

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: 11 November 2021



Dear Parent/Carer

Christmas Activities in school and out of school

I know you will share my disappointment that once again this year we find ourselves in the position of having to make difficult decisions about Christmas activities. Education staff meet daily with NHS Ayrshire and Arran Public Health colleagues and weekly with East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and Public Health jointly. Following discussion at the most recent meeting, in light of the rise in cases and concerns about further spread of the virus, we have made the difficult decision to limit school activities that would normally take place around Christmas. In the past week we have required to send whole classes home and have closed one primary school and been close to closing other schools due to the number of staff and children testing positive.

Schools will continue to find creative ways of celebrating the festive season at class or group level, but there will be no scope for whole school, or year group activities.

Unfortunately, we are asking schools not to undertake trips to pantomimes or concerts in the weeks leading up to Christmas. Current national guidance does not permit school assemblies to take place because of the enhanced transmission risks of having large groups in close proximity in an enclosed space for an extended period of time. Collectively across Ayrshire, we have taken the decision to treat performances with audiences in the same way.

I realise this is disappointing and we had all hoped we were returning closer to normal. However, we continue to deal with a relatively high number of cases each day in schools. The risk of proceeding as normal would be that more families would spend the two-week period over Christmas in isolation due to dealing with Covid at home. The decisions we make are never clear cut and I recognise many will disagree with these decisions. Our aim is to reduce the risks to around 16,000 children and young people and over 2,000 staff in education across South Ayrshire and ensure continuity of learning in schools. I also want to reduce risk for families and communities so that you are able to enjoy the festive season when it arrives. My thanks once again to all our staff and to you once again for supporting your children's school.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Douglas Hutchison'.

Douglas Hutchison
Depute Chief Executive and Director - People