

Our Ref: DB/CC
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Dear parent/carers,

Clarification of January arrangements

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone the very best of health, success and happiness for 2021. In light of national events, I wanted to get in touch with you before schools, family learning centres and nurseries return this week.

It is important that we continue to provide quality learning and education for all our children and young people without widespread disruption to their learning but it is vital that we do this within appropriate environments and with hygiene and physical distancing guidance in place to reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus.

You will be aware that the First Minister previously announced that there would be an extended Christmas holiday break for pupils until 11 January (the exception to that is the vulnerable and key worker children for whom schools are asked to provide childcare from 6 – 8 January).

Yesterday the First Minister clarified that in light of the rise in COVID-19 cases nationally, the arrangements previously announced for schools for the January have changed. All children and young people return to learning on Monday 11 January 2021 when online learning will be in place **until 1 February 2021**. There is a possibility that these arrangements could continue on for a longer period, subject to review on 18 January.

Under these arrangements, schools are closed for most pupils, who will instead be provided with a programme of remote learning, based on digital experiences and supplemented with other resources, where that is applicable.

The change in guidance from the Scottish Government will make care and support for our children and young people challenging, but keeping them as safe as possible is paramount while we work through this health emergency as well as ensuring continuity of education provision through online learning at home.

Government guidance also stipulates that childminders can stay open to all children and should operate in accordance with Level 4 guidance.

Online learning

Teachers will be in direct contact with pupils who will be able to access online learning through GLOW and Teams. In addition, this will be supplemented by the council's Digital School offering, which is currently available to primary and secondary schools. All content on the digital school will be regularly updated to ensure pupils have access to quality materials based on the curriculum. Further information will come directly from your school in relation to the digital offering before pupils return on the 11 January 2021.

Key worker

In line with Scottish Government guidance, all schools, including primary, secondary, LCSC and additional support needs, as well as family learning centres and nurseries (local authority and partner providers), will be open from Wednesday 6 until Friday 8 January only for children of key workers and vulnerable families when childcare support will be provided.

If you are a key worker and are unable to work from home, all schools, family learning centres and nurseries will be open for children and young people during existing times, when they will receive in-class learning. Lunch will be provided.

This service is **only** available to children of key workers (in the list attached) and vulnerable families. If another parent/carer is able to work from home, then your child must stay at home. Key worker support should only be accessed where you have no other alternative. Parents/carers who are key workers only should complete the attached key worker support form and send to the dedicated mailbox: keyworkerschools@northlan.gov.uk. Further details will be provided nearer the time.

Key workers are being contacted separately by members of our central team today to confirm receipt of their application and that their children can attend school on 6 January.

Schools have been given information about who key workers are and who to expect to attend. Those key workers who have not submitted the on-line form can still access the service, but need to make contact with their child's/children's school directly on Wednesday 6 January.

Children who were previously categorised as shielding must not attend, and under no circumstances should any child with symptoms of coronavirus present at a school or early years' facility.

Access to Schools and Early Learning Centres for Vulnerable Children

Under the Scottish Government arrangements, vulnerable children are expected to attend school and Early Years settings. Prior to Christmas schools identified children and young people in that category. They will make arrangements for these children to attend from the 6 January onwards.

A full list of criteria for establishing vulnerable children is available on the Scottish Government website - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-school-re-opening-arrangements-for-january-2021/pages/vulnerable-children-and-young-people/>

Vulnerable family support

Direct contact by their lead professional (social worker, health worker or school link) will be made with families of vulnerable children. If you are unable to contact your lead professional (social worker, health visitor, school link) to discuss attendance at school, please contact the Duty Officer – Education and Families on 01236 856326 (Monday to Friday, 8.45am-4.45pm) or social work emergency service on 0800 121 4114 (public holidays, weekends and out of office hours).

Transportation

If your child is attending school because you are a key worker or a vulnerable family, school transport will continue as normal from 6 – 8 January. You will be advised by your head teacher of any changes following this date, should there be any need to revise arrangements.

Additional Support Needs

I would like to thank ASN parent councils for working with us throughout this challenging time. Schools are planning for a bespoke learning package for individual children and young people. Head teachers/heads of centre or lead professionals will be in contact with parents/carers of children and young people with additional support needs to communicate arrangements and plans.

Free school meals

For all those who are eligible for free school meals, whether because of universal provision for P1-P3 or because you are otherwise entitled, Paypoint vouchers will be administered by SMS for the period **6 January – 1 February** when children and young people are learning from home.

This is an unparalleled situation and one that is changing rapidly but the council is focused on providing all our children and young people with quality education until schools and ELC establishments can return to a more normal routine.

I appreciate that you will still have questions around schools, centres and nurseries and about ongoing practical considerations and I aim to provide a further update when children and young people return to learning on 11 January 2021. Information is available at <https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/coronavirus/advice-parents-coronavirus/latest-school-updates/latest-school-updates>.

Yours,



Derek Brown
Executive Director
Education and Families