

Education & Learning Service

Position Statement

3rd May 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 guidance [available here](#) which brings multiple sources of information together as a single point of reference.

The Scottish Government guidance is an extensive document which contains the detailed information that school senior managers will need. This position statement can only summarise the key points, reflecting our local circumstances.

This position statement will continue to be updated in the light of further guidance and where the national protection levels change. **Latest changes are in red.**

(Please note: If hyperlinks do not work- right click, copy and paste the address into your browser)

Early Learning & Childcare Settings

Sector specific guidance is [available here](#). Highland Council early learning and childcare settings should follow this published guidance.

ELCC settings have fully reopened. Managers are required to update their operational status. To do this they must complete a “Changes to Service Delivery due to Coronavirus (COVID-19)” notification. This is only available through [eForms](#). If you do not update your status, the Care Inspectorate will consider your service closed.

Primary Schools

Primary schools have fully reopened. Guidance on reducing risks in schools is [available here](#).

Secondary Schools

All secondary learners will return to full-time schooling after Easter, subject to continued suppression of the virus. This will involve the removal of strict 2m physical distancing between pupils in secondary schools and these schools and local authorities should consider how, alongside this, they can strengthen other mitigations such as ventilation and the use of outdoor learning.

Guidance on reducing risks in schools is [available here](#).

Senior Phase School Learners Attending College

[Temporary lockdown guidance for colleges](#) is available here. Colleges are now able to prioritise the return of further senior phase school pupils studying at college who require in-person provision now in order 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.

Although schools will fully reopen after Easter, plans must be maintained for remote learning in the event of either a temporary school closure on the advice of the health protection team or a further area or national lockdown.

Shielding Pupils

At protection levels 0-3, children and young people on the shielding list are asked to follow the guidance for the general population, including attendance at school.

Pupil Attendance At School

Parents are required under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to provide education for their child. It is important that children and young people are able to benefit from their right to education; are able to see their friends and have social contact and benefit from the learning, care and support that schools provide. The ongoing need to reconnect to normal patterns and routines in children's lives will be important and reassuring to them.

National guidance is clear that measures of compulsion for attendance should only be used as a last resort once all other approaches to support attendance have been undertaken. Additional codes have been developed within SEEMiS to support the recording and monitoring of attendance and absence, including specific codes relating to COVID-19.

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; they 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.

Transition P7-S1

In order to balance the need for transition activities to support the health and wellbeing of young people with the need to manage Covid risks:

- Virtual transition activities should continue
- Further easing of lockdown is expected around the 17th May. As further information becomes available, consideration will be given to the possibility of physical transition activities within secondary schools. **Schools may provisionally plan for indoor physical transition activities for June but will need to await further guidance.**
- **Outdoor excursion transition activities may begin to take place from 10th May, subject to the guidance in the Excursions section below.**
- **For all transition activities:**

- Transport should not be shared between schools, with the exception of the small schools with one or two pupils transitioning
- At the transition event, groups should be formed and maintained consistently

Transition to Nursery & P1

Where a nursery is based in a school setting, careful physical transition activities can take place, subject to appropriate risk assessment.

Where schools link with a partner centre, careful physical transition activities can take place, subject to appropriate risk assessment and limited to one partner centre visit in a day.

In all cases, schools should avoid parents visiting and continue to use alternative means such as virtual tours, photographs and newsletters.

Practical Activities (Primary & Secondary Schools)

[Full guidance is available here.](#) Highland schools should follow this national guidance.

Physical Education and Dance

ELC and primary

From 5 April:

- children can take part in contact and non-contact physical activities outside
- indoor physical education and dance activities are not allowed

From 26 April:

- children can participate in individual non-contact activities indoors
- children can participate in contact and non-contact physical activities outdoors

From 17 May:

- children can participate in group non-contact activities indoors
- children can participate in contact and non-contact physical activities outdoors

Secondary

From 5 April:

- indoor physical activities and dance are not permitted, except for the purpose of assessment to ensure certification in the senior phase
- young people can participate in contact and non-contact physical activities outdoors

From 26 April:

- young people can participate in individual non-contact activities indoors
- young people can participate in contact and non-contact physical activities outdoors

From 17 May:

- young people can participate in group non-contact activities indoors
- young people can participate in contact and non-contact physical activities outdoors

PE specific guidance can be found here.

Dance specific guidance can be found here.

Music & Drama

Music specific guidance can be found 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.

