this in January.

School/ECC staff and other agencies will work together to determine which children are considered to be vulnerable because of factors related to their personal development, features of their family life, or because of wider influences that impact on them within their community. These children should attend schools and ECCs from 7th January and parents/carers will be contacted directly regarding this. Please note that our schools are currently closed and staff are on holiday until the 6th of January. Colleagues in other services are still working and will contact relevant families.

Remote learning for all pupils will begin on the 11th of January and your own child's school will contact you in January with information on how this will operate. Arrangements are underway for the continued provision of meals to children who are entitled to free school meals. School transport will continue to be available for those children who require this.

I understand that parents of senior pupils will have concerns about planned prelims due to commence in January and can assure you that schools will contact your child about revised arrangements for these after the 11th of January.

In line with Scottish Government guidance we will also offer places in schools and ECCs to children where all adults in the household are key workers and where no other options for informal childcare are available. East Ayrshire Council will return to Protection Level 4 on the 26th of December and the national guidance for Level 4 permits children of key workers to access informal childcare via friends and family.

Childminders can stay open to all children and should operate in accordance with Level 4 guidance.

If both parents/carers are key workers in one of the sectors listed below and attendance at school/ECC is your only option, please complete the registration form (link below). **A separate form is required for each child.**

If your registration is accepted, your child will attend their own school/ECC from 7th of January. Provision on the 7th and 8th will be limited to in-school childcare and wellbeing support for children attending and, from the 11th of January, pupils attending will access learning in school. The learning offered will be the same regardless if children are in school or at home, with children attending school being supervised by school staff.

Our overarching concern is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and staff, and measures will be put in place to establish new “bubbles” for children attending settings. A new strain of the virus is reported to be particularly effective at being transmitted and we therefore will seek to minimise contact between children and between children and adults wherever possible in schools. In ECCs new “bubbles” will be formed and the usual measures to keep people safe will continue. We will, however, continue to share information with Test and Protect about close contacts if any positive cases occur in schools and ECCs and this may result in children having to self-isolate.

The categories for key worker registration in East Ayrshire are:

- NHS and Social Care
- Emergency Services
- Education and childcare
- Involved in food production, distribution and sales
- Energy suppliers
- Postal workers
- Prison Staff
- GlaxoSmithKline employees in North Ayrshire
- Essential East Ayrshire Council employees who have already been officially notified by their manager
- HM Forces
- Funeral Services

The link to the registration form for primary, secondary and ASN schools is here: [Key Worker Registration Form](#)

For Early Learning and Childcare please use this link: [Key worker registration for ELC](#)

We understand that this is a particularly uncertain and anxious time for everyone and can reassure you that we are doing everything we can to make the return to education in January – whether in person or remote – as smooth as possible.

With many thanks for your continued support,

East Ayrshire Education Service