

## People Directorate

Depute Chief Executive and Director - People: Douglas Hutchison

County Buildings  
Wellington Square  
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Our Ref: DH/LD

Your Ref

Date: 4 March 2021



Dear Parent / Carer

### **Phased return to in-school learning**

Following the First Minister's announcement to Parliament, I want to set out what is likely to happen between the 15<sup>th</sup> of March and the 1<sup>st</sup> of April.

**Special schools:** All primary age pupils will return to full time in school from **15<sup>th</sup> March** while those of secondary age will continue with the current rotations until after Easter.

**Primary Schools P4 – P7 Pupils:** The expectation is that on the **15<sup>th</sup> March** all P4 to P7 children will join our younger children and return to full time in-school learning with no physical distancing.

**Secondary School Pupils:** It is expected that all secondary pupils will return fully to in-school learning from the **19<sup>th</sup> April** which is the end of the Easter Holiday. All pupils will now be expected to wear face coverings while in school, not only S4 to S6 as was previously the case. All pupils are expected to have some time in school during the 14 days between 15<sup>th</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> April, however this is limited by various factors. Transport is limited by the need for 1 metre social distancing and space in schools is limited by the need for 2 metre social distancing while in school. Schools are very keen to have all pupils back in school as soon as possible, however, while the restrictions above remain in place it is challenging to deliver in school learning for some, remote learning for most and provision for keyworkers in school. It would be unfortunate to weaken the quality of remote learning in order to have some pupils physically back in school while most remain at home due to the requirement for 2 metre social distancing in school and 1 metre on transport. Your child's school will be in touch with details of when they are being invited to attend school during the period between 15<sup>th</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> April. In a situation where physical space and time in school are limited, Scottish Government have made it clear that priority will be given to senior phase pupils working towards SQA Awards.

### **Planning for the return**

Scottish Government have focused a significant amount of funding on educational recovery. During the current year we have benefited from Covid recovery teachers in every school and an additional early years' practitioner in every school to support P1s. I am very grateful for the support they have provided. From Easter onwards it is important that we get a clear assessment of where every learner is and where they may need additional support. We will work collectively to establish a baseline in literacy and numeracy from P1 to P7 when pupils return and take appropriate action where there are obvious gaps. In addition I aim to appoint a literacy and numeracy recovery officer to focus on sharing the best practice across our schools. Schools will all benefit from additional funding to be able to appoint staff to ensure we can support our children and young people to make the progress we expect. There will be a particular focus for young people at transition points such as P7 to S1.

We have also invested heavily in mental health and wellbeing resources both in schools and at community level and I am grateful to our educational psychology service for their lead in this area. We are also planning a strong focus on physical wellbeing which is being led by our highly effective Active Schools team. We are making plans to remove charging for instrumental music services for the forthcoming year in order to encourage children to take up an instrument. Many young people who played an instrument have left school and it hasn't been possible to recruit younger players during the restrictions.

I want to reassure you that our focus going forward will be on recovery and ensuring all our children and young people hit the ground running when schools fully reopen. I would like to thank once again all our staff for their resilience, creativity and perseverance and our children and young people for their continued engagement with remote learning. I am grateful to everyone who completed the parent / carer survey on remote learning which was very positive about the quality of remote learning across South Ayrshire while highlighting a few areas for improvement. My thanks once again to you for all your support throughout this turbulent period in education and beyond.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas Hutchison". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

**Douglas Hutchison**  
**Depute Chief Executive and Director - People**