Proposed Delivery Plan for High Life Highland Music Tuition: Easter – Summer 2021

- After school Easter holidays all 'non-aerosol' instrument Instructors should re-establish access to schools following discussion with Highland Council colleagues.
- Education Scotland guidelines still apply, but where an appropriate teaching space is available, strings; guitar/ukulele; percussion/drumkit & pipe band drumming & piping (digital chanters) Instructors should be back in schools.

- Instructors can only be in 1 school per day, with minimal group teaching – so most timetables will involve a rotational plan which will most likely still require an element of online tuition (usually in school time) in order to engage with as many pupils as possible and deliver the fairest distribution of face to face tuition too.
- A thorough sanitising regime should remain in place for all lessons in school.

Google Classroom remains the best platform through which Instrumental Instructors maintain contact with pupils.

Please continue to include parents in these communications where possible.

- Brass; woodwind; and vocal teaching communities across Scotland are still waiting for further guidance around the return of activities to schools. Lessons for these instruments will have to remain online for the time being, with each Instructor constructing their timetable as required. Exceptions to this can be made for SQA support purposes.

[Drama specific guidance can be found 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)

Home Economics

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

[Food standards Covid 19 specific guidance can be found here.](#)

Science

[Science safety standards guidance can be found here.](#)

School Lets and After School Clubs

There should be no school lets at this time.

Regulated childcare specific guidance is [available here](#).

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 care clubs, may operate subject to the following:
 - [Full guidance can be found here](#)
 - Pupils from different schools may attend an after school childcare setting subject to a refreshed risk assessment.
- After school clubs run by staff can be conducted subject to risk assessment, agreement with CCFM or operators of PPP schools. These unregulated clubs should be limited to pupils from that school, and should comply with all the risk mitigations required for those type of activities (such as physical education). The outdoors should be used, where possible.
- 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.

School Residences

School residences will fully reopen after Easter.

[School residence specific guidance is available here](#).

All risk assessments should be shared with the associated school.

School Transport

Maintaining distance between young people on dedicated school transport is not necessary. However, where feasible and provided they do not introduce capacity constraints, the transport unit may put in place additional mitigations. These will be clearly communicated to schools and parents through the transport protocol document.

In addition, schools should note:

- the consumption and sharing of food and drink should not be allowed
- drivers are unable to monitor and enforce seating arrangements. It is important that schools, working with parents and carers, challenge poor behaviour among pupils

relating to school transport, as part of the wider behaviour management, and as part of their work to help pupils develop as responsible citizens

Adults travelling with children and young people with Additional Support Needs

Adults travelling with children and young people with additional support needs should be very alert to them displaying symptoms. As a general rule, these adults should wear face coverings. However, this requires to be balanced with the wellbeing and needs of the child: face coverings may limit communication and could cause distress to some children and young people. Advice should be provided to parents/carers to support the effective cleaning of specialist equipment for children and young people with additional support needs who are using school transport.

School Staffing

Attendance in schools will include teaching and non-teaching staff who, in the judgement of the local authority and schools, are required to attend in person, this could include student teachers undertaking placement practice; and possibly tutors observing their practice.

Shielding Staff

Staff who are on the shielding list are able to return to work and have been sent a letter to this effect from the chief medical officer. Any necessary adjustments to the workplace should be made in order to make sure protective measures are in place via an individual risk assessment.

Clinically Vulnerable

Clinically vulnerable staff (including those who have underlying health conditions, but who would not be on the shielding list) can continue to work in schools, subject to a dynamic risk assessment confirming it is safe to do so.

Where any concerns do exist, [guidance for people with underlying health conditions](#) is available here.

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 it 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.

Schools and local authorities should follow the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

Further advice for pregnant employees is available here.

Ethnic Minorities

The concerns within minority ethnic communities must be recognised and individual requests for additional protections should be supported wherever possible.

Responding to requests for additional protections may include offering access to support from occupational health services (OHS) and the provision of individual risk assessments. On 27 July 2020 Scottish Government published COVID-19 Occupational Risk Assessment Guidance which is applicable to the working age minority ethnic population staff and employers in all sectors can use this guidance to provide an individualised and evidence-based approach to understanding risks of COVID-19 in the workplace. This guidance is relevant to all staff and may of particular use for minority ethnic staff who have an underlying health condition, or are anxious about risks in the workplace.

Staff Movement Between Schools

Movement between schools (e.g. of temporary/supply/peripatetic staff etc) should be kept to a minimum. As far as possible, attendance should be consolidated within one setting. Those providing essential services key to the delivery of children's care or educational plans should be able to visit schools, for example

- cluster head teachers
- visiting teachers
- psychologists
- nurses
- social workers
- youth workers
- outdoor learning specialists
- therapeutic support
- active schools co-ordinators
- music instructors

Appropriate mitigations to prevent transmission of the virus in and between settings should be undertaken. Mitigations should be determined via a risk assessment carried out by the school in co-operation with the service provider.

