

**People Directorate**  
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Ref: LC/AMH  
Date: 03 February 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

I really do hope you are all well and are continuing to cope with the current school closures and working with remote learning in place. I have been extremely impressed with how well the pupils have engaged with this and can see that they benefit greatly from a structure and routine to their day.

I want to thank you all for the many positive messages we have received from you about the remote learning we have in place. We are all trying to keep moving forward. We know this is a very challenging time for you all, so staff appreciate this support as they are all working so hard to provide learning opportunities for their classes as well as catering for children through the Childcare in our school.

#### **First Minister's announcement on schools**

The First Minister has just announced that ELC and P1-3 will have a full-time return from **22 February** provided there is continued progress in the suppression of the virus. **A final decision will be made in 2 weeks, so on 16 February.** Please presume that these groups of children will return to school unless you hear otherwise on the next First Ministers Announcement in 2 weeks.

#### **Chief Medical Officer response**

I recognise that news of a more transmissible version of the COVID-19 virus will be a cause for concern. While cases of the new variant are increasing in all age groups, the rate of increase is slightly lower in children under 5 and, compared to other age groups in Scotland, children under 5 continue to have far fewer diagnoses of COVID-19. Indeed, since the start of the pandemic, 985 children aged 2-4 have been diagnosed with COVID-19. This is only 0.6% of children in this age group.

I want to reassure you that Public Health Scotland are continuing to closely monitor the new variant of this virus, its severity and its transmissibility between children, and from children to adults. While increased transmissibility is thought to be a feature of this variant, increased severity and hospitalisations are not. Any additional mitigations that can be put in place will be communicated straight away. At the moment though, childcare settings should continue to apply the safe operating guidance.

In the current climate, we cannot assume that any environment is entirely risk free, therefore it is vital that we all continue to follow appropriate guidance to lower risks wherever possible. With that said, I hope this letter provides reassurance that, with appropriate mitigations and safety procedures in place for maximising physical distancing and using face coverings during contact between adults, good hand washing, environmental cleanliness, avoiding car-sharing, good natural ventilation and getting tested and staying at home when symptoms arise, childcare settings can remain lower risk environments.

### **In-school provision**

We continue to offer support to children of parents of key workers (criteria was shared). The government guidance states clearly that the safest place for your child for now is to be at home with an adult – even if you are working from home so please only use our childcare facility when you have **no other alternative**. We do also have some additional children in school as vulnerable learners are included in school provision too.

### **Remote Learning Devices**

We surveyed to check all pupils had some access to a device, have issued guidance as well as made calls to help support the use of Teams. It's important to encourage children to return any assignments, so their teacher can review it. Games consoles and smart tv's can also be used to access MS Teams.

If you continue to have any difficulty with Teams or your child's Glow account access then please send your child's teacher a message and we will get in touch to help. **It's important that all children check in daily on Teams/ See saw or we will be concerned. We are still following absence monitoring procedures so as always if your child is unwell and not involved in class work then let us know.**

Once again, I thank you for everything you are able to do to support your child at home. Some days will be easier than others and some days it may feel overwhelming so put your family's wellbeing first and just do what you can. Little chunks of learning time pay off rather than hours of intense desk work so quality over quantity may be the best approach.

Best wishes and stay safe and well.

*Leanne Campbell*

Head Teacher