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North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

Your Ref: Our Ref: AMcC/CA/LB

If telephoning please call: 01294 324413

19 June 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

We have been working with our schools and centres to plan for our re-opening in August and we want to thank you for your patience and understanding.

The health, safety and wellbeing of our children and staff is our highest priority. In order to ensure this, our planning has been based on current guidance produced by the Scottish Government, which requires the implementation of a blended learning model initially. This means that children will spend part of the week learning in their school or early years centre and part of the week learning at home.

In developing our plans, our aim has been to maximise on an ongoing basis the proportion of face to face learning taking place in our schools. Over 6000 parents and carers fed back their views through our survey and we have taken this feedback into account alongside public health guidance, staff availability and accommodation capacity to arrive at our initial delivery model. We are now able to offer further detail on what this will look like across all stages of learning from the start of term in August.

Term Dates

Schools and early years centres will open across North Ayrshire for children and young people on Tuesday 11 August. This is earlier than our previously published start date and was set nationally by the Scottish Government. As a result, we have amended the term and holiday dates for 2020-21 and these can be viewed on the Council's website:

<https://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/education-and-learning/information-for-parents-and-carers/school-term-dates.aspx>

Attendance at School in August

We have been spending time with our staff calculating how many children can attend each school at the same time while physical distancing measures remain in place. All schools are slightly different, but across North Ayrshire we have agreed the following common model of delivery initially for Primary, Secondary and ASN schools.

As a minimum, all children will attend school for the equivalent of two days per week. Children will return to school in two groups (50% of pupils will be in the buildings at the same time). Creative use has been made of spaces within schools to enable this to happen successfully, while fully complying with the current arrangements around physical distancing.

In almost all schools, Group A will attend school on a Monday and Tuesday, and Group B will attend on a Thursday and Friday. On Wednesdays there will initially be an enhanced focus on learning at home.

Schools will try very hard to ensure that siblings from the same household can be in the same group.

Your child's head teacher will write to you this week, or on Monday, to give you specific details about the model in each individual school, as there may be some variations, for example because of factors such as the school roll, the layout of the building, school transport or individual pupil needs.

Planning is already well underway for children and young people attending our ASN schools as some will require a bespoke model which will determine the pattern of their week.

Further information specifically about plans for children in early years settings will be shared with you very soon. Scottish Government advice on this aspect of education was issued to local authorities only a few days ago but our staff are working at pace to ensure we get information to you as quickly as possible.

Timings of the school day

In order for pupils and staff to enter, leave and work in our school buildings and centres, your child's school may organise staggered start and finish times as well as staggered times for interval and lunch. Transport requirements may also impact on the start and finish times for some.

Blended Learning

Whilst we accept that learning in school is preferable to learning at home, we must start the new term with this model of blended learning. We are committed to ensuring that the blended learning model is a high-quality experience for our children and young people for as long as it needs to last. On Wednesdays, we are therefore investing some additional time in developing resources and new ways of reinforcing and extending the learning in a home context to complement the learning done in class. This time will also provide further opportunities for targeting support to those pupils who require it.

We will seek to build this time back into face to face learning in schools as soon as possible once the blended learning model is established and working well and, of course, if Scottish Government guidance changes.

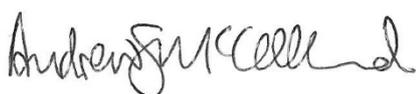
Facilities Management are developing an excellent cleaning regime and although cleaning will be carried out every day throughout the week, Wednesdays will allow additional input to this very important safety measure.

A set of Frequently Asked Questions has been prepared and will be added to the council's website next week. We will also update these FAQs as further questions arise.

We will continue to send you updates and further information as our plans develop.

We cannot thank you enough for the work you have done to support us at this most difficult of times. We hope that you can enjoy a restful time with your children over the summer period and we are looking forward very much to welcoming your children and young people back in August.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew McClelland
Head of Service (Education)



Caroline Amos
Head of Service (Education)

