

TO ALL PARENTS/CARERS

EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Carrie Lindsay
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Your Ref
Our Ref: CL/CG

13 August 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

I sincerely hope that your children have had a great summer break and are looking forward, as much as I am, to their return to education next week.

The First Minister has announced that, from Monday 9 August, Scotland is moving beyond Level Zero, meaning a lifting of most restrictions. However, this doesn't mean everything goes completely back to normal in schools and nurseries. Covid-19 is still with us and we need to learn to live with it.

For the time being schools are to continue operating as they did before the summer break. This is because most children in our schools are unvaccinated. The government and medical community would like to see what impact the removing of restrictions is having in the wider community, before taking that step in our schools and nurseries. This is to help us lower the risk of Covid-19 being passed on in schools and nurseries.

This means some precautions will still be in place when our children return. The more we all stick with these precautions, the less chance there is of an outbreak in one of our nurseries or schools.

Key points

- All staff will continue to wear face coverings in schools and nurseries (unless they are exempt), in accordance with the relevant guidance
- All pupils in our secondary schools will also continue to wear face coverings (unless they are exempt)
- Most of the previous arrangements we had in place in our schools and nurseries will stay in place for at least the first six weeks of term
- No visitors will be allowed in schools for the first six weeks of term, although a parent/carer may accompany a child onto school premises where this is agreed with the school as necessary and is risk assessed in advance
- Test and Protect contact tracing will still be carried out if any staff or children test positive

- Secondary aged children and our staff should continue to test twice a week
- It is highly recommended that all those over 16 get vaccinated as soon as possible
- Staff e.g. visiting teachers, psychologists, nurses, social workers, youth workers, outdoor learning specialists, HEI tutors and those providing therapeutic support will now be able to move between schools, where necessary.

Please continue to wear a face covering when bringing children to school and nursery or collecting them at the end of the day.

Testing

Regular testing, even when you don't have symptoms, can help keep you and your school community safe. Please encourage secondary aged children to test regularly.

If your child is at secondary school, they can access free LFD (Lateral Flow Device) tests from the school. They will probably have been given extra test kits at the end of last term and we'd like them, as well as our staff, to test before they come back into school. You can pick up more tests from your school on Monday 16 and Tuesday 17 August or from your pharmacy or local Community Test centre or order online. Please encourage your child to test twice-weekly and to record all positive, negative or void results on the online reporting portal at: www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19-report-your-test-result. Reporting results helps public health experts understand what is happening with Covid-19 in your area, so they can take early action to address any problems.

You can get home test kits (LFD) for the rest of your family for free. More information can be found at: www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested/pages/no-covid-symptoms.

What to do if your child develops symptoms of Covid-19

Please be on the look out for any symptoms of Covid-19 in the coming weeks. If your child develops any of the following symptoms they **must not** come to school. They should stay at home as soon as their symptoms start, self-isolate, and take a PCR test. Find out more on NHS Inform. The symptoms of coronavirus (Covid-19) are:

- a new continuous cough and/or
- a high temperature and/or
- a loss of, or change in, taste or smell (anosmia).

If someone in your household has symptoms you must all stay at home until you have booked and had the results from a PCR test. Follow the latest guidance, which can be found on NHS Inform. If you or your child(ren) test positive, Test and Protect will contact you to provide tailored advice on what to do.

Contact tracing

There has been a change to the contact tracing protocol for schools and nurseries. New procedures for identifying “close contacts” of a positive case mean you or your child(ren) no longer need to self-isolate unless:

- you are contacted by Test and Protect, or
- have symptoms, or
- a member of your household tests positive or has symptoms.

Now, if your child is identified as a contact of someone with Covid-19, they'll be asked to self-isolate until they take a PCR test. If the result is negative, they have no symptoms and they are aged between 5 and 17 they'll be able to come back to school. (Children under the age of five don't have to take a PCR test but should isolate immediately if they show any symptoms.)

Further information on the latest self-isolation requirements can be found on the NHS Inform website at: www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19 or [Translations \(nhsinform.scot\)](http://Translations (nhsinform.scot)) for accessible, easy read formats or other languages.

If there are any further cases of Covid-19 in the school or nursery community, Test and Protect and the local NHS Health Protection Team will work to ensure these individuals, and any of their relevant close contacts, are advised to self-isolate and follow the latest guidance.

School meals

Some good news amidst the pandemic gloom - from the beginning of term, free school meals will now be available to all children in P1 to P4. This is expected to roll out to more age groups as the year continues.

Welcome back

This has been a very difficult period for our children and young people, and I'm sure for you, and we understand there may be some anxieties about a return to “normal”. Our schools and nurseries still have multiple control measures against Covid-19 in place, in terms of hand hygiene and cleaning, and these are supported with regular testing of staff. Our schools will continue to talk to children about how to keep themselves safe and will be happy to discuss any worries you or your child(ren) might have.

I look forward to seeing all our children and young people return to school and continuing this next phase of their learning journey.

Please stay safe.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carrie Lindsay". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Carrie" on the top line and "Lindsay" on the bottom line.

Carrie Lindsay
Executive Director (Education & Children's Services)