**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Introduction**

**How will the revised school schedule work?**

Our plan is that from August there will be a model of blended learning which would see pupils attend school on some days and work from home on others. We are working with our head teachers and heads of centre to help develop this model.

We expect to have staggered start and finish times and lunch/play breaks, to reduce the number of children and young people entering/leaving the buildings at one time. This means school transport will be a challenge and we are still looking at solutions to that. This model would be the case at least initially - if things are working, we would consider how to build up the numbers in school.

We know this model could be difficult for families with siblings who attend the same school but are in different year groups, or have siblings who attend different schools. We will make sure they are in school at the same time as much as possible.

We appreciate parents will be keen for clarity on all of the above but hope you understand there is a lot of detail still to be worked out before we can give you that. Once the new arrangements have been further developed we will make sure parents have as much notice as possible.

**How will we manage physical distancing in schools and nurseries?**

The safety of pupils and staff is paramount and when schools return we will take all precautions to minimise the spread of the virus. The Scottish Government is developing updated guidance to help keep pupils and staff safe, and we will work within those.

We have been successfully managing physical distancing in the childcare hubs since March. We will apply the lessons learned from that as well as those from countries who are already physically distancing in schools.

We will have to reduce numbers in classrooms but there is also a chance to be creative in using non-classroom space. The layout of every school is different and solutions will need to be tailored to fit.

There is a balance to strike between safety and wellbeing - it is important our schools continue to feel natural and normal for pupils. We will be working with unions to ensure staff are comfortable with the measures put in place to protect them.

Clearly, asking nursery and early-primary-age children to physically distance is much harder than for older pupils, and different solutions will be needed. This will include reducing the numbers of children in class at any time and keeping children and staff within smaller groups to minimise the number of others they come into contact with. As with everything we do, safety will be our priority.

**How will we manage cleaning and hygiene in schools and nurseries?**

The Scottish Government guidelines recommend regular and enhanced cleaning of surfaces and we are already looking at how to expand the existing school cleaning regime. Regular hand washing will continue to be crucial and teachers will support pupils to follow the advice on this. We will learn from the practice that is now standard in our childcare hubs.

**How can we protect pupils, parents and staff classed as higher risk?**

The scientific consensus is that Covid-19 has a much less severe impact on children than it does on adults. However, we appreciate there will be pupils and staff with medical conditions who will be more at-risk than others, as well as pupils who share homes with high-risk individuals. The decision over how and when they return to school will be based on their individual circumstances. If you have any specific concerns, we would suggest you refer to the health advice in the first instance, but you can also speak to your head teacher.

**If parents don't think it is safe and keep children and young people off, will they be penalised for absences?**

The safety of our pupils and staff is our biggest priority - we wouldn't ask pupils to attend school if we weren't confident we were doing all we could to make it safe. Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child receives an education - that can happen in school or not. We think the best place for children to be educated is in school, but we trust parents to make the decision they think best. Your child’s head teacher will be happy to talk through any concerns.

**The school day**

**Pattern of attendance**

**What date will my child return to school? Is it the 11th August?**

Pupils will return to school at some point from the 12th August 2020.

Your school will contact you to advise of specific arrangements for your child/ren for that week and beyond.

**Some parents may choose to not send their child back to school. Would that give more time for others?**

We would encourage all children to be returned to school. Allocations of in-school time will be equitable for all children within their school.

**Will parents be able to change days of attendance?**

This will not be possible for reasons of planning and consistency for pupils, parents and teachers.

**Do I have to send my child to school for the part-time arrangement?**

Yes. Assuming your child is fit and well, he/she should attend school during their allocated time.

Your child should not attend school if either they or anyone else in the household has symptoms. If they or anyone in the house is self-isolating having had symptoms of COVID-19, your child should observe the full isolation period of 14 days before returning to school.

If your child is not at school during his/her allocated time, he/she will be recorded as being absent.

You should follow the usual arrangements for informing your child’s school of any absence.

**Will there be a staggered start and finish on the days my/our child/young person attends nursery/school?**

Staggered start and finish times are likely to be needed to prevent crowding at entry and exits points. You will be informed by your child’s school as to these arrangements.