Cluster Head Teachers

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

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:

- 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
- Safe disposal of any PPE used with the first group and new PPE issued e.g. if a fluid resistant surgical mask Type IIR 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.

Staff Meetings

Staff meetings within the working time agreement should continue to be conducted remotely, where possible. Where meetings are called immediately after the end of the pupil day and it is not practicable for these to be held remotely, all the usual risk mitigations should be in place with regards to distancing, face coverings and suitable location. This should be agreed with staff and their union representatives.

CCR Teachers

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 head teacher of the host school to ensure that the minimum number of visits necessary are undertaken-with the appropriate distancing and hygiene arrangements in place. Schools should be encouraged to follow SNCT and LNCT guidance on how flexibility of time over a 2 or 4 week period may help to reduce movement of staff across classes.

Pupil Support Staff

Distancing should be maintained by support assistants, and if that is not possible, face coverings should be worn (including transparent ones where appropriate). As part of risk assessment, the need for PPE should be considered and used accordingly. Where resources permit, if mitigations such as these cannot reasonably be implemented, schools might wish to consider timetabling/organising classes to limit the number of children and young people with whom a support assistant needs to come into close contact during the course of a day.

Staff Rooms, Offices and Bases

The number of people in staff rooms at any one time should be limited to ensure 2m distancing can be maintained and face coverings should also be worn. This includes at kettle stations and other gathering points.

Other Visitors-Including CCFM, Contractors, Other Support Services & Volunteers

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.

Subject to appropriate distancing and hygiene arrangements being in place:

- Contractors who have been properly booked through the maintenance team may have controlled access
- Contractors attending in an emergency and sent out by the maintenance team may have access, subject to the conditions of exceptional entry
- 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
- Health & Safety visits should be facilitated
- SDS careers advisors may attend one school in a day
- College and other tutors may attend one school in a day
- Counselling services may attend one school in a day
- **Other providers of health & wellbeing activities outdoors may attend one school in a day**
- **School photographers- outdoors only**

In addition, the following organisations provide a service to schools through The Highland Council:

- Safe, Strong & Free may attend one school in a day (outside where possible)


It is vital that the visitors above are limited to the minimum necessary adults whose own organisation risk assessments link neatly to schools' risk management. Schools should organise visiting organisations to ensure no more than one is in the school on any given day.

Parental volunteers may support staff from 3rd May for outside activities:

- **Activities in the school grounds.**
- **Excursions - as described in the excursions section of the position statement and subject to risk mitigations, supervision and use of Evolve.**
- **In both cases, this should be strictly limited to the minimum numbers necessary to support outdoor health and wellbeing activities.**

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

Face Coverings In Schools

- Across all levels, face coverings should be worn by adults (including necessary visitors) 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

- Staff should use sensitivity and discretion with regard to the wearing of face coverings by children and young people observing Ramadan during April and May 2021.

As is usual, if there are any concerns about a child or young person behaving or acting in a way which doesn't align with school policy or procedure, their behaviour or actions should be discussed with them to resolve those concerns as quickly as possible, with any further action taken in line with usual school policy or procedure. If all approaches to resolve the concern with a child or young person in relation to health and safety measures have been exhausted then exclusion could be considered as an appropriate measure, but only as a last resort. "Included, engaged and involved part 2: preventing and managing school exclusions", provides national policy guidance on the use of early intervention and prevention to promote positive relationships and behaviour.

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.

Social Distancing

There is no requirement for physical distancing between children in primary schools. 2m distancing between adults not from the same household should be maintained. There should be 2m distancing between adults and children whenever possible.

Secondary schools can only support a full time return to school for all pupils when there is no requirement for physical distancing between pupils throughout the school day. From 12 April, secondary schools should operate on this basis, acting on the balance of known risks, feedback from public health teams, the effectiveness of a package of mitigations and the benefits to all young people of being able to attend school. School staff and other adults in the school should must continue to apply strict 2m distancing when with other adults and with pupils.

Without 2m distancing between young people in secondary schools, the additional mitigations such as effective ventilation must be strictly adhered to. Secondary schools should also encourage physical distancing between young people wherever practicable and emphasize the importance of physical distancing in general as part of the FACTS for controlling the spread of the virus.

