

Dear parent or carer

I wanted to provide you with an update on what is happening in our schools and nurseries, following the Scottish Government announcement this week regarding the wearing of face coverings at school, and to provide some useful information on the measures we have in place to keep our pupils and staff safe and healthy.

Renfrewshire pupils are now into their second full week of the new term and I know our staff were delighted to be able to welcome them back after such a long absence.

Clearly this year's return to school has not been normal – the current situation has been a new one for all of us, but throughout, our number one priority has been the health and wellbeing of your child.

A huge amount has had to happen behind the scenes to put new procedures in place to minimise the risk of Covid19 in our schools and nurseries, in line with national guidance.

I am sure you would appreciate that hasn't been easy, and we appreciate your patience while we try to get things right in a fast-moving and ever-changing situation.

Rest assured our team are doing everything we can to strike the right balance between keeping our pupils safe, while also making sure our schools and nurseries remain a welcoming environment in which they feel comfortable and can learn and thrive.

There are a few specific issues I wanted to update you or provide a helpful reminder on.

### **Wearing face coverings**

The existing national guidance on face coverings is that these are not necessary in classrooms, but that pupils and staff can wear them if they wish. That remains the case but the Scottish Government have now announced two changes, which will apply from Monday 31 August.

The first is that secondary school pupils should wear face coverings while moving round any places where physical distancing will be difficult – such as corridors or communal spaces. The second is that children aged five and over should wear a face covering while on school transport.

Pupils should bring their own face coverings but if anyone doesn't have one, schools will be able to provide a disposable one. No child will be penalised for not having a face covering.

Please remind your child if they leave school at lunchtime, they should follow physical distancing guidance and wear face coverings in any businesses they visit.

The exceptions to these changes apply to any pupils who cannot wear face coverings due to breathing difficulties, certain disabilities, or complex additional support needs. Pupils will be reminded there will be exemptions and all children should be treated equally and with respect.

### **What to do if you suspect Covid19**

We all have a role to play to help stop the spread of coronavirus. Here is a helpful reminder of the guidance:

If your child or someone in your household is showing any of the symptoms of Covid19, do not send them to school. The symptoms are a new continuous cough, a high temperature or fever, or a loss of or change to sense of taste or smell. Anyone with any of these symptoms should be tested as soon as possible, and you should all self-isolate as a household in the meantime.

The NHS will only test those who have these symptoms. As there has been huge demand on the testing system of late, the NHS have asked you do not try to book a test for anyone who is not displaying Covid19 symptoms, unless otherwise instructed.

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde have today issued a letter clarifying some of the issues they have experienced around who should be tested and when, which they have asked councils to share with all parents, and you can see that here.

If you or your child tests positive for Covid19, please follow the NHS guidance around self-isolation and let your child's school know about the test result as soon as possible.

More info on what to do is at [www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/covid-cases-schools](http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/covid-cases-schools) and at [www.nhsinform.com/coronavirus](http://www.nhsinform.com/coronavirus)

### **Test and Protect activity**

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind you what happens when someone who has been in school or nursery tests positive, as there is an established process in place.

When we are notified of the positive test, we will inform the NHS Test and Protect team, and work with them to establish who was in close contact with that person.

NHS Test and Protect will contact those close contacts directly to ask they self-isolate, and get tested if symptoms develop. Only those deemed at risk will be directly contacted by Test and Protect - if you don't hear from them, your child is safe to attend school as normal.

A letter will go from the NHS to all parents at the school or nursery to make them aware Test and Protect is active, but due to patient confidentiality this will not identify who has tested positive.

We will follow the advice of the health authorities as to the appropriate steps to take to keep everyone safe, including whether the building is safe to remain open.

You will be aware we had individual cases in four Renfrewshire schools last week. In each case there was no evidence the virus had been transmitted within the school.

While we understand this may have caused some concern, we hope you would appreciate the system put in place by the health authorities did what it was designed to – the virus was found and stopped before spreading further. I would like to thank all parents and carers for their cooperation and support in this.

It is up to all of us to remain vigilant and follow the public health guidance. I can assure you the health and safety of your children and our staff will at all times remain our biggest priority.

### **School pick-up and drop-offs**

I would like to remind all parents of the arrangements around school pick-ups and drop-offs as parents have a key role to play here. Each school and nursery's layout is different and yours will already have made you aware of any special arrangements they have in place.

The national guidance is that adults should maintain two metres of physical distancing from other adults outwith your household at all times, and avoid large gatherings of people - please try to abide by this. If you are happy to, you should wear a mask.

### **General health and safety guidance**

Lastly, I would like to give you all a brief reminder of the general measures we have in place to protect the health of our pupils and staff, in line with the national guidance.

Our enhanced cleaning regime sees all school and nursery buildings thoroughly cleaned each day and we have hired 100 new cleaners across Renfrewshire to allow this. Surfaces are being regularly wiped during the day and materials are being provided for this, in line with national guidance.

Schools and nurseries are emphasising the importance of regular hand washing and hand sanitising during the day, and we ask children should do this before leaving and when they arrive home.

At the moment we are still only offering packed lunches within schools – this is to avoid queues building in dinner halls. We are working on new procedures to allow us to safely reintroduce hot meals and hope to do this as soon as possible.

We hope these measures will give parents confidence but if anyone has a specific medical concern we ask you speak to your doctor. There may be things your school can do to support you, but they can only do so on the basis of professional medical advice.

More information is available at <http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/openingschools>

I would like to end by again thanking all of our pupils, parents and staff for your patience and understanding at what I know has been a challenging time for everyone.

We will continue to do all we can to get things right for you and continue to provide the high standard of education and care for which Renfrewshire schools and nurseries are known for and proud of.

Yours sincerely

**Steven Quinn**

**Director of Children's Services**

**Renfrewshire Council**