

Reopening of schools and early learning centres

Frequently asked questions for parents

August 2020

Now that Scottish Government has confirmed that pupils will return to schools and early learning centres (ELC) full time in August, and released the guidance to support this, we have created this frequently asked questions document to support parents and carers in understanding what lies ahead.

It is likely that not every question is covered here and so you should contact your child's early learning centre or school in the first instance if a question remains unanswered.

Your child's school/ELC will be in touch with you to share further details of the plans for the reopening of their setting by the end of Thursday 6 August 2020.

In Inverclyde it has been agreed that pupils will be phased back into their schools and ELC and settings over the 12, 13 and 14 August 2020, as below, with all pupils starting back full time from Monday 17 August 2020.

Primary, secondary and ASN schools

Wednesday 12 August 2020	P1 and S1 pupils and any children with additional support needs who may require enhanced transition (schools will confirm this with parents)
Thursday 13 August 2020	50% of the school (including all P1, S1 and ASN pupils)
Friday 14 August 2020	50% of the school (including all P1 and S1 ASN pupils)
Monday 17 August 2020	All pupils return full time

Early learning and childcare

Wednesday 12 August 2020	children who require enhanced transition, children with a deferred entry, enrolments of new children (establishment will confirm this with parents)
Thursday 13 August 2020	50% of the centre (and those attending on Wednesday)
Friday 14 August 2020	50% of the centre (and those attending on Wednesday)
Monday 17 August 2020	All returning children, phased admission of new starts, wraparound care, blended placements and extended day placements.

The advantages of phasing pupils back in are:

- schools and ELCs can establish rules and routines with smaller groups
- there will be more opportunity to talk to the teacher and reconnect
- people who have not been in large groups get to phase in
- new starts and pupils with additional support needs (ASN) get a look around the school and can establish routines

If any parent has issues with childcare because of the transition phase then they should contact the school directly.

When will ELC settings reopen?

Childminders and fully outdoors settings were permitted to reopen to some children from 3 June. Registered ELC providers can open from 15 July, if they choose to do so. Term-time settings will open in line with schools in August.

Why are schools now planning on going back full time, when previously they were going back part time?

When schools and ELCs were first planning to reopen, the Government's scientific evidence suggested that it wouldn't be safe for all children to return to school at the same time. However, things have changed, and the Government has said we have made faster progress at suppressing coronavirus than was first thought possible. Infections are down and far fewer people are in hospital as a result of coronavirus. This has meant that the Government is confident that the virus is sufficiently under control to allow schools to open full time.

We will continue to work in partnership with Public Health Scotland to monitor any local impacts.

Is it safe for my child to go back to school or ELC?

The main priority for all schools / ELCs will be to look after your child's safety and wellbeing, and to ensure that they can continue to learn and make good progress. Schools / ELCs are already putting measures into place to make sure that staff and pupils are safe.

Some children and young people need additional support, which means that different considerations are required, for example, where staff need to help pupils with personal care, provision of some medications and healthcare supports. However, schools / ELCs have been carrying out individual risk assessments to ensure everyone stays safe. For example, they will decide whether PPE should be worn by staff. At all times, the wellbeing, safety and best interests of your child and the staff will be carefully considered. Schools / ELCs will be in touch with you if this applies to your child and if you have any further concerns please contact your child's school

Will staff and pupils have to physically distance when they go back to school?

Pupils will not need to socially distance from one another however schools will be planning to maintain separate groups of pupils as much as possible and limit contact between them e.g. classes or year groups. Staff will be required to socially distance from one another and pupils. If staff are with pupils less than 2m distance for more than 15 mins then staff will be required to wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), such as a mask.

In larger ELC settings children will be in separate groups in line with Primary class sizes of 25 / 30.

The arrangements for pupils who use school transport will be the same as in school and as such there is no need for distancing between pupils.

Will staff be wearing personal protective equipment (PPE)?

