

Education & Learning Service

Position Statement

7th February 2021

Covid Recovery

**Schools, Residences and Other Educational
Settings**

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Introduction

In a rapidly changing environment, schools are aware of many sources of information regarding school operations. The Education & Learning Service will continue to notify schools of these important changes, which will be distributed via the area offices. Head teachers should, therefore, follow the guidance issued by Education & Learning of The Highland Council in order to ensure a consistent and corporate approach. Where there are updates to national positions, Education & Learning Service will reflect on these and update head teachers as quickly as possible.

This position statement reflects the Scottish Government [latest school reopening guidance here](#).

[A further update from the Covid 19 Advisory Group is available here.](#)

Key Workers' and Vulnerable Children

The offer is only to be available during school hours as regulated wrap around and paid for services can continue to operate and parents can continue to purchase wrap around services. It is only for children aged between 3 and 14.

The definitions of key workers agreed with local authorities previously during the pandemic continue to apply but local authorities are advised to flex to suit local circumstances.

The definition of key workers sets out that there should be a particular focus on key workers in posts which ensure that essential services can be delivered and cover tasks within the local community which support the vulnerable and aid community resilience.

- **Category 1** – Health and Care workers directly supporting COVID-19 response, and associated staff; Health and Care workers supporting life threatening emergency work, as well as critical primary and community care provision; Energy suppliers; staff providing childcare/learning for other category 1 staff (this covers all staff working in a school to support essential service including CCFM)
- **Category 2** – 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.
- **Category 3** – 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).

From 22nd February, it is planned that schools will reopen for ELC- P3, and senior phase of secondary (practical). For all other children, if it is possible for them to be at home during this exceptional period, until schools fully reopen, then they should be. Whole workforces or entire groups of staff should not be designated as key workers. Doing so would undermine the collective effort we must all make to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives during this period of strict lockdown. Employers may make contact to make the case for key worker designation for employees only if it is a measure of last resort.

It is acknowledged that both teaching and non-teaching staff may face challenges in respect of childcare responsibilities when they are required to return to school. As a result, they can be considered as a keyworker for childcare purposes. When considering requests, head teachers are reminded that they should apply the same criteria consistently to all parents- that keyworker childcare would only be granted if there was no other alternative option available.

Headteachers should be supportive of teachers and other staff with challenging childcare arrangements to work from home, if possible, when planning the phased reopening of their school.

A lunch will be provided for those in receipt of free school meals and the usual lunch charge apply for those not eligible for free school meals

Transport will be provided, as required.

Direct payments/supermarket vouchers will be provided to families who are eligible for free school meals when accessing their online learning from home.

There is a need to ensure that sufficient staff are available for the delivery of the curriculum or quality will be hampered. Plans should also take account of the fact that the childcare service may experience reduced headcount due to staff having to self-isolate.

Teachers and support staff who are not required to directly supervise or teach children in the school, should remain at home and undertake remotely whatever duties they can- unless their attendance is vital to the safe operation of the school. CCFM staff will attend, where required, to facilitate the essential service delivery.

Consideration of Vulnerable Learners

Some children and young people rely upon the care and protection provided by schools, and there is an expectation that those identified as the most vulnerable be prioritised for in-school support from the first week of term.

The national guidance determines that children and young people may be vulnerable because of factors related to their personal development, features of their family life, or because of wider influences that impact on them within their community. Most vulnerable children and young people will have a child's plan, suggesting a need for a coordinated approach and greater vulnerability.

This would include a range of children and young people, such as those:

- at risk of significant harm, with a child protection plan
- looked after at home, or away from home
- on the edge of care', where families would benefit from additional support
- with additional support needs, where there are one or more factors which require significant or co-ordinated support
- affected by disability
- where they and/or their parents are experiencing poor physical or mental health
- experiencing adversities including domestic abuse and bereavement; and
- requiring support when they are involved in making transitions at critical stages in their lives.

Children and families may also experience adversity because of the impact of poverty and disadvantage. This group are harder to identify centrally and rely on local knowledge in schools. Staff are asked to use their local knowledge and that of partners to help identify children and young people over and above those identified by children's social work.