**Will children/young people from the same family attend nursery/school on the same days?**

Siblings who attend the same school will be allocated the same pattern and days. Every effort will be made to accommodate the same days for siblings who attend different schools or settings. However, this is more challenging to guarantee as models across the sectors may differ.

**What model of in-school days will Falkirk Council operate?**

**Early Learning and Childcare and Additional Support Needs Schools**

We are expecting further national guidance of the specific arrangements for Early Learning and Childcare, and Additional Support Needs settings. We will inform you of our local arrangements for Early Learning and Childcare and the Additional Support Needs Schools and Units as soon as possible.

**Primary Schools Blended Learning**

The first week of schools opening, your child will be allocated one day of in-school learning. Thereafter, your child will be allocated two days of in-school learning each week from week commencing 17 August. These will be either Monday/Tuesday or Thursday/Friday.  On the other days, the expectation is that your child will undertake learning at home.  This pattern of attendance allows for well planned in-school learning, teaching and assessment, followed by learning at home experiences which will support children to move forward with their learning.

Your school will be in touch with you by 23 June with your child’s pattern of attendance.

Siblings who attend the same primary school will be allocated the same days of attendance, but it will not be possible for parents/carers to choose their days of attendance or which pupils will attend together.

**Secondary Schools Blended Learning**

Every secondary school is creating its own blended learning model.  Each school will take account of the specific needs of their pupils, and ensure the highest quality of learning and teaching.

There will be common features in every secondary school.  All pupils in S1 - S6 will receive blended learning.  This will be kept under review and adjusted to meet current guidance.  Your school will be in touch with you by 23 June with your child’s timetable of attendance.

**Will there be set days on which my child/young person will attend?**

Yes. Schools will advise you of patterns of attendance for your children/ren. This will be unchanged over the course of part-time arrangements.

**Will parents be able to choose a pattern of attendance and can these be changed?**

Schools will allocate patterns of attendance to best meet the needs of pupils and other planning requirements. Given the complexity of this exercise patterns will not be able to be changed.

**Will in-school time be phased-up?**

Yes, we will follow national advice as to the requirements for physical distancing in schools and implement them as required.

**Lunch**

**What will happen over lunch time and social times to ensure children are kept safe?**

**Primary**

Physical distancing will be observed at all times during the school day. Pupils will remain in their groupings during lunch time and other social times.

Lunch times and social timings will be staggered to avoid large groups gathering.

It will be important for pupils to have access to outdoor spaces during the course of the school day and during social times. Schools will create zones for this purpose.

**Secondary**

Whilst there will not be a restriction on pupils leaving school grounds at lunchtimes, secondary schools will ask all pupils, to remain on school premises to minimise the risk of uncontrolled social distancing and to protect the local community from large numbers of pupils gathering out with the school grounds during lunchtime.

Many schools will initially operate with reduced lunchtimes and so there simply may not be time to leave school for lunch.  Schools are planning to put in place control measures, such as zoning in the lunch hall and staggered lunch times, to support pupil movement and distancing over lunchtime.

**Uniform**

**Will the uniform policy in school change?**

We have no plans to change or amend the policy for school uniform. Your school will keep you informed about local arrangements. Should you have any concerns please contact your school and they will be able to provide you with advice, guidance and support.

**Transport**

**Will transport continue to be provided for my child to attend school?**

Our transport planning department are currently working with further providers to assess how they will operate from August. This section will be updated once further information is available.

**Other questions regarding the school day**

**Is it possible for my child to delay starting nursery until next year (defer entry)?**

The legislation for delaying the start of primary 1 has not changed. All children who are 5 years old on the first day of the primary school year must begin school, which this year is 11 August.

Applications for delayed entry to school from parents of children born after this date were received and processed prior to the COVID-19 crisis.

Primary 1 teachers in Falkirk are skilled in the delivery of a play-based curriculum which offers a seamless transition from nursery.

If you have any concerns, please contact your school to discuss these.

**Are the plans for 1140 hours changed as a result of COVID19?**

The Scottish Government has removed August 2020 as the date for implementation of 1140 hours of early learning and childcare. No revised date has been issued as yet.

