



Director of Children's Services: Helen Budge

Children's Services

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All Parents and Carers

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Our Ref: HB/kk/S40-37/corr/21/002
Your Ref:

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Dear Parents and Carers

Information to all Parents and Carers: Updated Arrangements for Schools and Early Learning and Childcare Settings in January 2021

On 22 December 2020, I wrote to inform you of the period of remote learning for all schools and early learning and childcare settings in Scotland to 15 January 2021.

After the First Minister confirmed on Monday 4 January 2021 that all schools and early learning and childcare settings will now be closed to 1 February 2021, apart from for children of key workers and vulnerable children, due to concerns about the current levels of transmission of the coronavirus, and its new strain, I write with a further update.

For absolute clarification, schools and early learning and childcare settings will open for childcare and wellbeing support for children of key workers and those children who would benefit from support in school, on Thursday 7 January 2021. All other children and young people will have their Christmas holidays extended to include Thursday 7 and Friday 8 January 2021.

There will then be remote learning for all children and young people from Monday 11 January to Friday 29 January 2021. Remote learning will be undertaken in school and early learning and childcare settings for children of key workers and those who would benefit from support. These children will be able to continue to access school transport to attend their school.

All key worker applications that were made between 23 and 30 December 2020 have been reviewed, and parents and carers have been notified of the outcome. The vast majority of key worker applications have resulted in places being approved, following locally established criteria for determining eligibility, which is in line with national guidance in this area. Children's Services will be in touch again with parents and carers who are key workers to clarify arrangements for the period of school closure to the end of January.

Key worker applications remain open for the remainder of January 2021. Parents can complete an application form online, and should provide as much information as possible. The application form can be found here: <https://www.shetland.gov.uk/schools/information-key-workers-january-2021/1>

Parents and carers of children who have been identified as benefitting from being in school for additional support have also received letters from Children's Services, prior to the festive break.

Looking ahead, the aim is now for schools and early learning and childcare settings to re-open to all children and young people and the resumption of face-to-face learning and teaching from Monday 1 February 2021, but this is dependent on the virus being under control by then. There will be a national review of the temporary school closure period on Monday 18 January 2021.

As I explained in my letter to you on the 22 December 2020, the contingency plans which all schools and early learning and childcare settings have been preparing for remote learning has supported the development of the arrangements for the start of the new term. The remote learning provision will be similar to the education that your children and young people experienced during the lockdown between March and July 2020. In broad terms, Children's Services expect all schools' remote learning delivery to consist of:

- learning online on Microsoft Teams, Office 365 and Glow (the Scottish education's intranet) **and/or**
- leaning offline, referring to paper packs and other resources;

Your school or early learning and childcare setting will be in touch with you directly with more information about your children's remote learning provision at the start of the term.

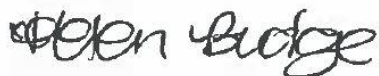
Secondary settings will also continue to update parents and carers of secondary four to six pupils, concerning updates with national qualifications and their assessment arrangements, following the cancellation of exams at both National 5 and Higher and Advanced Higher level at the end of last year.

I appreciate the challenges of remote learning many families experienced last year. Please be reassured that you are not expected, or should feel pressurised, to replicate the pupil day at home, each day. Short, focused periods of engagement with remote learning often worked best for children and young people during the last period of remote learning. As Shetland remains in Level 3 of the Scottish Government's Strategic Framework five level protection system, daily exercise outside, including walking, cycling and running during the school day are all encouraged, weather permitting.

On another note, if you are concerned about the provision of mobile devices in your family home to support your children learn remotely, have other worries or queries about remote learning, or concerns about your children's wellbeing at this very challenging and uncertain time, you should contact your child's school in the first instance.

Finally, there is also support for parents and carers at the Shetland Digital Schools Hub, including assisting parents and carers in relation to Glow and Microsoft Teams <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/sh/digitalschoolhub/>

The safest place for your child at this time is at home, if possible. I wish you and your children all the very best for the month ahead.



Helen Budge
Director of Children's Services