

Education & Learning Service

Position Statement

9<sup>th</sup> March 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's [latest school reopening guidance here](#)

and the [latest advice from the Education and Children's Issues sub group 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 15<sup>th</sup> March, primary schools and early years settings will fully reopen. Secondary schools will reopen on a part time basis.

For those not attending school full time from 15<sup>th</sup> March:

- 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.
- Only key workers who are physically attending their workplace or who cannot fulfil their critical functions when they are working remotely from home while supporting their children's remote learning may qualify for places
- Where alternative options are available – e.g. where childcare/remote learning can be provided or supported by one non-key-worker parent or carer who is able to work from home – these should be used instead of children attending school in person.
- Consideration should be given to ensuring application of this approach does not limit the ability of health and care staff (in category 1) to support the COVID-19 response during this period of acute pressure.
- 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.

### **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.

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.

If it is possible for children to be cared for safely and have their learning supported sufficiently well at home, that approach should be preferred.

## Vulnerable Lists and Scottish Government Returns

**Head teachers** 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.

- Once your whole school has returned you can stop the daily recording on the Vulnerable spreadsheet as you will be using SEEMIs absence recording. CME procedures should be followed as per usual. However you will need to go into the vulnerable spreadsheet once a week on a Wednesday to update in order to report figures to Scottish Government as this is still required. Once we have heard that the Scottish Government is no longer needing that report this will no longer be required.

# Phased Reopening

## Early Years Specific Guidance

### [ELC Specific Guidance Here](#)

- 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.
- Encouragement to limit the number of settings a child attends, but an emphasis that blended care can be used where this supports children's wellbeing and access to high quality early learning and childcare, and subject to the appropriate risk assessments being undertaken.

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.

## Primary Schools

- All remaining primary school children, those in P4-P7, will return to school full-time from 15th March.
- Regulated childcare, including breakfast and after-school clubs, for primary pupils will re-start on 15th March

## Secondary Schools

[Full guidance for preparing in school and remote learning for S1-S6 can be found here](#)

All secondary pupils will return on a part-time basis from 15th March - it is the intention that all secondary school pupils will return to spend some time in school, each week, from 15th March until the Easter break.

- Senior phase students (S4-S6) who are taking national qualifications will have priority for face-to-face lessons in school.
- Vulnerable young people and the children of keyworkers to continue to be supported in school
- The above may be brought together with other S4-6 pupils for the purposes of assessing practical learning.
- 8% cap on numbers in secondary schools removed
- Remote learning will continue in parallel for all secondary school learners when they are not in school

## Pupils with Split Placements (SEBN)

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 may resume for the most vulnerable pupils where 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 make a successful transition in August, due to their needs. Where possible, this should be timed to reduce the number of settings visited or revisited in a single day.

## Senior Phase Practical Work

Full details can be [found here](#)

The limited return of learners is for the purpose of completing the learning and teaching of critical practical work in relation to qualifications in 2021, that can only be carried out in school.

Senior phase learners in school to carry out practical activities related to national qualifications should be provided with an appropriate timetable of remote learning for when they are not in school.

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

From 15th March, colleges will be able to prioritise the return of other senior phase school pupils studying at college who require in-person provision to complete or progress. School pupils returning to college must be included within the current 5% limit on the numbers of students on campus for in-person teaching. Pupils should only be on campus for the duration of the practical work and should continue to learn remotely for those course elements where this is possible. [Temporary lockdown guidance for colleges](#) has also been published.

- Visiting college lecturers and other staff who deliver courses within schools should follow the school guidance and any sectoral guidance. For example, guidance from colleges and universities that applies to on-campus and off-campus activity.
- Pupils who attend a different secondary school, for the purposes of a school based college course, may do so in order to complete practical learning and assessment. Where possible, they should go directly to the other school from home and not return to their base school on the same day.
- If those young people who attend school go offsite for lunch, they should follow the rules in place for wider society, for example by wearing a face covering when entering a shop. Risk assessments should consider procedures for when children and young people leave and return to school premises, including hand hygiene. Schools may wish to contact local shops in advance to alert them to plans.

## Practical Subjects

Education Scotland guidelines should be followed in the delivery of practical subjects in both primary and secondary settings.

[Practical Subject Guidance Here](#)

### PE and Dance

[PE specific guidance can be found here.](#)

[Dance specific guidance can be found here.](#)

In summary:

- PE can only be delivered outdoors and involve non contact sports except for:
- **National Qualifications Assessments-** The sub-group considered the issue of physical education and dance for the purpose of assessment to ensure certification in the senior phase. The view was that relaxing the mitigations would not be appropriate at this stage, particularly as the science would suggest an increased risk of transmission among young people during physical exertion indoors. However, the sub-group was prepared to agree that in exceptional circumstances where, for example, snow precludes it taking place outdoors, physical education and dance for the purpose of assessment could be allowed indoors provided that all other appropriate mitigations were in place regarding strict 2 metre physical distancing, ventilation, and hand and respiratory hygiene etc. The sub-group recognised the

importance of physical education and dance for the health and wellbeing of young people, and would keep the issue under review.

