

Dear Parent Council Chairs

Thank you again for your participation in our meeting on Monday 8 June. As was shared at the meeting we received 608 questions from you on behalf of your parent forums. This tremendous response in such a short timescale reassures all that we are in this together to support our children and young people safely back to school as soon as possible.

A copy of the presentation from Monday night has already been shared with you. I believe the content of which has answered many of the questions posed. In addition we have grouped together questions under similar themes and answered as part of the Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) document.

Many of the remaining questions submitted were specific to individual schools and as such we have shared your questions with Head Teachers who can provide you with the detail you require moving forward.

Your continued support as we move towards phase 2 and phase 3 of our recovery plan is very much appreciated. We all want what is best for your children and for them to return to full time education as quickly as it is safe to do so.

Yours sincerely

The information within this FAQ is correct at the time of writing.

COVID-19 Local Phasing Delivery Plan

Frequently Asked Questions

STAFFING

- What arrangements will be made for children to 'meet' their new teacher in June?

These arrangements will be made by individual schools who will let parents know the relevant arrangements.

- Can my child have the same teacher in August? I am worried that it will be difficult for new teachers to get to know children who are only in school two days a week.

This will also be decided locally at school level.

- Will teaching staff have time to be more responsive to children who are learning at home?

Schools are maximising all teaching staff, including management to ensure that your child's learning needs will be met over the 5 days of the week. Class teachers will plan and oversee both your child's learning when in school and their remote learning out of school. As teachers will have 2 groups of pupils to teach the majority of their time will be spent in front children, therefore feedback may not be instant.

- Will schools require additional staff as they move in to Phase 2 and 3? Will they be looking for parent volunteers to help, or would this be discouraged?

As mentioned previously our schools are maximising all available teaching staff. It is unlikely that parent volunteers would be requested as this would increase footfall through the school and hence the safety measures we are putting in place could be compromised.

- Will staff from other agencies such as Speech and Language Therapy be able to come into the school to work with my child?

Yes, subject to the necessary risk assessment and physical distancing measures.

- My child has had one to one support in the past, will this be available?

Schools know your children very well and will arrange their support. All children will benefit from smaller groups during the initial phasing. The availability of staff however may vary at times if staff are shielding or self-isolating or indeed are off for any other reason.

- Will there be virtual parent's nights? How will we get to know about our child's progress?

Schools will make arrangements with parents to advise on children's progress; share engagement levels, or offer feedback. We would expect, however, that schools will make

arrangements for parents and teachers to “meet” following their usual parent / teacher calendar.

PUPIL ATTENDANCE

- Why do teachers need two In-service days in August, would it not be better to have children in school as soon as possible?

The two in-service days are currently under discussion and negotiation with a proposal that Monday 10th and Tuesday 11th August be in-service days enabling children to return on 12th August, a week earlier than originally planned. This is subject to agreement with Trade Union colleagues.

Having the in-service days at the start of term ensures that learning is not disrupted at another time in the year. This time is included in teacher terms and conditions and will be invaluable in making the preparations necessary to welcome children back into school. Ordinarily teachers work 195 days, with 190 days working with children. Our draft school calendar for session 2020/2021 offers children an additional 2 days of schooling (192 days).

- When will we know the school holiday dates for the rest of the year?

This will be confirmed before end of this term.

- How will you decide which days children attend school, will siblings be considered, friendship groups, parents working arrangements? Will parents get to choose?

We have asked schools to consider siblings across ELC, Primary and Special schools to ensure continuity for families. Secondary schools will be following a different timetabling model, therefore young people attending Secondary School will attend on different days than their younger siblings.

- What can I do if the days you give my child don't suit me?

The Scottish Government has asked that employers respond flexibly as we move through the different recovery phases, as such it may be necessary to negotiate with your employer.

- I'm worried about the virus, do I NEED to send my child back to school? What will happen if I don't?

All of our arrangements are based on the advice and guidance that the Scottish Government gives us. In turn their guidance is based on the scientific advice they receive from Public Health advisers. Therefore, all we are planning is based on it being safe for schools to reopen with the necessary safety measures in place. If you did not want your child to return to school they would still receive remote learning but only for the days they are not meant to be in school.

- Will keyworker families still be able to access all day provision on the days required to work?

