

**Partnerships**

Midlothian Council  
Fairfield House  
8 Lothian Road  
Dalkeith  
EH22 3ZG

Executive Director  
Ms Fiona Robertson

08 January 2021



Dear Parents and Carers

Firstly, I would like to wish you all a very 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 only, 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 11-15 January, you may now need to apply for the extended period 18-29 January.

Please note that 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 their school. Childminders with fewer than 12 children are able to look after **all** children, not just key worker/vulnerable children.

If you do require to apply for a critical childcare space you should make this application via email to your child's school but only **if absolutely necessary** and you cannot access childcare anywhere else.

We would like to reassure you that for all young people and staff who will attend in person, our schools still provide a safe environment. We will have 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 assure the safety of staff and young people.

- All staff and young people should wear face masks in all classes and communal areas, subject to the existing exemptions

- Face masks will also be worn by all visitors to schools and also outside at pick-up and drop-off times whenever on school 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.

### **Senior Phase**

In acknowledgement of COVID-19 related disruption to young people's education this academic year, the Deputy First Minister outlined to Parliament on 8 December that National Qualifications in 2020-2021 will be awarded on evidence of demonstrated attainment, supported by local and national quality assurance processes.

The national alternative certification model for National 5 is established in all Midlothian secondary schools. Well-planned programmes of moderation at school and local authority level are in place to quality assure teachers' judgements. Contingency planning for a similar alternative certification model for Higher and Advanced Higher on the lines of that for National 5 was already underway before the First Minister's announcement on 8<sup>th</sup> December. This is now being taken forward at pace in line with national guidance.

Extensive collaboration and engagement of staff at all levels working together within and across schools, with local authority officers and with key external partners will ensure that senior phase pupils will receive the support to achieve of their best.

We understand that senior phase pupils may have been expecting to undertake formal assessments at the start of the new term. Further information on revised arrangements and support will be shared with young people over coming weeks but at this stage the January assessment timetable at Penicuik High School is postponed pending further advice on school opening.

### **School start and finish times**

Drop off time for students during this period at Penicuik High School are as for normal school opening. The only entrance open will be the right hand door nearest the Head Teacher Office end of the building. All student must sign in each morning. Parent/ Carers must not enter the building without permission.

### **Transport**

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.

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## **School lunches/ Free School Meals**

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

Young people who attend school 11-29 January will be provided with a school lunch. Parents/carers will not be charged for this lunch.

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.

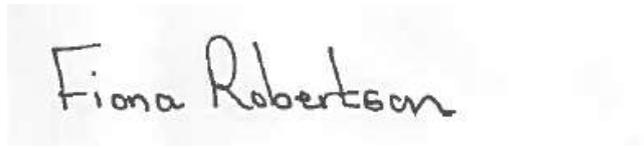
We appreciate the levels of concern and anxiety as COVID-19 continues to affect our schools and communities, and we would like to reassure you that we are doing all we can to support our young people and staff at this time.

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

[Education-COVID19@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto: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

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  
[cathy.lailvaux@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto: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.