- There is a legislative exemption for exercise in respect of wearing a face covering.
- **Please note:** physical distancing should be maintained where possible, but that the requirement for strict 2 metre distancing could be relaxed when young people are outdoors for the purpose of outdoor activities and learning.

## 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:

- 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)

## 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.
- Out of school childcare settings, including breakfast and after school clubs, **may reopen from 15<sup>th</sup> March**
- In lockdown and 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

## School Residences

- School residences should continue to plan closely with their associated school for the reopening of residences for this specific group.
- **Schools with boarding provision, whether independent, grant aided or local authority provision, should consider what arrangements to put in place from 15 March, and whether to make different provision for different pupils or groups of pupils. Schools will want to consider balancing the risks of travel against educational benefit and given the short period before the Easter break and the benefits of avoiding travel and reducing virus transmission, it may be appropriate for many pupils to continue to follow an appropriate timetable of remote learning from home.**
- **In planning for the wider return of boarding pupils, either in March or after the Easter break, schools should allocate pupils to residential “bubbles”, as practiced in autumn 2020. These bubbles should be as small as practically possible and would endure through all activities which are not governed by the main guidance. Schools should continue to risk assess these arrangements as per the wider reducing risks in schools guidance, considering for example the arrangements for distancing as set out elsewhere in this guidance, and maintain contact with their local health protection team.**
- Residences must link with the health & safety unit, and the area education & learning manager for permission to reopen.

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

Full guidance on reducing risks in schools can be [found here.](#)

## School Transport

School transport will operate at normal times, as required.

Secondary pupils who are entitled to free transport and are attending school for part of the day may travel free on public bus routes between their home and school during the school day **if** they show the driver a form confirming that they are attending school that day. Forms have been issued to schools to complete for this purpose.

Taxi routes transporting only one pupil **may** be retimed to suit part-day attendance if that can be agreed with the operator. All such requests should be made to the Transport Officer, not direct to the contractor.

The transport unit will update operators with guidance that sees school transport as an extension of the school estate.

In summary:

- Maintaining appropriate distancing is recommended and arrangements should be made wherever possible for each passenger to sit on their own. For example, consider using staggered “zig-zag” style seating, with pupils permitted to sit alternately in window/aisle seats in each row of the vehicle or, on services where there are banks of three seats, one seat is left empty between passengers. Children and young people from the same family should be permitted to sit next to each other.
- In relation to secondary age pupils who are transported to school via taxi or private hire vehicle, pupils from two different households may travel in a taxi/private hire vehicle (alongside other mitigations e.g. hand and respiratory hygiene, face covering and windows open).
- Broadly, this means that in buses, about 50% of the normal seating will be available
- Where dedicated transport is provided for children and young people with additional support needs there is a requirement to consider the wellbeing needs of learners. Local authorities should take appropriate actions to reduce risk where adherence to strict physical distancing may not be possible. School and local authority transport teams may wish to work together to identify whether it is appropriate to transport pupils from the same class grouping ‘bubble’ in the same vehicle, subject to an assessment of the specific needs of the pupils involved and with the use of appropriate mitigations.
- Face coverings should be worn on school transport (as on public transport) and an approach whereby pupils sit on staggered seating (i.e. not next to each other, but alternating window-aisle-window etc. row by row) would be sufficient mitigation. Car sharing should continue to be discouraged.

Schools must keep their transport officer up to date on requirements. Schools may contact transport providers directly with small changes (for example, to update them on last-minute changes to the pupils requiring transport) but must inform their transport officer at the same time if doing so. Schools are not to arrange for additional transport to be provided, or routes to be changed to collect a child not normally on the journey, as this must be approved by the Transport Officer first. This is especially important for planning the phased reopening of schools.

## Staffing & Visitors

### Staff Return to Schools

#### Primary Schools

As all pupils will be returning to school with effect from Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March, there is an expectation that all staff should return to work, with the exception of those who hold a **shielding letter**, you can ask to see a copy of this if required.

There are some employees who are **not shielding** but have been issued with a medical certificate indicating that they are only fit to work from home. Head Teachers should engage with these staff to discuss mitigations around any risk that they have identified in returning to the workplace. Health and Safety can assist with practical advice around this.

### Secondary Schools

As not all secondary pupils will be attending school there is more flexibility around which staff need to attend in person as some on-line learning will continue. It is for the Head Teacher/ SMT, as part of the planning for pupil attendance, to make decisions as to which staff are required to attend to meet the face-to-face learning needs of the pupils. Discussions should then be held with individual staff members bearing in mind the above advice.