Adults in schools do not need to wear face coverings as long as they can maintain two metre distancing. Where adults cannot keep a two metre distance, are interacting face-to-face and for about 15 minutes or more, face coverings should be worn.

Staff in schools and ELC settings will not generally need to use PPE unless they would normally need to (for example, in a chemistry lesson), even if they are not always able to maintain a distance of 2m from others. PPE is only needed in a very small set of circumstances. This might also include where the intimate care of children already involves the use of PPE. Schools will be carrying out individual risk assessments to ensure everyone stays safe, which will include looking at if or when PPE should be worn. At all times the wellbeing, safety and best interests of your child and staff will be prioritized.

How can my child get to and from school / ELC safely?

Your school or ELC will be in touch to let you know the safest way for your child to get to school. School transport will be running from the 12th of August. Scottish Government guidance is that there is no need for social distancing between pupils on school transport as explained above. At the time of writing if your children are over the age of 5 and using public transport to travel to school they must wear a face covering.

Someone in our household has coronavirus symptoms – should my child go into school / ELC?

No. If you or anyone else in your household develops symptoms of coronavirus such as a high temperature or a new and continuous cough or a loss of/change in smell or taste, **that person must stay at home for 10 days and get tested**. In addition, **everyone else in the household must stay at home for 14 days**. You can find all the information about what you need to do in the NHS Inform website here: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus#stay-at-home-advice>

Will staff be tested for coronavirus?

If staff develop coronavirus symptoms, they must self-isolate and get tested. The Scottish Government will be introducing surveillance testing to some schools.

What happens if a child or teacher develops coronavirus symptoms at school / ELC? Does this mean that the teacher and whole class must isolate?

If a staff member or pupil becomes unwell due to suspected coronavirus, they must wait in a ventilated space until they can be collected or get home safely. They will then need to get tested for coronavirus and they and their household must self-isolate. If they test positive for coronavirus they'll be asked to continue to self-isolate for 10 days and their close contacts, identified through contact tracing, will be asked to self-isolate for 14 days.

If other staff or pupils need to self-isolate as a result of coming into contact with them, the school, ELC and Local Authority will consult with public health professional and the NHS who will decide if the rest of the class need to self-isolate. You can find out more about the test and protect scheme here: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/test-and-protect>

What will schools / ELCs be like when they reopen?

Despite the fact that schools / ELCs are returning full time, there may be some changes, for example:

- how or where pupils are dropped off and picked up
- changing how people move around the school buildings
- changing seating arrangements
- ensuring everyone washes their hands regularly and wipes down equipment after use
- staggering lunch breaks or intervals
- cleaning more frequently
- holding more lessons outside where possible.

After schools / ELCs reopen staff will be focused on welcoming pupils back and focusing on their health and wellbeing before then moving on to assessing their learning and planning their next steps.

How will I drop off and collect my child from school / ELC?

Each school / ELC will confirm exact arrangements with parents about drop off and collection of pupils. Some schools / ELCs may restrict access to the school / ELC playgrounds in order to limit contact between families. Staggering the start and finish of the day may also be put in place to further limit such contact. We would ask that in any case parents to do not spend time waiting around either before drop off / collection.

Schools / ELCs will also limit parents' access to the building and would ask that contact with the school / ELC is via phone or email. If you have to attend the school, this should be restricted to one adult if essential and by invitation by the school / ELC.

Will my child be attending their usual buildings?

Yes. There are no plans to use any other buildings to accommodate pupils as they return to their school / ELC.

Can I settle my P1 child into school on their first day?

Unfortunately parents will not be able to accompany their child into school on their first day as the Scottish Government guidelines do not allow for this. Schools will work with parents to support them to support their children as much as possible.

Will breakfast clubs be operating?

At this moment in time we will not be able to reopen breakfast clubs however we will review how these can be reopened at the start of the term and once we know more we will communicate this to parents.

