



Parent/Carer Update - 25 April 2022

I am writing to update you on Covid 19 matters as we start the new Term.

Covid 19 Current risk assessment – Living with Covid

We have updated our Covid19 risk assessment in line with current Scottish Government advice to educational establishments. This is about how as a school we will continue to take precautions and mitigate against Covid 19 and learn to live safely with the virus. The updated risk plan can be found on our website at <https://penicuik.mgfl.net/>

Update on Mask Wearing

The general guidance for safety in the workplace should be adhered to in schools. This includes consideration of both:

- physical distancing
- the use of face coverings by all staff and young people in secondary schools, and by all staff in primary schools, in indoor communal areas and when moving around the school building."

"The legal requirement to wear a face covering in most indoor places and on public transport has changed **from Tuesday 18 April** with general safety guidance for people who are managing a workplace or organisation. **Schools will now apply the approach** within that workplace guidance to the use of face coverings by staff and secondary pupils in indoor communal areas in schools. *Masks are not required in classroom settings.*

In practice this means that the wearing of face coverings will not be mandatory in schools, but it will remain encouraged in indoor communal areas in line with the workplace guidance. Any individual who wishes to wear a face covering in a school setting should continue to be supported to do so."

Chromebooks and Water Bottles

Could we please remind students that they should bring a refillable water bottle to school each day and their personal Chromebook. The lack of a Chromebook in class may hinder their learning in that lesson. Although we have some spare Chromebooks available we are not able to guarantee that we will have enough extra devices and students need to routinely bring their Chromebook to school as they would any other equipment.

SQA Exams and Covid 19

The Scottish Government and SQA have issued a joint message on public health measures and examinations. This information is as follows.

As we move towards the beginning of the formal exam period on Tuesday, we know centres may have questions around public health guidance in relation to COVID-19.

Public Health Guidance

For exams taking place before 1 May, the [current public health guidance](#) remains in place with PCR testing available for individuals who are symptomatic, and contact tracing and isolation guidance also remaining in place. Population wide asymptomatic testing (LFD universal offer) ended in mid-April, including in schools.

What is changing from 1 May?

From 1 May, advice to people with respiratory symptoms including COVID-19 will change in Scotland in line with the [Test and Protect Transition Plan](#) published on 15 March 2022. The general public will no longer be advised to seek a test if symptomatic.

From 1 May, people with symptoms of respiratory illness in Scotland, including COVID-19, will be asked to follow general public health guidance which will be available on 1 May. As set out on the [Public Health Scotland website](#), this new guidance will be published on [NHS Inform](#) and will broadly align with the current [UKHSA 'Stay at Home' Advice](#).

In terms of children and young people the guidance says that from 1 May:

When children and young people with symptoms should stay at home and when they can return to education

Children and young people with mild symptoms such as a runny nose, sore throat, or slight cough, who are otherwise well, can continue to attend their education setting.

Children and young people who are unwell **and** have a high temperature should stay at home and avoid contact with other people, where they can. They can go back to school, college or childcare, and resume normal activities when they no longer have a high temperature and they are well enough to attend.

Children and young people aged 18 years and under who have a positive test result:

It is not recommended that children and young people are tested for COVID-19 unless directed to by a health professional.

If a child or young person has a positive COVID-19 test result they should stay at home and avoid contact with other people for 3 days after the day they took the test, if they can. After 3 days, if they feel well and do not have a high temperature, the risk of passing the infection on to others is much lower. This is because children and young people tend to be infectious to other people for less time than adults.

Children and young people who usually go to school, college or childcare and who live with someone who has a positive COVID-19 test result should continue to attend as normal.

What does this mean for the Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service (EECCS)?

SQA, working with the Scottish Government and partners, has updated the [Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service guidance for 2022](#) to reflect the above.

(Friday 22 April 2022)

As has always been the case, the only supporting documentation that SQA *requires* from the centre in support of an EECCS request is a statement from the head of centre. Given public health guidance, that statement should confirm the individual candidate (or their representative) reported having confirmed COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19 before 1 May, or more specifically, having a high temperature (37.8C or greater as per the [NHS Inform website](#)) and feeling unwell from 1 May onwards.

As part of that established process, for COVID-19 related absences (as with any other medical condition) heads of centre will continue to use their professional judgement to determine what documentation (if any) is needed by them to support an Examination Exceptional Circumstance request and hold that documentation locally.

There should be no requirement for an individual to produce evidence of a positive COVID-19 test for the purposes of the Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service. As of 1 May it is not recommended that children and young people (18 years and under) are tested for COVID-19 unless directed to by a health professional.

Learners who are absent from an exam owing to COVID-19 or COVID-19-related symptoms as per the relevant public health guidance, may have an Examination Exceptional Circumstance request submitted for them, by their centre, under the 'personal circumstances' outline reason and the 'covid-related absence' detailed reason.

I trust this clarifies several key matters as we approach the SQA Exam diet. If you have any queries or concerns please email the school office at penicuik_hs@midlothian.gov.uk and they will pass it on to the appropriate staff member.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Biddick', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Craig Biddick

Head Teacher