There are a few groups to particularly consider:

Young Carers and others living with parents with emotional wellbeing concerns

Many young carers adapted well to learning at home. However, for a small number, the lack of school as a support mechanism may have a detrimental impact.

In addition to those already identified as young carers, over the lockdown period, many parents experienced increased pressures on their own emotional or mental health. This may have increased pressures for their child(ren). Schools should consider what supports may be required by any family where there is a parent or carer who is known to be experiencing poor emotional or mental health. There are indications that some large families living in areas of deprivation are feeling particularly anxious.

Pupils with significant ASN and health needs

Many children and young people have significant or complex additional support needs. Most of these children and young people can engage in learning at home with support from their parent or carer. For this group, particularly those also affected by health needs, learning at home may increase their safety at this time. For other children and young people, their specific additional support needs or family situations may mean it is difficult for them to be at home for extended periods. For these children and young people, attendance at school may support their wellbeing

or reduce the stress for a family seeking to continue with learning at home. This has become a very political category and schools are likely to face some challenge in this area.

Sustained absence from school (for whatever reason) even on the return to school

Children or young people who have not managed to re-establish regular school attendance at a level of 80% or above (not including time lost due to self-isolation or medical illness) should be considered as a priority. A further gap in attendance at this point could significantly impact on any progress already made to re-engage.

Emotional impact of their previous lockdown experiences

Some children and young people experienced significant distress or impact on their emotional wellbeing during the lockdown in 2020. This may have led to periods when they did not engage with the learning provided for them and/or isolated themselves from family or carers, refused to leave the house or developed concerning behaviours. These children or young people may also have had difficulty re-engaging fully with their learning or the school community.

Lack of engagement with school and partner agencies during the previous lockdown.

Children who did not engage with any learning provided during the lockdown period may have developed significant learning gaps. In extreme situations some children or young people may not have reduced this gap at all despite the opportunities provided to address this between August and December.

School Transport

School transport will operate, as required.

Schools should keep their transport officer up to date on requirements. Schools should not contact transport providers directly. This is especially important for planning the phased reopening of schools.

By Friday 12th February, schools should notify the area education and learning manager of numbers requiring school transport starting 22nd February.

Catering in Schools

By Wednesday 17th February, information on predicted pupil numbers in relation to vulnerable young people, key workers' children, ELC, Primary 1-3 and S4-S6 will be required. This should be notified to the area education and learning manager.

Delivery of the Curriculum

All children have access to remote learning, either at home or at school.

From 22nd February, it is planned that schools will reopen for ELC-P3, and small numbers of senior secondary pupils requiring practical in-school learning. This means that schools should now plan to resume learning and teaching for these groups. Remote learning will remain in place for all other age groups of pupils.

In secondary school, it is expected that senior phase pupils attending should not exceed 8% of the whole school population. For clarity, this maximum percentage does not include pupils who are attending due to vulnerability or key worker status.

Consider how PSAs and EYPs will be used to support remote learning.

Attendance in school should be restricted to necessary staff, vulnerable children and children of key workers. From 22nd February this will extend to ELC-P3 and senior phase (practical), and the necessary staff to support this safely.

It has been agreed with clinicians that schools may, if absolutely necessary during the phased start to the term, re-group vulnerable pupils and children of key workers (i.e. move them into different groups to those they were in prior to the festive break). During this exceptional period.

SQA

Highland schools will follow SQA guidance on course delivery and assessment. Updates will be sent out centrally. [Further information from SQA is available here.](#)

- Schools should engage with college staff to include that planning for the return of some pupils to the Senior Phase for the purposes of undertaking practical work that is necessary for course completion includes consideration of college courses.

School Residences

From 22nd February, with the phased reopening of schools to senior phase pupils for practical learning, school residences should now begin to plan closely with their associated school for the reopening of residences for this specific group.

Residences must link with the health & safety unit, and the area education & learning manager for permission to reopen. The Highland Council await further specific information on school residences from Scottish Government.