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.

## Shielding & Clinically Vulnerable

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.

### Primary Schools

As all pupils will be returning to school with effect from Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March, there is an expectation that all staff should return to work, with the exception of those who hold a **shielding letter**, you can ask to see a copy of this if required.

There are some employees who are **not shielding** but have been issued with a medical certificate indicating that they are only fit to work from home. Head Teachers should engage with these staff to discuss mitigations around any risk that they have identified in returning to the workplace. Health and Safety can assist with practical advice around this.

**Pregnant employees** are considered to be clinically vulnerable and after 28 weeks extremely clinically vulnerable, **however this in itself does not mean that they automatically do not attend work**. An individual risk assessment should be carried out to try to mitigate the risks and only where this cannot be achieved should they then work from home. There will be very little requirement to deliver on-line learning therefore if is deemed necessary for a pregnant member of staff to work from home until the start of their maternity leave, then the Head Teacher should ensure that they are engaged productively.

Further advice is contained in the attached document which also contains a link to current [advice for pregnant employees](#)

## Secondary Schools

As not all secondary pupils will be attending school there is more flexibility around which staff need to attend in person as some on-line learning will continue. It is for the Head Teacher/ SMT, as part of the planning for pupil attendance, to make decisions as to which staff are required to attend to meet the face-to-face learning needs of the pupils. Discussions should then be held with individual staff members bearing in mind the above advice.

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.

**Children and young people at the highest clinical risk (individuals on the shielding list) have also been advised by the Chief Medical Officer not to attend school, college or regulated childcare services such as nurseries in person in level 4 areas or during lockdown.** We will update this guidance if this advice changes. However, parents can consult with their child's secondary care (hospital) clinical team who may advise that an individualised risk assessment could be undertaken with the school, college or nursery and arrangements put in place which may allow your child to continue to attend when establishments re-open.

The arrangements for all other clinically vulnerable children, young people and school staff as set out in the reducing risks in schools guidance should be followed. This includes the baseline advice (which applies as standard throughout all levels) and the enhanced protections at Levels 3 and 4. This guidance makes clear that individual risk assessments should be in place for clinically vulnerable staff. Local authorities should ensure that clinical advice is taken fully into account when updating these individual risk assessments and agreeing appropriate mitigations with employees.

## Pregnant Employees

**Pregnant employees** are considered to be clinically vulnerable and after 28 weeks extremely clinically vulnerable, **however this in itself does not mean that they automatically do not attend work.** An individual risk assessment should be carried out to try to mitigate the risks and only where this cannot be achieved should they then work from home. There will be very little requirement to deliver on-line learning therefore if is deemed necessary for a pregnant member of staff to work from home until the start of their maternity leave, then the Head Teacher should ensure that they are engaged productively.

Please see link to the current [advice for pregnant employees](#)

## Staff Movement Within A School

If work can be organised in another way to avoid a staff member working with different groups (bubbles) in the one day, then this should be done. If it is not possible for this to happen and it is essential for continuation of children's education under the current Scottish Government guidelines, then it is possible for a staff member to work with more than one group in the same day. However, a strict regime should be in place for the changeover and these arrangements should be included in the risk assessment. Arrangements should include the following:

- Safe disposal of any PPE used with the first group and new PPE issued e.g. if a Fluid Resistant Surgical Mask Type IIR mask is in use, then this should be disposed of and a new one issued for use with the new group. The same for any disposable gloves and aprons.
- Good hand hygiene after finishing with one group and before starting with another.
- Use of Face coverings
- Physical distancing from pupils and staff wherever possible

There may also be other measures which can be implemented that are specific to the school and any such measures should be included in the risk assessment. Good hand hygiene, use of face coverings/masks, physical distancing and cleaning/disinfection of hard surface and self-isolating and booking a test if someone has symptoms are still the most effective measures for controlling Covid-19.

## Visiting Staff

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 managed to ensure that the minimum number of visits necessary are undertaken**-with the appropriate distancing and hygiene arrangements in place.
- **CCR teachers may attend more than one setting in a day only if there are no other alternatives to delivery of service. The arrangements will be managed by the headteacher of the host school to ensure that the minimum number of visits necessary are undertaken**-with the appropriate distancing and hygiene arrangements in place.
- **CCR teachers who are not required, as above, to teach in school will continue to work from home.**
- Educational psychologists, allied health professionals and CSWs may, where necessary, visit more than one school in a day, **this should be managed to ensure that the minimum number of visits necessary are undertaken**-with the appropriate distancing and hygiene arrangements in place.
- 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.