You can find more information about Early Learning and Childcare here:

<https://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/children-families/early-learning-childcare/nursery-places.aspx>

**How many children will be in a group and how will these be decided?**

This will depend on the physical capacity of the learning space allocated to your child’s group. Schools will make these arrangements based on the physical distancing requirements.

Decisions about groupings will be informed by what best meets the needs of children and allows for the most effective model of delivery to be achieved.

**Will there be screen and barriers in learning spaces and around the school?**

Physical distancing will be observed at all times, so there is no requirement for physicalbarriers to be erected.

**What will happen if there are not enough teachers to teach the children?**

We will work closely with our schools to provide appropriate staffing to ensure in-school learning can be delivered as planned.

**Health & Safety**

**The welfare and safety of children and young people as we reopen schools and ELCs is of paramount importance to us and to you.**

**We have used our experiences of effective practice already in place in Hubs to inform our plans for re-opening.**

**Cleaning**

**How will schools be cleaned, how often and by who?**

The Scottish Government guidelines recommend regular and enhanced cleaning of surfaces. We will have an enhanced school cleaning regime to ensure we can do that across all schools and nurseries. Regular hand washing will continue to be crucial and teachers will support pupils to follow the advice on this. We will learn from the practice that is now standard in our childcare hubs.

**How will learning resources be cleaned and protected?**

Pupils will be provided with a personal in-school learning pack and an at-home learning pack. This ensure pupils are self-sufficient in accessing learning without the need to share these items.

Some items will need to be shared within the group. In this case, we will issue advice to schools on the safe use of resources and cleaning protocols, such as quarantine and ‘cleaning down’.

Textbooks, novels and storybooks will be covered with plastic jackets to allow them to wiped down.

**PPE**

**Will staff be wearing any forms of personal protective equipment (PPE)?**

We will advise school staff in line with national guidance.

At this time, protective gloves and aprons are only required when carrying our personal care duties; administering First Aid; and, when serving/handling food.

Staff are not required to wear face coverings.

**What will my child/young person be expected to wear and will they be expected to wear a face covering or other form of personal protection?**

Your child will be expected to wear his/her school uniform to school as per the Council’s on School Uniform.

Children will not be expected to wear any form of personal protective equipment (PPE). However if you decide that your child should wear a face covering, please inform your school of your wish and send your child to school with the particular face covering to be used.

**Should my child/young person wear different clothes each day?**

There is no requirement for your child to wear different or new clothes each day. Clothes should be laundered between blocks of attendance.

**Protecting high-risk children and staff**

**Will there be measures in place to make sure staff do not have COVID19?**

All our employees are directed to follow the NHS guidance which would mean anyone who suspects they have COVID-19 should remain at home for 7 days from the start of their symptoms and arrange to be tested.  Employees in this situation will not attend our schools until either 7 days from the start of their symptoms or they receive specific advice from their test result.

The Scottish Government has recently announced testing will be available for anyone who shows symptoms and we would urge all staff or residents to get themselves or their child tested if there is reason to do so. Their Test and Protect strategy is there to stop the spread of the virus and it's important everyone follows that. As it stands, the national guidelines would mean any staff members or pupils in close contact with someone testing positive for Covid19 would need to self-isolate for 14 days. One benefit to keeping pupils in small groups means if one tests positive the number who need to self-isolate is small - which is why we are considering that as an option.

**How will school/ELC make sure my child/young person keep their hands clean?**

Routines for toileting and hand hygiene will be reinforced and communicated frequently.

Schools/ELCs will have increased hygiene procedures and sanitisers available around the building and in learning spaces where there is no hand washing facility.

**What measures will schools/ELC’s have in place if my child/young person is injured or becomes unwell at school?**

There is no change to procedures for the administration of First Aid to pupils. Staff will be advised to wear appropriate PPE in line with national guidance.

If a pupil becomes unwell, they will be comforted until they can be collected and taken home.

The welfare and wellbeing of pupils remains a top priority and this will not be compromised during current arrangements.

**Other questions regarding health & safety**

**Will risk assessments be done? Will these be shared with parents?**

Yes. It is a requirement of schools being re-opened that a full and thorough risk assessment has been completed. Officers have created a risk-assessment which is tailored for the response to COVID-19.