[Further guidance can be found here.](#)

Practical Subjects (largely suspended but left as guidance for restart)

[School Operations Full Guidance Here](#)

[Practical Subject Guidance Here](#)

PE

[PE Specific Guidance Here](#)

In summary:

- PE can only be delivered outdoors and involve non contact sports.

Music & Drama

[Music Specific Guidance Here](#)

In summary:

- Individual lessons where 2 metre physical distancing can be applied, the environment is well ventilated and equipment is not shared, carry low risk.
- Virtual lessons, rehearsals and performances, using digital forms of communication, carry even less risk.
- Choirs, orchestras and group drama performances should not recommence at this point.
- Young people should not engage in drama, singing, or playing wind and brass instruments with other people.
- For those young people who have chosen to undertake a Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) qualification in music or drama, it may well be necessary to record a virtual portfolio.
- There should be no sharing of musical instruments between learners during lessons. Items such as pianos or music stands must either be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected or left for at least 72 hours between use.

[Drama Specific Guidance Here](#)

In summary:

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- Schools may plan carefully for low risk drama activities
- Outdoors or virtual activities (eg recorded performances, outdoor creative dance, use of awnings/gazebos)
- Normal breathing and volume of speech (eg low volume monologue/dialogue, , mime)
- Individual or small numbers involved
- (eg solo performance, dialogue)
- Any equipment is used only by one person (eg actors have their own costumes)
- Physical distancing for older pupils

Visiting Staff & Cluster Head Teachers

Adult visitors to schools should be strictly limited only to those that are necessary to support children and young people or the running of the school and arrangements should be communicated clearly to staff and the wider school community.

Movement between schools (eg. temporary/supply/peripatetic staff) should be kept to a minimum, until further notice. **This includes movement between schools on a daily basis of those who visit**, such as visiting teachers (CCR, ASN etc), psychologists, nurses and social workers. Recognising the importance of holistic support for children and young people requirement to meet their needs, every effort should be made to secure these wider inputs through lower risk methods such as digital/virtual means or outdoor settings. However, please note:

- Where it is vital for council staff to attend a school setting, this should be to no more than one school in a day- with the appropriate distancing and hygiene arrangements in place.
- CCR may only attend one school in a day and only if they are directly supervising children as skeleton staff. **From 22nd February, CCR staff may attend one school per day only where necessary to provide cover for supervision or teaching, otherwise they should work from home.**
- Cluster head teachers may, where necessary, move across locations- with the appropriate distancing and hygiene arrangements in place.
- **Educational psychologists, allied health professionals and CSWs may, where necessary, attend one school setting in a day- with the appropriate distancing and hygiene arrangements in place.**
- **Schools should engage with college staff to include planning for the return of some pupils to the Senior Phase for the purposes of undertaking practical work that is necessary for course completion includes consideration of college courses.**

- In line with Scottish Government advice about minimising the number of people in school, for the time being music instructors will not be attending school in person, but will continue with online learning as previously.
- In secondary schools, where small numbers of senior phase learners will be returning to school from 22 February, it may be beneficial for music instructors to attend in person to support practical work that is essential for completing national qualifications, or to support the recording of performances. Such attendance in school by music instructors should be arranged through discussion between principal teachers/faculty heads, the school's head teacher and the relevant music instructor(s). Risk assessments and mitigations should be in place as normal. In all such cases the amount of time music instructors would be in school should be kept to a minimum.
- In a few cases, we have visiting staff from outwith Highland delivering learning in schools. Visiting staff who live outwith Highland should not travel into Highland at this time and should employ other learning methods.

Active Schools Co-ordinators

- There is a suspension of active schools co-ordinators attending schools at this time.

Other Visitors-Including CCFM, Contractors and Other Support Services

- Contractors who have been properly booked through the maintenance team may have controlled access- with the appropriate distancing and hygiene arrangements in place.
- Contractors attending in an emergency and sent out by the maintenance team may have access, subject to the conditions of exceptional entry- with the appropriate distancing and hygiene arrangements in place.
- CCFM staff continue to operate essential services to keep schools open. The deployment of their staff is a matter for that service, and they continue to minimise attending multiple sites in a day. Where this is not possible, and to ensure the delivery of essential services, they may require multiple access in a day- with the appropriate distancing and hygiene arrangements in place.
- Health & Safety visits should be facilitated.