Yes children will be offered a place in school for 5 days (or as required). They will join their classmates for face to face learning 2 days per week and will undertake remote learning on the remaining days in school.

- Will the criteria for keyworkers change as more families are seeking to get back to work?

The Scottish Government decides the categories for key workers. Any review of this criteria will be by the government. We are introducing an application process to make it easier for parents to apply for a keyworker place, where both parents, or one single parent, meet the Scottish Government criteria. Your child's school will share this application process with you in the coming weeks.

- Will other childcare be available on days when my children are/are not in school? What will this be and who will be responsible for ensuring it is safe?

The Scottish Government's roadmap allows for OSC and Funded Providers to re-open in national phase 3, when it is safe to do so they will provide childcare. Childminders and fully outdoor provision are allowed to operate now. The Care Inspectorate governs childcare providers.

- My child usually attends the CCC or PSADU, will this still be available?

Yes, although their pattern of attendance may change.

- I've heard that children aren't allowed to go from one childcare setting or school to another, is that true?

The current advice from the Scottish Government states that blended placements (where children are attending two or more settings – for example a critical childcare hub followed by a childminder), should be avoided where possible, but may be permitted where this is the only option to support critical childcare arrangements, for example, for keyworker families. In such cases, this would be a matter for childminder discretion, following a risk assessment and consultation with the families and other setting concerned. This may change on 15 June when further guidance is expected regarding ELC and OSC.

- How can I support my child emotionally to come back into school if I'm not allowed in?

Our Educational Psychology Team has been developing materials as part of East Renfrewshire's Healthier Minds Strategy. These materials are readily available on their website (<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/er/PsychologicalService/>). Schools are also planning how to support children with this change, for example the use of social stories, virtual tours, etc. Individual worries should be discussed with schools. We are also planning a media campaign to get clear and easy messages to parents, pupils and staff about readying ourselves for coming back to school.

CURRICULUM

- What transition arrangements will be in place for children moving to P1/S1 and between stages?

For many of our schools transition visits have been taking place for some time before lockdown, however a focussed transition programme will take place in June for children in Primary 1, Primary 7 and those who would benefit across the age range with this type of support. Schools will be in touch with families regarding arrangements.

- What consideration will be given to children with ASN?

Schools are fully aware of the support needs of your children. Transition arrangements will be made to support children with ASN.

- Will learning in school focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing?

Yes this will support children as we move to this new way of learning. There will be a focus on resilience, relationships and nurturing approaches as we welcome children back in to schools. Primary schools will focus on these 3 areas of the curriculum, with teachers making connections with other areas of the curriculum. Secondary schools will offer learning experiences across the curriculum.

- How will teachers support children's mental health and wellbeing, and help them understand the 'new rules'?

This will be included in health and wellbeing which is one of the key focus areas in the recovery curriculum. We will also be giving our staff specific advice on mental health and resilience when they return to school on the in-service days in August to support them to in turn support pupils.

- How will schools identify, and address the gaps in learning caused by non-attendance at school due to the pandemic? Surely the pace of learning will continue to suffer if children are only attending school part time?

Assessment is part of everyday learning and teaching. Teachers will quickly assess the progress children have made while schools have been closed, identify gaps and plan next steps in learning. Learning will take place over 5 days with a combination of face to face in school learning and remote out of school learning. School leaders will monitor children's learning to ensure continuity and progression for children as well as pace and challenge. There will be a balance of new learning and application of skills recently taught.

- Has consideration been given to children repeating the year? If not, why not?

No. The impact on children's self-esteem means that this is not a viable option.

- Will all children need to be assessed when they come back to school in August?

Assessment is an ongoing part of learning and teaching and is used by teachers to plan next steps in learning.

- Will you still do Standardised Tests?

Yes. As above, assessment in all forms is integral to learning and teaching.

- Home learning has been challenging for families and a number of questions remain:

- Will new learning be introduced, so far my child has only done revision?

Yes

- Will there be more interactive lessons with audio or video elements, why has this not been done already?

Yes, a Video Vault is already in development to support with this. As part of the West Partnership, East Renfrewshire is also exploring the use of e-Sgoil, an innovative and exciting programme of live teaching; a sort of “online school”.

- How are parents expected to balance home learning for their children along with working from home?

We recognise that this is hard, the Scottish Government is appealing to employers for flexibility to make this easier for families.