While the document itself will not be shared with parents, Parent Council Chairs will be informed when this exercise has been completed.

**How will schools/ELC’s maintain physical distancing when pupils return?**

All of our schools/ELCs are applying Scottish Government guidance to set up learning spaces. Floor area calculations have been made to allow 2m separation between all individuals except for limited circumstances e.g. In the corridors, on the way to toilets, etc.

Nursery arrangements on physical distancing follow age-appropriate guidance and will apply as small groupings or zones.

Signage both inside and outside of the school/ELC building will direct learners on moving around, including one-way systems.

Staggered breaks, start/finish times, and lunches with entry and exit lanes will minimise numbers being together at any one time. This would also include different entrances/exits and staggered drop off/pick up times for parents/carers.

Where appropriate, one-way systems and pathways will be in place to allow groups to move to and from their learning space safely.

Toilets will be assigned to specific groups of children.

**What can be done to ensure children know the new procedures?**

Proper time will be taken when pupils return to rehearse these important procedures with them. This will be continually reinforced across the day and throughout the week in an age-appropriate way.

**How are learning spaces going to be organised?**

Teachers will arrange learning spaces according to national advice on physical distancing.

Maximum use will be made of the teaching space of the school including outdoor learning spaces.

Scottish Government plan to issue separate advice around the middle of June specific to organising learning from nursery-aged children and the early stages of primary school. We will update you on this once we have more information available.

**Will secondary school pupils change classrooms when they change subjects?**

In the initial weeks of the pupil return to school in August it is planned that S1 & S2 will almost always remain in one teaching space with subject staff delivering lessons throughout the school day.  Depending on curriculum structure there may be some movement to support lesson experiences when possible.

Pupils in S3 to S6 will follow their current timetabled classes as much as possible with measures in place to carefully manage transitions. We will try to minimise movement as far as possible, however, with so many different groupings across subjects limiting pupils to remain in the one area would make it impossible to deliver some courses.   Schools are exploring managing movement through approaches such as a ‘no bell’ approach to allow for a more fluid approach to pupil movement.

**Will my child/young person’s temperature be checked?**

There are no plans for temperature checks to be performed when pupils come to school.

All staff working in education facilities, along with the children and young people in their care, should be supported to follow up to date health protection advice on isolation if they or someone in their household exhibits COVID-19 symptoms, or if they have been identified by NHS contact tracers as a close contact of someone with the disease.

**What do I do if my child/young person or someone in the family develops COVID19 symptoms?**

Your child cannot attend school/nursery is he/she or anyone in your household has symptoms of COVID-19.

Should your child develop symptoms when in school, they will be isolated in an identified safe, comfortable space until they are collected and taken home.

Staff and children who develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19 must be encouraged to stay at home, self-isolate, and contact the NHS for advice on testing. Those who do test positive for COVID-19 will be asked to continue to self-isolate for 7 days and their close contacts, identified through contact tracing, will be asked to self-isolate for 14 days.

**How will parents/carers be informed if their child/young person may have come into contact with COVID19?**

Parents will be informed in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 within your child’s group.

We will inform Public Health Scotland who will make contact with you under contract tracing protocol.

**Wellbeing**

**Wellbeing is the main priority for schools and ELCs when children and young people return in August. As well as keeping children physically safe proper time will be spent during the learning day to focus on relationships, wellbeing and nurture.**

**Since the closure of schools and ELCs, a great deal of effort has been made by staff to stay connected to children, young people and their family during these challenging times.**

**We will use and share the many great examples being delivered across Falkirk to ensure that children and young people continue to develop as: successful, confident learners who contribute effectively and responsibly to their school community.**

**Will free school meals be provided throughout the summer?**

Young people who currently qualify for free school meals and attend critical childcare provision (i.e. attend summer hubs) will continue to receive a free meal over the summer period. All families who qualify for footwear/clothing grant will receive a payment of £3.50 per day to provide their child with lunch.

**Will pupils return to their current year class to help them settle back into school?**

Class configurations will be considered at school level to take account of SG guidance. It is unlikely that young people will return to their current year class in their entirety but there will be an element of that class in their groupings.

