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Education Department
211 Main Street
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Dear Parent / Carer

First of all I must heap praise on all of you and thank you, not just for being there to reassure your children when schools closed on 20 March, but for the ongoing support in engaging with them in their remote learning. It feels like a life time ago and I know it has not been an insignificant undertaking. I appreciate many of you have had to juggle work commitments with running the “home school” and I’m sure it’s given you an even higher level of regard for the job teachers do, day in day out with up to 33 learners at a time. However, we will need to continue to count on your support as we slowly ease our way out of lock down.

I also want to express my gratitude to all the staff and our partners in the Trust, who have been continuing to support your children and young people through school hubs, remote learning and regular telephone conversations to chat and find out how they are. The speed with which all of this was introduced was amazing. It continues to be of a high quality, lauded by Education Scotland for its coverage and the percentage of learners able to access it digitally, all thanks to the support our Education Department has had over many years from elected members.

As we move to the next phase out of lockdown and following government advice, I wanted to keep you up to date in as much as I am able to in these uncertain times.

You will be well aware that the Scottish Government announced last week that we are now in Phase 1 out of lockdown and no doubt you will have seen our own media release of key dates for ERC in June. As part of this phase we are in the middle of preparing schools to welcome back the children and young people who have attended our hubs for the past 10 weeks. Senior leaders in each of our schools are completing risk assessments for their buildings which will make sure we take all the necessary steps to secure everyone’s safety. As such school hubs will close on Friday 5 June and all children and young people who have been using the hubs will be welcomed back to their own schools on Monday 8 June.

The staff will also be returning to their own buildings in small groups to prepare for welcoming back of children at key transition stages in their learning who will be invited in small groups of children into school from 15 June. Head Teachers will send invitations during the course of next week.

Teachers will primarily be in their buildings over the course of June to redesign their classrooms and prepare in school and out of school learning activities for the return of more pupils from August. You will have seen in the national announcements that schools will reopen on 11 August. Normally in East Renfrewshire we start the school year with two in-service days and I am planning on the basis that we will do likewise this year. As such pupils will return in small groups from Thursday 13 August, but we are awaiting further government advice to confirm whether we can stay with these arrangements. We will keep you fully informed as and when we have confirmation.



Mhairi Shaw, Director of Education, East Renfrewshire Council, 211 Main St, Barrhead, G78 1SY

During the summer holidays (29 June – 10 August), our partners in the Trust will make provision for emergency childcare for those who have been accessing the hubs since 23 March. We are in the process of planning this and will confirm arrangements when they are completed.

Our next stage is to work with head teachers to consider how we could phase some in school learning for increasing numbers of children. 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.

We are planning for a blended learning approach of 'in school and out of school' learning. This will be very different for all of us and I understand that this temporary way of learning will mean that families need to make adjustments for work and childcare arrangements. This blended model will see small groups of children coming in for part of the week (in school learning) and learning from home (out of school learning) for the remainder of the week. Teachers will continue to set tasks and monitor engagement, progress and attainment of all pupil work, whether in or out of school. As we plan for this approach we will be capitalising on our school environments, both indoors and outdoors, as well as considering using other community facilities. Given the different style of buildings and outdoor opportunities across East Renfrewshire, each school will develop its own plan that supports their school community needs as much as possible. The opportunity for outdoor learning however will be maximised in all schools and ELC settings.

Our departmental Local Phasing Delivery Plan will be considered by elected members at Education Committee next week (11 June 2020) and should be available online from Friday 5 June. This sets out four phases:

- **Phase 1** – Schools and centres reopen in June 2020 to an increased number of children and young people for transition purposes;
- **Phase 2** – Schools and centres reopen on 11 August 2020 to all staff with pupils, attending on a part-time basis with a blended model of in-school and out of school learning;
- **Phase 3** – Schools and centres incrementally increase the number of hours pupils spend in schools while reducing out of school learning;
- **Phase 4** – Schools and centres reopen fully to all pupils.

Each of Phases 3 and 4 will depend on the progress we make as a country in continuing to control the spread of the virus, but we would hope we will be able to move from Phase 2 to Phase 3 as soon as is practicably possible, based on national public health advice. Obviously from the above you can see we will need to continue to work closely with you to provide the high quality learning experiences we have come to expect in East Renfrewshire. We understand that this could mean some continued disruption for those of you who are working. I recognise this; however, I am afraid in order for us to follow physical distancing advice from the government we will be unable to have all children in school at one time until we reach Phase 4 of our plan and lockdown is completed lifted. Please be assured that we are making every effort to maximise the use of space in every school and community resource, where necessary.

We will continue to provide emergency childcare provision for the children of keyworkers in line with government advice. We will be asking parents to apply for this support and will be issuing more information on this in the coming weeks. The Scottish Government has also appealed 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.



As with the Scottish Government Route Map, none of our plans are set in stone, so we and schools are planning to be as flexible as possible to allow us to move quickly to the next phase when it is safe to do so or to move back to lock down procedures should that be necessary.

Our Local Delivery Phasing Plan will be considered by the Education Committee on Thursday 11 June and will be available online from Friday 5 June. We will be sharing our early plans with Parent Council Chairs at a virtual meeting on Monday 8 June. I would encourage you to discuss any comments you have moving forward with your PC Chair prior to this meeting so that they can represent your views.

Genuinely, I would like to thank you again for your support and assure you we will continue to work in partnership with you to ensure that we continue to deliver the highest possible quality learning experiences for all our children and young people in East Renfrewshire in the weeks and months ahead.

Finally once our plans for schools re-opening are finalised I will provide further information. Individual schools will also try and provide as much detail as possible before and over the summer holidays regarding what back to school will look like in August for your children and young people. This will include your child's pattern of attendance for in school learning.

If you would like to read the current government guidance on the re-opening of schools you can access them on line at:

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

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

Yours sincerely



Mhairi Shaw
Director of Education

