

Our ref: DB/MR
Date: 4 August 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to update you on the plans to return to schools in North Lanarkshire. The Scottish Government announced last week that all schools should return by Tuesday 18 August. I am pleased to confirm that all schools will return from Wednesday 12 August, following a single in-service day on 11 August.

In common with many councils, the return to school will be **phased** as follows:

Primary schools

- Wednesday 12 August: Primary One, Primary Two, Primary Three.
- Thursday 13 August: Primary One, Primary Four, Primary Five, Primary Six, Primary Seven.
- From Friday 14 August: All pupils.

All Primary One pupils will attend on 12, 13 and 14 August. Please note that schools may vary arrival times and departure times, particularly for Primary One classes. If this is the case, schools will be in contact to confirm these changes.

Secondary schools

- Wednesday 12 August: First Year, Second Year, Third Year.
- Thursday 13 August: First Year, Fourth Year, Fifth Year, Sixth Year.
- From Friday 14 August: All pupils.

All First Year pupils will attend on 12, 13 and 14 August.

ASN schools

ASN schools will follow the phasing set out above. However, taking into account the specific needs of some children, there may be some variation. Where this is the case, the school will be in direct contact with you.

Nursery classes and Family Learning Centres

Those attending nursery classes at a primary school will return on Wednesday 12 August and those based at Family Learning Centres will return on Thursday 13 August. The exception to this is Stepping Stones Family Learning Centre, which is open on Wednesday 12 August. If you have not already heard from your provider confirming your child's session, your provider will be in touch shortly.

Making schools as safe as possible for the return of young people has been our priority throughout the summer. The guidance issued by the Scottish Government – which can be accessed at www.gov.scot/coronavirus - makes it clear that a return to school is not a return to normality.

Schools will look considerably different on pupils' return. The government guidance makes it clear that schools must have clear plans for the arrival and departure of pupils, how they move around the building, how they manage breaks and lunches, and how they promote health and hygiene.

It is important that teachers are able to ensure young people are familiar with differences in their school and necessary safety and hygiene measures during the first days back. That is why we are putting in place the phased arrangements detailed above.

Schools are required under national guidance to undertake a considerable programme of risk assessment to ensure that they comply with government guidance. This will mean that a number of specific orientation activities will be undertaken with pupils and staff in the week of their return.

Inevitably, because of the different sizes of school and the different configurations of each building there will be some local variation. We have been working hard with head teachers and property managers to ensure there are individual risk assessments in place and extensive signage and other measures continue to be installed to support the new environment.

All of this is happening to minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus. Equally, we have to be prepared for all eventualities and detailed planning is happening to respond to any positive cases and the measures that could be required if positive cases were to happen in a school setting.

Our prime focus during the first few days will be on health and wellbeing, and re-establishing relationships. We are aware that children and young people have missed the day to day routine of school life, but we also need to help them deal with issues that they might find challenging about returning to school.

In secondary schools, there will be the usual focus on course options, and, in relation to this, we are reviewing our plans to provide vocational learning, college programmes and consortium arrangements between schools for senior phase courses. Our intention is to find way to honour commitments to pupils, where possible, but we acknowledge that delivery of such programmes may look different in light of government guidance which makes clear that movement of pupils and staff across schools should be minimised.

On Wednesday 5 August, we will publish on our website extensive questions and answers based on the guidance and to give you some certainty about some of the anxieties you and your child may have. Inevitably, we will not be able to answer every single question but we will add to these as we approach the start of the school term.

These questions and answers, and all other information we have available, will be published on a dedicated page: www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/schoolplans. When we publish updates on this page we will announce those on the council's Twitter feed (@nlcpeople) and on the council's main Facebook page (www.facebook.com/nlcpeople). Schools will also publicise this on their own Twitter feeds, websites, blogs and via email and text.

In the meantime, I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for the support you have given to our schools over this challenging period. I speak for staff in all schools when I say that we will be delighted to welcome the pupils back, with our primary objective being to do this in the safest possible way.

Yours sincerely

Derek Brown
Executive Director
Education and Families