**Will children/young people have set days they attend school/ELC as routines help them focus and cope?**

Yes. The establishment of a clear routine is very important for mental wellbeing.

**Pastoral support in secondary?**

Secondary schools are planning a range of inserts and supports to give all pupils access to support staff in the first few weeks back to school.  As much as is possible schools are planning for the delivery of Pastoral care to continue as normal.  One of the key principles of all school recovery plans is based on pupil emotional health and wellbeing and schools are looking at modifying their curriculum to ensure they cover this key area.  Pastoral support bases will continue to operate but many will have some modifications to account for social distancing requirements.  Access to the range of external support providers will be limited for the initial phases of return to school and schools are looking at how some of these services could be delivered in school, for example, through online virtual access.

**Will children/young people be given time to talk about their experiences?**

Health and well-being will be a major focus within schools. Young people will be able to share their experiences of lockdown and ‘new schooling’ in a variety of ways. This will be planned into the curriculum.

**What will be in place to support the wellbeing of children/young people when they return to nursery/school?**

Schools and nurseries will be welcoming places for children. We appreciate that lots of people will be feeling nervous or anxious about returning to school. Staff will be on hand to answer questions and of course we will offer plenty of reassurance to your children. All our schools operate the Nurture Principles. The process of returning to school will in itself help build a child’s resilience. The key is not expecting too much too soon from your child.

**Will parent/carers be able to access mental health support if their child/young person needs this?**

Support for wellbeing will be available. Even the process of re-connecting with peers and teachers will be positive for children’s mental wellbeing. Some children and their families may require some additional assistance. The best first-step is to discuss your concerns with the school or establishment staff. Support will be available from Educational Psychology, and depending on the age of the child, school-based counsellors, school nurses, child and adolescent mental health services and voluntary partners. Which one is the right support will depend on a number of factors, which is why it is best to discuss with the school or learning establishment staff first. You can also access online guidance. The educational psychology service website is a good place to start.

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/fa/epservice/how-we-work/promoting-learning-at-home/>

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/fa/epservice/how-we-work/support-for-adults/>

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/fa/epspractitioners/materials/> (in A-Z and includes information on grief and loss, mental health and wellbeing).

Other relevant advice and guidance for staff is available on: Other relevant advice and guidance for staff is available on:

*Online learning including anxiety course:* [*https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/fa/epspractitioners/service-delivery/online-learning-for-practitioners/*](https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/fa/epspractitioners/service-delivery/online-learning-for-practitioners/)

*Covid 19 specific advice and guidance:* [*https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/fa/epspractitioners/introduction/423-2/*](https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/fa/epspractitioners/introduction/423-2/)

**What support is there for parents/carers?**

There is a range of support for parents and carers, which can include advice from educational psychology or child and adolescent mental health services about your child, direct support as a parent from family support services, social work and voluntary services.

**Can this support be accessed before children/young people return to education?**

Yes. Speak to the school or nursery staff about what support may be appropriate for you or look at the [educational psychology service website](https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/fa/epservice/)

If you are not sure please call **01324 506600** and someone can direct you.

**Childcare**

**Will parents/carers who are not key workers be able to send child/young person to school fulltime if they are unable to work from home and/or access childcare for the days my child/young person is not as school/nursery?**

No. Almost all children will be allocated a part-time arrangement for attending school and this will not be able to be changed or adapted.

The local authority is required only to provide emergency childcare for children of critical keyworkers (as defined by Scottish Government). Such provision will be made in schools, where possible, but other facilities may need to be considered.

**Will childcare be offered at my child’s school or somewhere else?**

Your school’s capacity is being prioritised for pupils returning for in-school learning, therefore, After School Clubs will not be able to operate from the school premises at present, but this will be kept under review to respond to any new government guidance.

**If my child is in a class group and also needs to be in childcare group, how will this work?**

If a family’s circumstances meet our criteria for childcare, the family will be offered childcare on the days that your child is not attending school. The families who we can accommodate will be contacted directly and made aware of the arrangement for their child.

**When will Out-of-School Care services be up and running?**

Out-of-School Care providers will advise schools and parents of operating plans as soon as these have been fully worked out following receipt of further guidance from Scottish Government.