- There may be no other visitors to schools. Schools must liaise with the area office for any exceptions.

Pupils with Split Placements

Some pupils have split placements between a school and an SEBN provision during the day.

- Pupils who have a split placement, as above, and agreed as part of their child's plan, may attend both settings in a day, where there is no practical alternative, and where the pupil would otherwise be unable to attend school due to their needs.

Some pupils require enhanced transition to a new setting (most commonly P7-S1).

- Enhanced transitions should be paused at this time.

[ELC Specific Guidance Here](#)

- Face coverings should now be worn by all adults when physical distancing is not possible, but not when interacting with children; Face coverings are not required when working directly with children, including on the floor or supporting children to move around the building or with toileting, or as a result of being less than 2 m distant from children. To support this, adults must maintain a 2m distance from other adults when working together with groups of children. Face coverings should be worn by adults wherever they cannot maintain a 2 m distance from other adults (e.g. in corridor and communal areas). Coverings should also be worn by staff and visitors when not working directly with children, for example when in office and admin areas, canteens (except when dining), staff rooms and other confined communal areas, (including staff toilets) when 2 metre distancing cannot be maintained, except where a person is exempt from wearing a covering. Face coverings should be strongly encouraged for parents and other visitors to the setting (whether entering the building or otherwise), including parents at drop-off and pick-up.
- Guidance on singing in ELC settings; Advice from the Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues ([link](#)) shows that there are increased transmission risks associated with music and drama activities. When considering planning such activities, providers should carefully consider this advice, and advice from Education Scotland on these activities. The Sub-Group has specifically considered the question of singing in ELC settings ([link](#)). It has concluded that singing should not happen indoors as an organised, large group activity. However, the Sub-Group recognises that

children sing naturally in the course of activities and play, and should not be discouraged from doing so, and that singing can also be used to comfort young children when necessary.

- Size of groupings: Advice on the number of children in a group setting has been brought in line with primary class size numbers increasing to a maximum of 33 children. This does not change staffing requirements or ratios.
- Blended placements: In order to minimise the number of contacts and risk of transmission, attendance at multiple ELC settings should be reduced as far as possible. Parents and carers should be encouraged and supported to limit the number of settings their child attends, ideally ensuring their child only attends the same setting consistently.
- The national Covid 19 sub-group considers that such placements should be discouraged until transmission levels can be reduced, although it recognises that this may not be possible in all cases.

For children who attend multiple settings, either ELC settings or childminders, consideration should be given to how they are supported to ensure good hygiene practices (washing hands, not sharing resources, etc.) when moving between settings, and how their contacts with other groups of children are managed, based on an appropriate risk assessment in each setting. Where a child attends more than one setting, consideration should be given to sharing of record keeping across settings, to assist with any Test & Protect process. Any records should be managed in way which is consistent with the requirements of GDPR.

Head teachers should continue to familiarise themselves with [Scottish Government guidance](#) and note, in particular, that any relaxation of the above position in Highland will be clearly communicated via the area office.

All of the above must be reflected in the school risk assessment.

Face Coverings In Schools & Social Distancing (ELC specific guidance above)

[Guidance Here](#)

In summary:

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Across all levels, face coverings should be worn by adults at all times where they cannot keep two metres from other adults and/or children and young people in primary and secondary schools (with some exceptions in P1-2).

Parents should also be reminded of the need to comply with the restrictions when dropping off or collecting their children from school or ELC settings, and to ensure they maintain strict two metre distancing from other adults, and wear a face covering at these times (unless exempt from doing so).

- 2m distancing should be put in place at the current time for secondary-aged pupils, in addition to continuing to be in place for staff
- 2m distancing should also form part of the arrangements for return to secondary schools
- 2m distancing should continue to be in place between staff in ELC and primary schools.
- 2m distancing should continue to not be required for children in ELC, between primary school pupils, and between pupils and staff – in line with the general guidance for this age group.

