

06 August 2020



Dear Parents and Carers

I hope that you have all had a lovely summer and an opportunity to spend time with family friends.

As you know, the Scottish Government has announced that the scientific advice and evidence in relation to the current suppression of COVID-19 will allow the full time return of all schools and early learning and childcare settings from the start of the new term in August.

We are delighted with this news, and our staff are very much looking forward to welcoming your children back to school.

Early Learning and Childcare

For those with younger children, we have already confirmed with you that early learning and childcare will start with transition activities from the 12th August. We are pleased to advise that our early learning and childcare settings will be moving to implementing the delivery of 1140 hours expansion for 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds as soon as we practically can. Further information will be sent out to all families with children in early learning and childcare settings in due course.

Primary, Secondary and Special Schools

P2-P7 Primary School children will resume full time from Wednesday 12th August. From Wednesday 12 August, there will be a phased start to full time education for our P1s under individual school arrangements until they are in full time from Monday 17 August. The school will be in touch with you directly to share these individual arrangements for P1 children. To confirm, all P1-P7 will be in fulltime from the 17 August.

For Secondary Schools, all S1s will start secondary school on Wednesday 12 August full time and schools will be in touch with you directly to share arrangements for S2-S6 pupils for the period 12th – 14th August. ALL secondary school pupils will be back in full time from Monday 17th August. Re-coursing of senior pupils will be completed by 18th August to ensure all young people have a timetable in place for the year ahead with exceptions made for individual circumstances.

Our primary and secondary schools will communicate their own individual arrangements to their parents and carers as soon as possible, and certainly no later than Monday 10th August.

Saltergate School will provide information for parents / carers on the arrangements in place for pupils attending the school.

Safe return to school for all children and young people

I know that you will have questions and concerns around aspects of your child's return to school and I hope that the following information may help to address these.

Risk Assessment

All schools and ELC settings have been risk assessed with colleagues from our Health and Safety service, with enhanced health and safety measures and protocols put in place that follow the current public health and government guidance.

These include observing the age-appropriate physical distancing measures outlined by current government guidance as well as public health advice to help reduce the spread of the virus, guidance on handwashing and hygiene, use of PPE, updated fire safety arrangements and use of transport.

Dropping Off and Picking up

Schools will make individual plans for their own contexts for the dropping off and picking up of children. These plans will be communicated to you by individual schools but will include:

- Possible staggered start and finish times to avoid congestion in the playground (all times will be within a 15 minute bracket of the school's usual start and finish times).
- School grounds will be closed to everyone until 15 minutes prior to the first start time so please do not bring your child to school, or encourage them to come to school early. If a breakfast club is operating at your child's school the school will communicate with you separately arrangements for arrival at the school.
- Guidance on where your child should enter the school building as the national guidance suggests as many entrances as possible are used to minimise congestion
- Plans for children sanitising their hands on the way in to and out of the building
- Previous arrangements to discuss any matter concerning your child at the start or end of the school day will no longer be feasible. Guidance for parents and carers about how they should safely communicate with school staff will be issued by your child's school; almost all of these meetings will be virtual unless this is not feasible and will take account of individual circumstances
- Guidance on safe, active travel, minimising traffic and no large gatherings around the school building

Lunches

All children and young people should bring a packed lunch to school with them until Friday 18 September, following which there will be further guidance issued. BACs payments will continue until this time for those entitled to free school meals. Pupils will eat their lunch in identified classrooms or appropriate spaces within the school building to avoid mass gatherings of children in line with national guidance.

Leaving School at Lunchtime

If pupils leave their school building at lunchtime Midlothian Council expects that they will wear face coverings when entering local shops and not gather in large groups or in the community in line with national guidance and expectations. It is important that our secondary school pupils who normally leave the school building with their peers to use local services understand the need to adhere to this national guidance to assist with the safety of all when they return to the school building.

People & Partnerships

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Executive Director
Ms Fiona Robertson

Midlothian

School Uniform

There will be a relaxed approach to dress code at this time to allow for regular washing of clothes. This will be revised and updated for pupils returning to school after the September break. You may send your child to school in their school uniform if you wish to do so.

Face Masks, Face Coverings and PPE in schools

Midlothian Council has provided all school staff with face visors as enhanced protection. Some staff may wear face masks to support any children and young people who are working in close proximity to pupils or choose to do so for personal reasons. You may wish to discuss this with your child to ensure that they are prepared for staff wearing visors and masks. Children and young people will be familiar with people wearing visors and face coverings if they have been out and about in their local facilities and communities. In certain circumstances, staff may wear enhanced PPE as required when working in specific environments.

Cleaning

Every school will have an enhanced cleaning regime in place, with staff on duty throughout the school day. Toilets, door handles, bannisters and other surfaces in constant use will be cleaned on a rotational basis to ensure the highest possible levels of cleanliness.

Contingency Plans

There is a strict protocol in place for the reporting of suspected COVID cases, and the procedures to be followed by schools. We must ask parents and carers **NOT** to send their child to school if they display any of the common symptoms:

- new continuous cough
- fever/ high temperature
- loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste (anosmia)

If a child displaying any of these symptoms is sent to school, we will ask parents and carers to make arrangements to have them collected immediately.

Further guidance on this can be found on the NHS Inform website:

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/>

You will be aware that our schools had plans in place for remote learning and blended learning prior to the announcement of a full return to school. The plans remain in place as a contingency for any change to the current position.

School Transport

For those children and young people who come to school via public or dedicated school transport a separate communication will be sent confirming the arrangements for 12 August onwards.

Children and Young People with Additional Support Needs

Saltergate School and all primary provisions will return to pre-Covid arrangements. Schools will communicate individual planning arrangements for transport and any alterations to shared placements directly with parents. Individual settings can be contacted if parents / carers have any concerns.

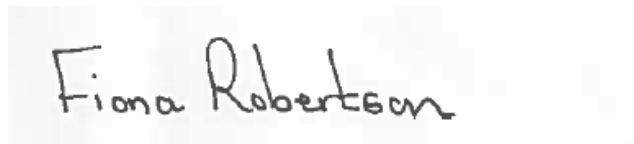
We appreciate your support at this time, and that this has been a very difficult time for children, young people and their families. We can assure you that our arrangements are focused on getting it right for every Midlothian child, and ask that you understand these need to be flexible to allow us to adapt to current and changing circumstances.

We would be grateful if you could discuss with your child the importance of following the arrangements and protocols put in place in their school to ensure their safety and that of others. Our safety measures and expectations with regard to behaviour must be followed, and schools will be in contact with the parents/ carers of any child or young person who is behaving in an unsafe manner and placing themselves and others at risk.

Our schools and early learning and childcare settings are very keen to support any children and young people who may need some extra help as a result of lockdown and the interruption to their learning. If you feel you need to have further discussion about your child's return to school, for any reason, please do not hesitate to contact your child's school.

Finally, thank you very much again for your support. I very much look forward to welcoming your child back to school next week, and to supporting their learning and wellbeing.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fiona Robertson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered within a light grey rectangular box.

Fiona Robertson
Executive Director Children, Young People & Partnerships
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