

06 January 2021



Dear Parents and Carers

Firstly I would like to wish you all a Happy and Healthy New Year!

Further to the First Minister's most recent announcement on Monday 4 January, schools will now open for in-person learning for children of key workers and vulnerable children, with remote learning for all other children and young people from 11 January to 29 January.

We understand that while you may not have needed to apply for a critical childcare space for the original remote learning period from 11-15 January, you may now need to apply for the period from 18-29 January. You should make this application via email to your child's school only **if absolutely necessary** and you cannot access childcare anywhere else. Please use the school email address below:

bilston.ps@midlothian.gov.uk

Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Settings

From 5 January to 29 January, early learning and childcare settings can only look after children of key workers and vulnerable children. If you have not yet applied for a place at a council setting or private/voluntary provider setting but now need one because of the extended restrictions, please contact the setting directly. As with schools, if it is possible for children to be at home during this exceptional period, until settings reopen more fully, then they should be.

Please note that for ELC and school children, arrangements such as grandparents looking after children, are still permitted. Where there is an alternative option for childcare, for example with a parent who is not a key worker, or a grandparent then this should be used in place of a child attending in person. Childminders with fewer than 12 children are able to look after all children, not just key worker/vulnerable children.

We would like to reassure you that for all children and staff who will attend in person, our schools still provide a safe environment. We have the same very strict standards of cleaning and expectations of hand and respiratory hygiene in place, and will continue to follow all appropriate guidance.

We have reviewed our expectations related to the wearing of face masks as part of our enhanced measures to provide further assurance to staff and children.

- There is now an expectation that all EY staff wear face masks at all times

- There is now an expectation that Primary School staff will wear face masks at all times
- Face masks will also be worn by all visitors to schools/ELCs and also outside at pick-up and drop-off times whenever on school/ELC premises, even outside

Only essential visitors will be allowed in school with all other meetings taking place virtually. During this period, parents and carers will not be permitted in school buildings other than by prior arrangement with the school and as the only option available.

School start and finish times – core hours:

Monday to Thursday – 08.45am to 03.15pm

Friday – 08.45am - 12.20pm

Drop-off and collection points:

Nursery children – nursery gate as before

P1 and P2 children – main office entrance

P3 – P7 children – kitchen gate entrance, through playground then in the P3/4 cloakroom door. Those children who are to be collected at alternate times to the core hours should be collected from the main office.

Transport/Safe Routes to School

During this time, school transport will run as normal and there will be crossing patrols in place for those who have been asked to attend, or who have a critical childcare space.

School Lunches

Children who attend school and ELC on these dates will be provided with a school lunch. Parents and carers will not be charged for this lunch.

BACS will continue to be paid to those who are entitled to Free School Meals for financial reasons, however every child attending school in person will get a meal provided. Further information about Free School Meals during this period can be found here:

https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/855/school_meals/117/free_school_meals_and_clothing_grants/3

Remote Learning

Teachers in school are working together to plan and deliver remote learning experiences which will be based on children's current learning targets. In addition to this some teachers will be in school delivering learning and teaching so your child may experience teachers other than their own. For ELC, home learning activities will be provided. Schools have been planning for the possibility of remote learning experiences for some time, and are well-prepared, however please contact your child's school directly if you have any questions in this regard.

People & Partnerships

Midlothian Council
Fairfield House
8 Lothian Road
Dalkeith
EH22 3ZG

Executive Director
Ms Fiona Robertson

Midlothian

We also continue to be guided by the most recent Scottish Government guidance as follows:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-reducing-the-risksin-schools/>

There are things you can do to help reduce the risk of you and anyone you live with becoming ill with COVID-19.

Do:

- wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- wash your hands as soon as you get home
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards.

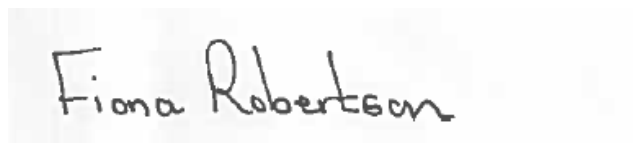
We appreciate the levels of concern and anxiety as COVID-19 continues to affect our schools and communities, and we would like to reassure you that we are doing all we can to support our children and staff at this time.

If you feel there are any queries that can't be answered by the school, please email:

Education-COVID19@midlothian.gov.uk

We would like to thank you for your continued support as we put our plans into action following this very recent announcement. We will keep you updated with any further information via our usual channels of communication.

Yours sincerely



Fiona Robertson
Executive Director Children, Young People & Partnerships
cathy.lailvaux@midlothian.gov.uk

Useful Websites for Parents and Carers

- A [Parent Club COVID-19 internet microsite](#), which contains advice on working from home whilst caring for children, advice on helping children

with remote and blended learning as well as links to advice and support resources for parents of children with additional support needs.

- Education Scotland's [Parentzone Scotland](#) website includes advice for parents, families and practitioners on supporting children and young people's learning during COVID-19.
- The [National Parent Forum Nutshell guide on blended learning](#), published in August 2020. This joins further Nutshells on [Supporting Learning at Home during "lockdown"](#) and on [online safety](#).
- Education Scotland's [Scotland Learns](#) initiative provides newsletters and online resources for teachers and for parents/carers.