

Covid-19 Briefing

Briefing for Pupils, Parents & Carers

11th August 2021



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR
Education, Skills & Children's Services

DMD31186

Schools & ELCs Return – Thursday 12th August

We are pleased to offer a warm welcome back our pupils for the start of the new academic session on Thursday 12th August. Particular mention also goes to children and young people starting in new schools and early learning centres for the first time, be that in nursery, P1, S1 or other year groups.

Since schools and term-time nurseries closed on 25th June, there have been a number of changes and updates to Covid-19 guidance for schools and nurseries locally and nationally and this briefing is intended to provide pupils, parents and carers with the latest information prior to returning tomorrow. As long as Covid-19 measures impact on the operation of schools and nurseries, we will continue to provide regular briefings to keep people informed.

'Get Into Summer' Programme

With the support of Government 'Get into Summer' funding provided as part of Covid-19 recovery, we were able to offer and extend summer club and Motiv8 activities throughout the holiday for pupils eligible to access this provision.



We hope that all the children and young people who participated in these activities enjoyed them, and we'd like to thank parents and carers for supporting attendance and thank all the staff, volunteers and partner services that delivered the 'Get into Summer' programme.

Updated National Guidance for Schools

As part of the nation's move beyond level zero on 9th August, the government has issued an updated guidance document for the safe operation of schools. Whilst the new guidance does reduce or remove some of the measures in place last term, many will be kept in schools for at least the first six weeks of term, as a precaution. Further guidance updates are expected after this initial six-week period.

All schools and nurseries will continue to require:

- Fully updated risk assessments
- High level of checking for symptoms
- Access to twice weekly LFD testing (S1-6 + Staff)
- Enhanced hygiene and environmental cleaning

- Frequent handwashing and sanitisation
- High levels of room ventilation
- Physical distancing (Staff)
- Use of face coverings and PPE, where required
- Participation in Test & Protect

Updated Covid-19 Arrangements for Schools

In addition to the core measures above, a table is provided at the end of this briefing that provides a summary of information about which measures are staying in place and which are changing. This list will be updated as any further changes are made.

Restrictions on Visiting Schools

One of the measures that most significantly affect parents and carers is the restriction on visiting school buildings. For at least the first six weeks of term, this will continue to be the case for parents, carers and all other routine visitors to schools. Only visitors essential to maintain services will be permitted to enter school buildings.

In very restricted circumstances, a parent/carer may enter a school, by prior agreement with the headteacher, where the visit relates to a significant matter of child wellbeing.

Parents are permitted to access school grounds but must always wear a face covering when doing so. Please check with your school about local arrangements for drop-off and pick-up of children.

LFD Home Testing for Pupils

The programme of voluntary LFD Testing for secondary children will continue to be in place for this term. **Participating pupils are asked to test before returning to school, with a test having been taken either the night before return or on the first morning of attendance.** If a positive test is received, you must not attend school. Self-isolate and seek a PCR test from NHS Western Isles by calling 01851 601151 or e-mailing wi.covid19queries@nhs.scot

We ask that all participating pupils make sure that their test results are recorded each time on the [online portal](#), whatever the result received. It is important that this part of the process is completed.

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Participation in the LFD testing programme for pupils remains voluntary but we strongly encourage and support young people taking part. If you haven't already enrolled, please contact school offices and they will assist. Additional test kits are also available from school offices, as required.

Pupils starting in S1 or are new to the school should also test now if they have kits available at home already. If not, we encourage you to join the scheme as soon as you start school this week and take a test at the earliest opportunity.

Once term commences, LFD Testing should continue twice weekly unless instructed to stop testing.

Contact Tracing and 'Warn & Inform'

One of the key measures removed in the new schools' guidance is the requirement for strict groupings (bubbles) to be in place. They have been removed as it will no longer be a requirement for whole classes/groups to self-isolate if there is a confirmed positive case.

If a positive case is identified in a school, only identified close contacts will be required to isolate and any specific advice or instructions from NHS Western Isles will be followed at the time.

For other pupils not identified as close contacts, a 'Warn and Inform' letter will be issued to tell you about the case and advise about what precautionary actions, if any, you should take.

It is important for the continued safe operation of schools that all pupils and their families fully comply with the instructions and advice of NHS staff about testing and self-isolation.

Vaccination for 16-17 Year Olds

Information provided by NHS Western Isles:

Young people aged 16 and 17 who are now eligible for a first dose of the COVID vaccine will be contacted directly by NHS Western Isles to invite them to attend a vaccination appointment. We ask that individuals do not register on the national portal: it is not used in the Western Isles.

Vaccinating people as quickly as possible will help drive infection rates down, particularly as a significantly more infectious and faster spreading strain has developed.

The coronavirus vaccine can reduce your risk of developing coronavirus and make your symptoms

milder if you do get it. The vaccine is not mandatory, but NHS Scotland strongly recommends you get the vaccine when offered it.

The vaccine offered to 16 and 17 year olds in the Western Isles will be a first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Pending further evidence on effectiveness and safety in this age group, a second dose is anticipated to be offered later to increase the level of protection and contribute towards longer term protection.

The programme has always carefully assessed all the benefits and potential risks and offered vaccine to groups where this benefit is clear. The research and evidence shows that is the case for this age group, and they will now be called forward for an appointment for a COVID-19 vaccine.

We await the outcome of analysis of data on second doses for this age group and any additional future advice on vaccination for those in the 12-15 age group.