## Cluster Head Teachers

- Cluster head teachers may, where necessary, move across locations- with the appropriate distancing and hygiene arrangements in place.

## Active Schools Co-ordinators

- **From the 15<sup>th</sup> March active schools co-ordinators may support outdoor activity and learning for schools during the day within the appropriate framework.**

## Music Instructors

- 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 except for:
- 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.

## 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.

## 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 into full consideration the demands of remote learning and phased reopening of schools.

## Face Coverings In Schools & Social Distancing

Full guidance on minimising transmission can be found here.

In summary:

- Across all levels, face coverings should be worn by adults at all times where they cannot keep two metres from other adults. Face coverings should be worn in all settings in communal areas such as staffrooms, offices, corridors and canteens.
- **Face coverings to be worn at all times by staff and young people in secondary school. This includes classrooms.**
- Face coverings should also be worn by parents and other visitors to any school site (whether entering the building or otherwise), including parents at drop-off and pick-up.
- In addition to the above, anyone wishing to wear a face covering may do so.
- **Face Covering Exemptions:** There are situations where some people are unable to, or it would be inappropriate for them, to wear a face covering. The reasons why someone might be exempt are explained on the [face covering exemptions page](#) 

The current face covering guidance on the Scottish Government website recommends:

- that face coverings are made of cloth or other textiles and should be two, and preferably three, layers thick and fit snugly while allowing you to breathe easily
- that schools follow and endorse best practice on how to wash, store, wear and dispose of face coverings
- workplaces endorse and support staff to follow the best practice in the use of face coverings

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).

No other restrictions are being eased in order to provide the headroom to support an initial return of some learners and therefore ensuring the right behaviours. For example, parents should avoid contacts with other parents, children and young people at the school gates, on the way to school and after school in order to try and reduce community spread/outbreaks. Schools can assist with this by, for example, having staggered start/finish times.

- **Strict 2 metre distancing to be observed in the school building in secondary schools**
- **Please note:** physical distancing should be maintained where possible, but that the requirement for strict 2 metre distancing could be relaxed when young people are outdoors for the purpose of outdoor activities and learning.
- **Secondary schools should look to minimise movement of young people and staff when in school**
- 2m distancing should continue to be in place between staff in both ELC and primary schools.

- There should also be 2 metre distancing between adults and primary aged children whenever possible.
- 2m distancing is not required for children in ELC (either between children or between children and staff)

It has been agreed with clinicians that schools may, if absolutely necessary, re-group vulnerable learners and children of key workers (i.e. move them into different groups to those they were in prior to the festive break). This should be kept to the minimum necessary to ensure effective, safe learning and teaching arrangements are in place. It should be done in a way which meets children's needs and enables them to engage in learning and teaching which is age and stage appropriate. Upon a full return to school, children and young people may return to their original groupings.

## 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 started week beginning 8<sup>th</sup> February. Headteachers will receive specific guidance on how testing will work, and should attend the briefing session when notified regarding this. **After the Easter break, testing will become available to all secondary pupils.**

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.

**Travel escorts should pick up testing kits from their associated school.**

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.

## Excursions

[Full guidance here.](#)

All school trips (non residential, residential, or foreign) are currently suspended, with the following exception:

Short local excursions which promote outdoor learning (such as a short visit to a local park or green space) will be permitted for those learners in school, as long as these are appropriately risk assessed. In this case, the school must

- Complete Evolve with the associated risk assessments for the activity and risk management
- Have specific consent from parents

## 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.

## Deferred Entry to School and Repeating a Year

The full policy can be [found here.](#)

Although this last year has been disruptive to learning and teaching, children and young people have continued to learn through formal and informal means. Our success with remote learning in Highland has ensured a continuous educational experience for almost all

our children and young people. In addition to this, children have had the opportunity to learn a variety of skills at home through a wider range of experiences including outdoors, life skills and play.

The return to school focuses on wellbeing as we restart the formal curriculum. This will be more successful, in the round, where pupils continue to learn with their peers.

Where parents request to defer entry to Primary 1, the normal process should be followed.

Where parents request that their child repeats a year in school, the following should be considered:

- This is a complex area and can be contentious, with varying views, however across a number of studies, it has been found that there is no significant difference in long term academic outcomes between children who are educated alongside their age peers and those who have been advanced or retained by a year.
- Early years establishments and schools should provide the right help to the right child at the right time and provide an adapted and differentiated curriculum to meet the needs of children and young people with any additional support needs.
- Despite the pandemic, the same general rule applies in all cases - children should be educated with their chronological year group. This is particularly important at this time as all children in school are affected and we must ensure equity of provision.
- There are risks in repeating a year that pupils will be adversely affected by reaching school leaving age prior to national qualifications; there can also be social and emotional challenges for young people who are significantly chronologically advanced than their peer year group.