Will the temperatures of pupils and staff be taken on entering the school / ELC?

This will not be required.

Will pupils still have to wash their hands?

Yes. All aspects of hygiene such as washing hands and using hand sanitizer will remain in place. At a minimum, pupils will need to wash their hands as they enter and exit the building, before and after eating and after to the toilet. The latter two should be common practice. Schools and ELCs will promote personal hygiene and pupils taking responsibility for this.

In early years settings and other schools where appropriate, will children still have nappies changed?

Yes, the national guidance allows for this and schools / ELCs have carried out risk assessments to allow for this.

If my child has physical and medical needs, can these be met and can they return?

Yes. Schools / ELCs will have already carried out risk assessments for these pupils. It is likely that they have already been in touch with you to discuss this. If not and you are concerned then please contact your child's school in the first instance.

If my child is still shielding in August what will happen for them?

On the 30th of July the First Minister announced that shielding would be paused for all on 1st August 2020. If parents are still concerned about their child's health and the return to school / ELC we suggest that you contact your child's school ELC to discuss a plan for how they can safely return to school.

If this isn't possible for a short period of time then learning can be supported at home whilst they remain away from school. The use of virtual remote learning can be used just as in lock down.

Will schools and ELCs administer first aid?

Yes. Schools and ELCs have already planned for this and have risk assessed doing so.

Will my child be allowed to bring a school bag and their own resources into school?

Yes, pupils can bring in a school bag and a small amount of their own resources such as stationary. Schools will also provide learning resources for pupils. Pupils must not bring in additional things such as soft toys. Pupils should not share any of the things they bring into school. For younger pupils where reading books are sent home these will be quarantined on their return to school and cleaned before being used again by other children.

Will my child be able to eat lunch at school / ELC?

Yes. In early learning settings lunches will be provided and eaten as usual as much as possible. In primary schools the majority of lunches will be delivered to classrooms and eaten there rather than in the dining hall. This will include a hot option.

In secondary schools lunchtimes will be staggered and "grab and go" systems will operate. Pupils will be allowed to go out of school for lunch as usual but will be expected to follow all rules re social distancing and wearing face masks in shops and wash their hands in returning to the building

Will my child have homework?

Yes this will continue. As above resources sent home will be planned for and on return be carefully handled before being used again. Staff will use a range of ways to mark and feedback on home learning other than physically marking papers. More homework will be done online using systems already in place.

Will my child be expected to wear uniform?

Your child's school will have written to you in June to confirm the uniform arrangements for August. These will remain in place e.g. relaxed uniform in primary schools, and will be reviewed over the autumn term with a possible move back to full school uniform at some point. Schools will write to confirm these arrangements.

Where schools have cloakrooms these will be used.

Will my child be changing for PE?

Your child's school will decide on their protocol for this and write out to you to let you know what this is. It is possible that on days where PE is being taught that your child might be asked to wear their PE kit to school that day to minimize changing in school.

What about other subjects such as learning music and cooking in food technology?

Schools have already planned for specific subjects following national guidance for science labs for example. As your child returns to school staff will induct them into using these learning spaces and the related equipment safely. We will have to make changes to how music tuition is carried out and initially, we may not be able to provide instrumental music instruction in the same way as normal. Your child's school and the music service will be in touch to explain how this will work.

Will schools and ELCs operate one way systems?

As far as possible schools and ELCs have already planned to use these to limit the number of pupils passing one another. In smaller schools this will be harder to achieve however the scientific advice is that the risk of transference when passing in corridors etc is very low.

How will classrooms be set out?

Scottish Government guidance is that pupils should sit at desks facing the front of the classroom as far as possible and not sit face to face. This means that pupils will less likely be sitting in groups.

Will schools hold assemblies?

At this time the gathering of large groups of pupils in halls for assemblies is discouraged. Schools can consider virtual assemblies where pupils stay in their classrooms and the senior staff appear on screen via video conferencing software as a means to hold such events.