SQA Awards

After a very challenging year that saw Covid-19 continue to significantly disrupt education and cancel exams, our senior pupils received their SQA results yesterday. At this time, we would like to thank pupils, parents, carers and wider families for your resilience and commitment to the qualifications as the system shifted and changed nationally to respond to the crisis.

We do sincerely hope that the academic year just getting under way does not see the disruption of last year and we will share with pupils, parents and carers, any information about arrangements for National Qualifications in 2022 as we get it.

If any pupils remain concerned about the results received yesterday, your school will be able to provide support and guidance in the first instance. You can also call the My World of Work national helpline on 0808 100 8000 or visit www.myworldofwork.co.uk

Seeking More Information?

We have aimed to provide the fullest update on Covid-19 matters affecting education within this briefing but there may be other areas, particularly in relation to the arrangements at specific schools, that you wish to find out more about. In the first instance, you should contact your local school office who will be best placed to respond to queries and questions.

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Summary of Guidance Retention and Changes in Key Areas

Mitigation Area	Status	Description	Timescale
Risk assessments	Retain	All our schools and ELCs will continue to have a specific Covid-19 risk assessment in place and updated to reflect changes in procedures.	On-going.
Vaccination	New	NHS Western Isles will begin to invite those aged 16-17 for vaccination appointments. Schools will not place any requirements or restrictions on pupils in relation to vaccinations.	Ongoing
Ventilation	Change	Schools will require to keep high levels of ventilation in classrooms, with windows and doors open and mechanical ventilation in full operation. A change has been made in the guidance requiring monitoring of air quality.	Implementation during term one
Building hygiene and environmental cleaning	Retain	All existing enhanced cleaning and building hygiene measures remain in place	For at least six weeks
Hand and nasal hygiene	Retain	Continue all hand hygiene and sanitisation procedures and promote good nasal hygiene.	Ongoing
Face coverings for adults	Retain	Face coverings will be worn by adults at all times in secondary (unless exempt). In other schools, they will be worn in all communal areas and when physical distancing cannot be maintained. Nursery staff will apply their own specific guidance about wearing face coverings.	For at least six weeks
Face coverings for secondary pupils	Retain	Secondary pupils should wear face coverings at all times, unless medically exempt.	For at least six weeks
Physical distancing for adults	Change	Physical distancing between adults and each other and between adults and pupils will continue but must now be at least 1m. Where 2m distancing can still be retained without disruption or limiting capacity it can continue to be applied. There is separate distancing guidance applicable in ELC settings	For at least six weeks
Physical distancing for secondary pupils	Change	There is no requirement for secondary pupils to retain a certain level of physical distancing from each other, but they should be encouraged to maintain distance, where possible, and physical contact should be strongly discouraged.	For at least six weeks
Class Layouts	Change	In secondary schools, classroom layouts must continue to allow for as much spacing as possible and for pupils to be sitting facing the same way. In ELC and Primary settings, restrictions on classroom layouts have been relaxed and will be determined by local risk assessment.	For at least six weeks
Pupil bubbles	Change	It will no longer be a requirement to keep strict pupil groups (bubbles) and they can begin to be relaxed. Schools have up to four weeks to implement this change.	Phase out ASAP and within four weeks

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Mitigation Area	Status	Description	Timescale
Assemblies and large gatherings	Retain	Schools must continue to avoid large gatherings such as assemblies and large school events.	For at least six weeks
One-way systems	Retain	Schools will keep in place any measures implemented to improve flow around the building and avoid congestion.	For at least six weeks
Staggered breaks and lunch times	Retain	Timetable changes to accommodate staggered breaks and lunchtimes to reduce congestion in key areas of the school will continue to be in place.	For at least six weeks
Twice-weekly LFD testing	Retain	All participating staff and secondary pupils should continue twice-weekly LFD testing and record results online.	Continue until instructed to suspend testing
School Transport	Retain	Passengers on transport to and from school should continue to wear a face covering unless medically exempt and continue to make full use of hand sanitisation facilities.	For at least six weeks
Self-Isolation & Contact Tracing	Change	Whole groups/classes will no longer be required to self-isolate for 10 days. If a positive case is identified, local contact tracing staff will determine who are close contacts of the case. Pupils identified as close contacts will be instructed to immediately self-isolate and then seek a PCR test. They may be asked to wait several days before being tested to make sure results are reliable. If the test is negative, they will be able to return to school if they remain fully clear of symptoms. A positive test will require continued self-isolation. Any pupils not identified as close contacts will be provided with a 'Warn and Inform' letter.	Ongoing, subject to any specific advice from NHS Western Isles
Rules restricting PE, Drama, Music and Dance	Change	All restrictions affecting the delivery of PE, Dance, Music and Drama are removed. There may be some local restrictions in some schools depending on the size/capacity of spaces available.	On-going, subject to any local or national changes in protection levels
Restrictions on visitors	Retain	Visitors are not permitted into school buildings except for the essential continuation of service, provision of education or critical maintenance. Parents are permitted to access school grounds for pupil drop-off and pick-up but must wear a face covering when doing so. Parents must maintain physical distancing from staff and from families from other households.	For at least six weeks
School Trips	Retain	Guidance in place for school trips and outings are unchanged. Schools are permitted to undertake on-island day trips. Overnight residentials on-island may be permitted with prior approval. Off-island and international travel is not permitted for schools.	For at least six weeks