

Our Ref: DB/CC
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Dear parent/carer,

Key workers and vulnerable children education and learning provision

You will have received my previous correspondence in relation to the childcare provision this week and the return of schools, family learning centres and nurseries from Monday 11 January 2021.

Under the new arrangements, the majority of children and young people will be participating in a programme of online learning as schools are closed for most pupils.

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), are open from Monday 11 January 2021 until Friday 28 January **only** for children of key workers and vulnerable children during existing hours of operation, when they will receive in-class learning and teaching.

Lunch will be available for those children who are eligible for free school meals and lunch halls will be open as normal for pupils to purchase food and drinks or for packed lunches.

The in-school service is **only** available to children of key workers and vulnerable children and although schools are not high-risk environments, it is important that we try and keep the numbers of both pupils and staff within school buildings as low as possible to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus.

Updated guidance in relation to key workers

I am writing to you as the Scottish Government has published updated guidance in relation to key workers and parents/carers. First and foremost, the advice remains that people should stay at home to minimise the risk of spreading the virus.

Understandably, there are key workers who are in posts which ensure that essential services are delivered, that support the vulnerable in our communities and that aid community resilience.

However the updated guidance is clear that parents and carers should consider carefully if your role as a key worker can be done at home and if not, if you have a partner or family member at home who is able to look after your child, then please do so. This is so that we all make every effort to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives during this period of strict lockdown.

The updated guidance outlines that whole workforces or entire groups of staff should not be designated as key workers. In particular, those workers in category 3 of the guidance, should be clear that the work they carry out (private, public or third sector) requires to be done to ensure the country keeps running throughout the pandemic.

This means that key worker support should only be accessed where you have no other alternative. Key worker categories can be found on our webpage here: northlanarkshire.gov.uk/schoolplans and I have included the updated guidance attached with this letter.

You will have already been contacted separately by members of our central team to confirm details of school or centre attendance from 11 January. Following the updated government guidance, the team is currently reviewing all applications and will **only** be in touch with you if your role as a key worker does not meet the updated guidance.

Schools have information about who key workers are and who is expected to attend.

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

As previously noted, 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 and arrangements will now have been made for their attendance from Monday.

The continued care and support for these pupils throughout this current lockdown period is a priority for local authorities and it's important that we apply the definition outlined by the government while balancing the overarching policy aims of reducing the number of children, young people and staff who need to attend school in person as far as possible.

A full list of criteria in respect of children who may be deemed vulnerable 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 children 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 worker or school link) to discuss attendance at school, please email the designated mailbox keyworkerschools@northlan.gov.uk or social work emergency service on 0800 121 4114 (public holidays, weekends and out of office hours).

Transportation

Transportation has been provided this week for those who are eligible for free school transport and this will continue into next week. However, the service will review demand next week and provide an update on arrangements. If your child is normally eligible for free transport to school, they will continue to receive this but the mode of transport may change for the duration of this lockdown period. You will be advised by your head teacher of any changes to your child's transport arrangements but on Monday, please use your normal

mode of transport based on eligibility.

This is a rapidly changing situation 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.

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