Mitigations that schools should consider include:

- Encourage young people to maintain distance where possible, particularly indoors – this does not have to be strict distancing of 2m if this is unachievable, but encouraging young people not to crowd together or touch their peers is recommended;
- Discourage social physical contact (hand to hand greeting/hugs);
- Use all the available space in classrooms, halls, libraries or social spaces to promote distancing where possible;
- Adjust class space if required, and where possible, to maintain spacing between desks or between individual young people;
- Seat young people side by side and facing forwards, rather than face to face;
- Avoid situations that require young people to sit or stand in direct physical contact with others;
- Where young people need to move about within the classroom to perform activities (for example to access a shared resource) this should be organised to minimise congregation around the point of access to the shared resource;
- Encouragement of set seating plans, even across different subject classes, is likely to reduce the number of close contacts needing to self-isolate if a young person tests positive;
- Where staffing within the school allows it, consider altering class sizes and composition to intensify support for young people and create more space. For example, where there are 3 maths sets in a year group (one set with 30 pupils, another with 20 pupils and another with 10 pupils) class size and composition may be altered to improve the spread of pupils and create 3 sets of 20 pupils;
- Young people in the senior phase may require to spend time in college environments. They should ensure that they follow the COVID-19 guidance for universities, colleges and student accommodation providers on the appropriate approach to these specific circumstances while on campus. This has now been included in updated guidance for colleges;
- In special schools and units, and where there are groupings of children with complex additional support needs, the balance of the staffing complement, the groupings of children and young people and their needs, and therefore the staffing and resources required, (PPE, cleaning of equipment), should be considered/assessed throughout the school day and adjusted where appropriate/necessary. Further guidance on meeting the needs of children with additional support needs is provided within continuity of learning guidance.

Secondary schools should consider which of these possible mitigations are achievable in their establishment and look to implement as many as is practicable, while also bearing in mind that this distancing is an additional, precautionary step, which goes beyond what continues to be recommended in the latest scientific advice.

In special schools and units, and where there are groupings of children with complex additional support needs, the need to maintain 2m distancing needs to be carefully considered. The balance of the staffing complement, the groupings of children and young people and their needs, and therefore the staffing and resources required, (PPE, cleaning of equipment), should be considered/assessed throughout the school

day and adjusted where appropriate/necessary. Further guidance on meeting the needs of children with additional support needs is provided within Coronavirus (COVID-19): supporting children and young people with complex additional support needs - gov.scot (www.gov.scot).

Minimising Contacts (Groupings)

Wherever possible, maintain groupings of pupils throughout the day. Efforts should be made to keep groups separated and avoid large gatherings such as assemblies. Configuring groups should be risk based and adapted to the particular school setting

Testing for Covid 19

The use of Lateral Flow Device (LFD) home testing by secondary pupils and all school staff, is an additional measure to help manage associated risks. After the Easter break, testing will become available to all secondary pupils.

Regular visitors to schools should also be offered lateral flow tests. Where possible, these should be collected from the same school each week to help with records management.

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 secondary 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 head teacher 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.

Head teachers 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.

Managing Covid Cases

Head teachers should continue to follow the established arrangements with NHS Highland Health Protection Team and notify the area manager, without delay.

Working Time Agreement

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

Shared Facilities with Highlife Highland

HLH operations have restarted outdoors in a number of settings. HLH are preparing sites for public reopening from 26th April, in line with government guidance. Where these sites are shared with schools, HLH should liaise with the headteacher to ensure that agreed risk management is in place.

Excursions

[Full guidance is available here.](#)

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.

- School day trips beyond the local area to the school can recommence from 10th May (subject to confirmation that virus suppression continues to be sufficient) (subject to confirmation that virus suppression continues to be sufficient).
- School residential expeditions (camping) can recommence from the 10th May (subject to confirmation that virus suppression continues to be sufficient).
- School residential visits to outdoor education centres can recommence from 31 May 2021 at the earliest. This is subject to a further review of Covid data on the week commencing 3 May 2021 and a number of other mitigating actions being put in place. One such mitigating action is that schools should only

consider these visits if both their establishment and the outdoor education centres are located in level 0, 1 or 2 areas.

In all cases:

- Schools are required to follow the [guidance detail here](#).
- Complete Evolve with the associated risk assessments for the activity and risk management
- Have specific consent from parents

International trips may not take place at this time.

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.

Parents' Evenings and Summer Term Events

As visitors are still, broadly, restricted in schools- parents' evenings should continue to be organised virtually.

Sports days and other Summer events should be limited to pupils, staff and the minimum numbers of volunteers to allow these events to go ahead, subject to continued suppression of the virus.