



Education Resources
Executive Director **Tony McDaid**

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Date: 22 December 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Arrangements for the phased re-opening of South Lanarkshire Council schools in January 2021

As you will no doubt be aware, the First Minister announced that arrangements for pupils returning to school in January have now changed in response to the COVID situation. This letter sets out the current position of South Lanarkshire Council, which is based on Scottish Government guidance.

www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-school-re-opening-arrangements-for-january-2021/

Christmas holiday period

Our schools finish for the holidays today (22/12/20) and **for the majority of pupils the holidays have now been extended until Monday 11th January.**

If there are any positive school cases of COVID19 over the holiday period, I can confirm that NHS Lanarkshire (NHSL) Public Health specialists, with the support of South Lanarkshire Council Education Headquarters (HQ) staff, will continue to investigate and identify close contacts. This activity will be ongoing from when schools close on Tuesday 22 December 2020.

Therefore, I wish to communicate the following key messages:

- *if a positive case is identified after schools close on Tuesday, 22 December 2020, NHSL and Test and Protect (T&P), supported by South Lanarkshire Education HQ staff, will investigate and identify close contacts;*
- *this may result in a phone call or text message to parents by T&P asking close contacts to self-isolate over the Christmas and New Year period.*
- *during the Christmas and New Year holiday, when schools are closed, we will be asked by NHSL Public Health to collate this information so that we can share it with Head Teachers at the end of the holiday period.*

Re-opening of schools in January 2021

As outlined above, the school holidays have now been extended until Monday 11th January. The exception is for those children who have both parents (or, in the case of a single parent family, the main carer) as designated key workers and who are unable to source alternative childcare. Children who fall into this category will be able to attend school from **Thursday 7 January** where they will be supervised by staff. School staff will return on Wednesday 6 January to allow planning to take place for the safe return of children of key workers and vulnerable children.

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The Scottish Government guidance states that a keyworker is defined as:

- Health and Care workers directly supporting COVID response, and associated staff; Health and Care workers supporting life threatening emergency work, as well as critical primary and community care provision; Energy suppliers (small numbers identified as top priority already); staff providing childcare/learning.
- All other Health and Care workers, and wider public sector workers providing emergency/critical welfare services (for example: fire, police, prisons, social workers), as well as those supporting our Critical National Infrastructure, without whom serious damage to the welfare of the people of Scotland could be caused.
- All workers (private, public or third sector) without whom there could be a significant impact on Scotland (but where the response to COVID-19, or the ability to perform essential tasks to keep the country running, would not be severely compromised).

In order to be eligible to access childcare:

- parents must be keyworkers (or, in the case of a single parent should meet criteria);
- children should attend only when there are no alternative childcare arrangements;
- keyworkers who are able to work from home are not eligible for critical childcare.

Please find attached a **key worker enrolment form** which will be required to be filled in if your family falls into this category and you wish them to attend school. Families who wish to use this service must complete and return this enrolment form to the school office by e-mail by **6th January**. This will allow schools to ascertain numbers and plan accordingly.

School Transport

All existing transport arrangements will still be in place from 7th January for children of keyworkers.

Free School Meals

The Council will continue with Free School meal payments for families during the extended holiday period (6 to 8 Jan) and the week of remote learning (11 to 15 Jan).

Week Beginning 11th January - Online learning

All other children will have access to online learning during this week which they will access from home. Schools will be in touch with individual arrangements on how children can access learning. Children of key workers can continue to attend school where they will be helped to access online learning activities.

In addition, schools will make contact with individual families whose children may require access to school for other reasons.

Week Beginning 18th January

The Scottish Government aims for a full return to school buildings and face-to-face learning and teaching for all children on 18 January.

Thank you for the way in which you have supported our schools and nurseries in what has been a challenging term for everyone. I would also like to pay tribute to the work of Parent Councils, who continue to ensure your concerns and issues are highlighted and steps taken to resolve them.

I hope you have a well-deserved, peaceful and relaxing Christmas and New Year break.

Yours sincerely



Tony McDaid
Executive Director (Education Resources)