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Dear Parent/Carer

I am delighted to welcome you and your family back to nursery and school next week and I hope you have been able to enjoy the summer holidays, following an incredibly challenging year for everyone. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and appreciation for all you have done to support your child's learning during recent times.

To all our primary one families and others who are joining our school community for the first time, a very warm welcome. We look forward to getting to know all our new pupils as they settle into the school year.

Our experience over the past 18 months has shown us all how resilient our nursery and school communities can be. I have been continually impressed by the positivity and commitment of our children and young people and their families, and the dedication shown by all staff. I want to reassure you that we are here to ensure everyone can return to nursery and school life safely and with the support they require. The priority is to ensure all children and young people have the best learning experience possible.

Return Dates

Teachers and staff return to school this week to prepare in advance of children and pupils returning to school or nursery. Children and young people return on Monday 16 August 2021 and your child's school will confirm start and finish times directly with you.

Returning Safely

For now, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) safety measures you have become familiar with in our nurseries and schools will remain in place and for the next six weeks, complying with Scottish Government guidelines.

This means staff will continue to observe physical distancing, enhanced cleaning will continue in all nurseries and schools, visitors will be restricted, and we continue to ask parents and carers to please respect physical distancing during pick up and drop off times, although I appreciate how difficult this can be.

All secondary school pupils as well as staff in nurseries, primary and secondary schools will continue to wear a face covering in class and in communal areas and are strongly encouraged to continue to test at home before returning to school and twice a week thereafter, using a lateral flow test. Test kits are free and can be collected from schools and local pharmacies or you can order test kits online (www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests) and get them delivered to your home.

Although many of us will be familiar with these preventative measures, you can find more information and the updated national guidance on Coronavirus (COVID-19) protection measures for schools and nurseries (www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/coronavirus-schools) on our website.

Changes to Note

Contact Tracing and Self-Isolation

We very much welcome some changes to contact tracing and self-isolation being introduced and you can read more about this in your letter from NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/NHS-TP-1108). If someone is identified by NHS Test and Protect as being a close contact the following new rules apply:

Children aged 5 to 18

Will not have to isolate for 10 days, so long as they remain asymptomatic and have a negative result from a PCR test.

Under 5s

Will not have to isolate so long as they remain asymptomatic but there is no mandatory requirement for them to have a negative result from a PCR test.

Adults

Who are double vaccinated and have a negative result from a PCR test will no longer have to isolate if they are a contact of a positive case.

We hope this will mean less staff and pupils having to self-isolate and for much shorter periods of time, which I know will be very welcome for everyone. If your child does develop symptoms of Coronavirus (COVID-19) and tests positive, please inform their school or nursery when reporting absences.

Bubbles

Previous arrangements for creating smaller groups in schools, commonly known as 'bubbles', are no longer required. However, we will continue to encourage physical distancing, where possible, to further minimise any risk. This means we will avoid bringing children and young people together in large groups. For example, this means there will be no large assemblies for an initial period.

Transport to School

Children and young people aged 5 to 11 will no longer need to wear a face covering while on school or public transport. Young people aged 12 and older will have to wear a face covering, unless they are exempt. There is no need for physical distancing between children and young people while on school transport.

Drama, music, physical education (PE) and dance

I am pleased to confirm lessons and classes on drama, music, physical education (PE) and dance can now take place indoors with good ventilation and enhanced hygiene measures in place.

Vaccinations

We are now seeing the vaccine offered to everyone aged 16 and older and, in line with the national Joint Committee on Vaccinations and immunisations (JCVI) guidance, it has also been offered to some young people from key groups who are aged between 12 to 15. All 16 to 17-year-olds can now get their Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine appointment by text or email. Register for the vaccine (www.nhsinform.scot/vaccineregistration) on the NHS Inform website.

We are hopeful that as the national vaccination programme continues to progress, we will see more restrictions lifted in October. Until then, I ask that you please continue to support your nursery or school and follow the measures in place. I am confident that together we will be able to come through this phase successfully.

Once again, I would like to extend my sincerest thanks for your continuing support, and I hope you are reassured about the arrangements for supporting a return to nursery and school for our children and young people. Please do contact your nursery or school if there is any further information we can provide.

I look forward to speaking to you over the course of the year.

Yours sincerely



Steven Quinn
Director of Children's Services