- Will devices be available for families where required e.g. multiple children at home and only one device available?

Remote learning will not necessarily be digital but if you are finding the use of devices in your home a challenge then please speak to your child’s school.

- Will learning be shared in advance, e.g. a week at a time so that parents are clear on what needs to be covered and enable them to gather resources or plan tasks for suitable days and times?

This is for individual schools to decide.

- Will there be more advice for parents or more individualised learning for children with ASN?

This should be discussed with your child’s school.

- Is it possible to ensure that one platform is used to share home learning? It is confusing when there are too many sources to check.

This should be discussed with your child’s school.

- Will printed resource packs be available to support learning at home?

This is for individual schools to decide, but we recognise that we need a balance between digital learning and other ways, such as using paper and pencil. The children and young people need that too.

- Will teachers provide more feedback on learning? At the moment my child hardly gets any but in some schools the teachers are phoning home to check in, why is this not the case in my school?

This should be discussed with your child’s school. It will be for Head Teachers to monitor the quality of learning and teaching both face to face and remote.

- How will you make sure that there is consistency in learning within each school, and compared to others? It feels like other schools are doing more than mine.

The department has a good system in place to monitor pupil engagement, however school leadership teams have responsibility for the monitoring of learning experiences of their learners. If you have a concern you should discuss with your child's school.

- How do you monitor the quality of learning being offered at home, and children's engagement with it?

Please see above.

- My child is in the senior phase, will they get to sit exams next year? What is the plan to ensure they are taught everything they need to know to complete their course?

We don't yet know the answer to this question, this will be dependent on a decision from the Scottish Government and SQA, however we are pressing for an announcement through our professional associations.

- How will subjects be timetabled in Secondary Schools, will there be a focus on certificated subjects or will they still need to do things like RE, PSHE and PE?

The full range of subjects will be covered through the new temporary timetabling model.

- Play is going to be important for my child's wellbeing when they go back to school, will they still be allowed to play in the early years of primary school, or will they be expected to sit in rows for more than an hour at a time?

Yes, playful approaches to learning will still be promoted in the early years. Care Inspectorate guidance on cleaning and safe use of play equipment and resources will be adhered to.

BUILDINGS AND OUTDOORS

- Will outdoor facilities be upgraded to support increased outdoor learning e.g. outdoor sinks, outdoor toilets, shelters etc?

No

- Why do schools need to close on a Wednesday for cleaning, can this not be done in the evening?

All our schools are cleaned daily, the Wednesday ensures that all ELC and Primary teachers receive the non-class contact time (NCCT) to which they are contractually entitled, enabling them to respond to and plan for both remote and face to face learning.

- Will you use other buildings in the community to maximise capacity? What about Portacabins?

Yes, we will look at all options when considering space available to us.

- Will parents be allowed into the school playground? How will times be staggered to minimise the number of people waiting to get in?

Parents won't be allowed into the playgrounds as per the Scottish Government guidance. Schools will communicate this detail with their families as the physical settings of each building will determine an individualised approach for each school.

- If there are staggered times, how does this affect those who travel on school or public transport?

Schools will advise on times, the department is in discussion with bus companies and SPT to support this.

Will childminders be allowed to collect children from school?

Any childminder collecting children from a school would be expected to follow the same rules as any other parent/visitor.

At present the Scottish Government guidelines for childminders state that situations where children are attending two or more settings – for example a critical childcare hub followed by a childminder, should be avoided where possible, but may be permitted where this is the only option to support critical childcare arrangements, for example, for keyworker families. In such cases, this would be a matter for childminder discretion, following a risk assessment and consultation with the families and other setting concerned.

- How will the way children move around schools change? What will this mean e.g. for children with ASN who may be used to going to a base when the classroom setting becomes too much? How will children be supported to understand this, will there be signs and symbols to help them?

Schools will provide this information and will take the needs of all children into consideration when devising the systems for their building.

- How will you ensure social distancing at playtime and lunchtime? Who will supervise this and what will happen if children break the rules?

Playground supervision will continue as it does at present with janitors and other school staff overseeing this. Schools will be able to advise on their own procedures determined by the available space in their own school grounds and will encourage children to follow the rules.

SAFETY

- Will schools share their risk assessments with parents? Have they done Equality Impact Assessments on the changes being introduced with regard to ASN?