Will schools offer after school activities?

Schools will be able to offer outdoor sports type activities after school from August however all indoor activities will not happen at this time. We will review this situation with schools prior to the October holidays to allow staff and pupils to settle back into school safely. Schools will write out to parents to confirm arrangements when the time is right.

Will schools be going out on school trips?

Schools can resume non-overnight domestic visits, including workplace / work experience visits. Schools are planning for residential trips later in the year as long as the guidance and science allows for this. Schools will be in touch about trips planned for the future. However, schools are likely to reduce and minimize the number of such trips at this time.

Will school swimming be happening?

The Government has announced that swimming pools will not be able to open until at least 14th September. We will then see how we can incorporate swimming back into the curriculum.

Will the consortium offer for the senior phase be running?

Yes. We are keen to ensure that we do not limit pupil's options and choices of the curriculum at this time. We are planning to minimize the need for pupils to move between schools however we anticipate that some movement will still be required.

My child is attending college this summer, what are the plans for their education?

West College Scotland will be opening for pupils from the 17th of August. The first week back will be a virtual induction with classes resuming at the college from the week beginning the 24th August. The college will be using strict social distancing rules within its campus and where possible offer aspects of courses remotely. The College will be in touch with students to explain arrangements.

Will foundation apprenticeships be running?

Yes. Providers will contact students about arrangements however much of the course will be provided virtually. Contact with employers etc will increase as the guidance allows it. Some aspects of the programmes will be delivered via virtual simulation.

My child was in Primary 7 in June 2020 and missed their leavers' service etc. Are there plans in place to offer something to them now they are in S1?

Yes primary schools have planned to hold a service / assembly for former P7 pupils as soon as the guidance allows this. They will be "invited back"!

Can parents visit the school / ELC for a meeting?

As above we need to manage and minimise parents and visitors going into schools / ELCs. Where meetings can be carried out virtually or over the phone this will be the approach taken. Schools and ELCs will review how they will report to parents and it may be that parent/teacher meetings need to happen virtually for the foreseeable future.

What will my child be learning and what will learning look like?

Over the last few months children's experiences of learning will have been quite different to normal. We recognise that good health and well-being is fundamental to ensuring that children and young people can engage effectively in their learning.

When returning to school children will have regular contact with someone i.e. their class teacher or other staff such as pastoral care / guidance teacher or another member of the staff team, who knows them well, to talk about their well-being. We will want to give pupils time to share their experiences during lockdown; to offer compassion and individual support as required; and to support engagement with learning. We will also want to hear about what they have learned during lockdown.

Not all children will want to talk about their experiences – for most children the return to the structure of a well-planned school/nursery day will be what they have missed and what they need to recover.

Schools and ELCs will focus on the delivery of high quality learning and teaching as we know this makes the biggest difference.

All of our primary and secondary schools will have extra staffing in place to support any pupils who need some extra support with their learning on their return.

Health and Well Being

On the initial return to school, schools will plan activities which will provide opportunities for children to reconnect with school, their teachers and staff and their classmates and to explore their experience of lockdown. We have provided a range of advice to schools / ELCs prior to the summer holidays including various policies and guidance written by our Psychological Services Team. As always, teachers should be flexible to respond to any issues as they arise.

Teachers will strike a balance between offering experiences and learning focused around health and well-being with a focus on getting back to core learning, including courses in secondary schools.

Outdoor learning will also be a strong feature of the curriculum on offer in all establishments.

We also want our children and young people to experience a breadth of curriculum. We recognise that many children flourish when they are given opportunities for personal leadership, for example, in the expressive arts and in sport. Schools will continue to find innovative ways to ensure our children and young people have opportunities to achieve.

From September the 1st all pupils in Inverclyde aged between 5 and 18 will have access to a new school counselling service to be run by Action for Children. More information about how referrals for the service will work will be conveyed in the coming weeks.