Testing for Covid 19

The use of Lateral Flow Device (LFD) home testing by senior phase pupils and staff, is an additional measure to help manage associated risks. Deliveries of testing kits to schools will start week beginning 8th February. Headteachers will receive specific guidance on how testing will work, and should attend the briefing session when notified regarding this.

High Life Highland staff and volunteers delivering programmes and activities in schools should be included in the self-testing procedures, and for the purposes of the testing procedures be treated in the same way as school staff. Please note that this can take place only when the current suspension of such visitors to schools is lifted.

At-home testing using Lateral Flow Devices will identify asymptomatic individuals in school and childcare environments so that they and their close contacts can self-isolate, minimising the likelihood of passing on the virus. This will help further reduce risks in school and ELC settings, and enhance the confidence of school communities.

Any testing should be voluntary. Nobody should be required to undergo testing without consent, or be excluded from school if they do not wish to take a test. Staff and senior phase pupils should be actively encouraged to participate and contribute to the wellbeing of their school communities. Any staff or pupils who choose to decline to participate should follow the usual national guidelines on self-isolation. It is critical that everyone gets a test if they show symptoms of COVID-19.

Highland Council, therefore, cannot insist that any individual undertakes a test or exclude them from the workplace or school on the basis of their decision. Testing is considered to be a private medical matter therefore details of whether a test is taken or the result of any test cannot be shared with staff. A positive test result must be shared with the headteacher as part of the Test and Protect procedures.

Vaccinations for Education Staff

Vaccinations are available for eligible staff. This includes:

- all staff at Drummond, St Duthus and St Clement's.
- individual staff in any specialist provision working with C&YP with medical/complex needs
- individual staff in mainstream working with C&YP with medical/complex needs.

Headteachers and all staff must follow the specific guidance for booking vaccinations. The confidential telephone number must not be shared by staff. Ineligible staff must not attempt to book a vaccine using the above number.

School Lets and After School Clubs

There should be no school lets.

In summary:

- The position is unchanged and there will be no school lets to other organisations at this time except for below
- Where a commissioned partner provider for early years normally has a let within a school, this can restart subject to agreed risk assessment.
- After school care may continue
- In level 4 Non-essential activities or clubs outside the usual school timetable should be paused. This does not include regulated childcare operating from school premises

Shielding

The current advice is that children and staff on the shielding list should not attend school in person. A letter from the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) was issued to those on the shielding list ahead of local authorities moving into Level 4 in most parts of the country.

Local authorities and schools should consider whether local risk assessments and individual risk assessments for clinically vulnerable (but not shielding) individuals need to be updated to ensure the safe running of schools under these arrangements. Local decisions should be made about whether specific staff may work from home where their attendance is not required to give effect to these arrangements – for example, when delivering remote learning.

Local Outdoor Excursions

[Full guidance here.](#)

All school trips (day, residential, or foreign) are currently suspended.

Vulnerable Lists and Scottish Government Returns

Schools should ensure that the vulnerable lists are kept up to date, using the issued guidance. Discussions with the practice lead for schools and health visitors should take place in order to ensure safety and wellbeing of our most vulnerable children. Head teachers should raise any concerns that are unable to be resolved locally with the additional support needs manager/officer so that area discussions can take place with the children's services manager.

Where children are missing in education, the usual processes of checks and reporting should take place.

Currently, Scottish Government require a weekly return on the numbers of level 3&4 vulnerable pupils and contact made. Clericals should ensure that this is completed using the provided link by 12 noon on Wednesdays, taking the information from the vulnerable list. It is vital that this is completed by all schools.

Seemis and Registration

All pupils should be registered daily in Seemis, using the latest issued guidance for recording with the appropriate codes. The registration of pupils continues to be important under the Education Act, and numbers are also uplifted by Scottish Government during the pandemic.

February Holiday and INSET

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Schools will be closed to all pupils and staff 15-17th February. All education staff should work from home on the INSET day. CCFM and contractors will have their own arrangements.

Working Time Agreement

Changes to the working time agreement, in the light of schools phased reopening:

Agreements around WTA and CAT are through collaborative discussion with staff and any meetings/tasks deemed necessary take in to full consideration the demands of remote learning and phased reopening of schools.