Risk assessments will be shared with school users, not for parents, although the aspects which pertain to parents will naturally be shared. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been conducted for the whole recovery plan.

- What will happen at lunchtimes? Will there be hot food? Can my child still come home for lunch? Will my child still get their free school meal?

Yes but these will be delivered to class and may not be hot. Children may still go home for lunch but will need to follow strict hygiene procedures including handwashing when they return to school.

- Will children and staff need to wear PPE? What about face masks?

PPE will be determined by individual risk assessments for pupils and staff.

- My child has asthma, how will you keep them safe?

We will adhere to all public health information, and ensure individual risk assessments are in place, where required.

- Will there be enough handwashing facilities and hand sanitiser provided? What about children with sensory difficulties, how will they be supported to use products with unusual textures or smells?

Yes, soap and sanitiser will be provided, schools will address any individual concerns.

- Will all children be expected to social distance at all times to a distance of 2m? How is this even possible for young children?

Yes but we know this presents a challenge for children, so we continue to encourage them to do so and are grateful if parents would help with this messaging. The Strategic Framework for Reopening Schools and ELC states that it is not appropriate for young children to maintain the models of physical distancing that would be suitable for older children, either practically or in terms of child development. Alternative, age appropriate public health measures will supplement physical distancing including:

- *Enhanced hand hygiene and cleaning practices*
 - *Caring for children in small groups*
 - *Minimising contact between those groups*
 - *Maximising use of outdoor spaces*
 - *Physical distancing between adults in the setting, including parents at drop-off and pick-up times*
- If my child requires first aid or is upset, what will happen, will there be a 'no touch' policy?

No – appropriate risk assessment and PPE will be in place to make sure children are supported appropriately.

- Will school uniforms be required? Doctors don't wear ties for hygiene reasons, blazers can't be washed every day, how will schools adapt their guidelines about uniform to make sure that we can wash clothes worn into school each day?

Guidance has been provided for some high risk environments such as Health and Care settings which indicates a need to change and launder clothing on a daily basis, however at the time of writing this advice has not been extended to schools.

Scottish Government guidance to support the reopening of schools does not include advice regarding the removal of school uniform, therefore there is no reason to suggest that uniform should not be worn. As we hope to provide as much normality for children as possible we would encourage the wearing of school uniform for all pupils. Schools will advise appropriate clothing for outdoor learning and physical activity, as it may mean on these days children turn up to school in their PE kit / outdoor clothing.

Where children wear school uniform the risk of children feeling under pressure to dress in expensive items is removed, and the cost of this for parents prevented. We are however mindful of current times and the choice of items being limited to online shops or supermarkets which remain open, in particular the challenge of providing suitable footwear at this time, we therefore want to reassure parents that our schools will operate with a level of flexibility and discretion to ensure that no child will be made to feel different because of their dress when they return to school in August.

- What sort of things will children be allowed to bring into school, will they still be expected to bring a school bag?

School will advise parents of this.

- What will happen if a child or member of staff shows symptoms of coronavirus? Will there be a sick room? Will you take children's temperatures when they arrive at school?

Any child who is feeling unwell should not attend school. A suitable area for isolation has been designated in each school and parents will be asked to collect any pupil who is unwell. We will not take children's temperature at school as per the Scottish Government guidance.

- What will happen if a child or member of staff tests positive for coronavirus?

Anyone who develops symptoms will be required to self-isolate and follow the national guidance relating to Test and Protect. We will follow our continued rigorous cleaning programme.

- What will happen to clubs, trips and after school activities?

Schools will advise on this.

- Will all Parent Council Events be cancelled, unless they can be done virtually e.g. a quiz?

Schools will advise but the department will encourage them to carry on remotely.

COMMUNICATIONS

- When will we find out what days our children will attend school?

Schools are working on their recovery plans and will communicate to parents week beginning 22.06.20

- It would be easier if we just had to check one single source for information, will this be possible?

Schools will share information but the council will also issue wider messaging through the usual channels.

- Will Parent Councils be able to use teams to host virtual meetings?

If you have Office 365 this will be possible.

- How can parents and the Parent Council best support the school at this difficult time?

Following and adhering to the latest Scottish Government guidance will be of most help and of course, continuing to support the Head Teacher and all school staff.