



Your Ref:
Our Ref: ES/SP
Contact: Eleanor Sheppard
Location: Marischal College

Date: 30 June 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

Over the last 4 months, the Education Authority has continued to respond to Scottish Government guidance around the re-opening of school buildings. Schools had been preparing at pace for a blended offer with a mixture of 'in school' and 'at home' learning from August. These preparations were formalised through the development of Individual School Return Plans. Individual School Return Plans were written in keeping with the Local Authority Local Delivery Phasing Plan which we published on 12 June.

On 23 June, John Swinney, the Depute First Minister (DFM), made a statement which detailed the ambition of The Scottish Government for all children and young people to return to school full-time in August 2020. This means that the planning assumptions schools had been working to have now changed. Our School Return Plans will now become our Contingency Plans.

The Scottish Government are now committed to a 100% return for children and young people to school buildings from August if the scientific advice supports this. The Government intend to confirm this plan in July. In the meantime, the Scottish Government are revising the Physical Distancing Guidance for schools and anticipate publishing this guidance during the summer holiday period. This guidance will outline any adaptations required to school buildings and health and safety practices to ensure a safe return to school buildings for pupils and staff.

This sees us head into the summer holidays with three possible scenarios for August 2020:

- a) A 100% return with minimal adaptations to normal practice
- b) A 100% return with significant adaptations to normal practice
- c) A blended return to school should the scientific evidence not support a 100% return

If we are advised that we can progress with a 100% return in July, and the updated Physical Distancing Guidance can easily be put in place, we will open for groups of pupils from Wednesday the 12 August. This will allow staff two days to review plans in light of the updated Physical Distancing Guidance on Monday 10 and Tuesday 11 August.

This review is necessary to ensure the safe return of children and young people to our school buildings from Wednesday 12 August. Children will attend school in smaller groups for the first week as this will enable us to ensure that all children and young people are familiar with new processes put in place to keep them safe. All children and young people will attend 5 days a week from Monday 17 August. The school will send you details of when your child should attend during week 1.

If we are advised of a 100% return, but the Physical Distancing Guidance published over summer requires a change to anticipated health and safety practices, I will advise you of this through Groupcall following the Scottish Government statement in July. Significant additional considerations could delay our opening of school buildings to children and young people by a few days. We will do all we can to avoid this scenario, but as yet we have no information about any changes being proposed in the updated Physical Distancing Guidance and our first priority remains the safety of your child. We are hopeful that this won't be necessary due to the detailed planning already undertaken.

If the Scottish Government advise that we require to return to a blended model of education the school Contingency Plan will apply. The school will send you a copy of their Contingency plan so that you are aware of arrangements if Local Authorities are advised to deliver a 'blended' offer of 'in school' and 'at home' learning. Implementation of this model would see the Education Service work with partners to increase the 'in school' offer where there are particular constraints.

Many of you have made enquiries about adaptations to school buildings and amended health and safety practices. It is likely that some of the health and safety arrangements outlined in the School Contingency Plan will be in place if children return full time. We expect the updated Physical Distancing Guidance will confirm which should remain in place.

I appreciate how unsettling this period has been for you and your family and thank you for your continued support over the last few months. We all very much look forward to welcoming our children back into school buildings in August.

I realise that as parents/carers you are seeking as much certainty as possible on what the start of the new term may look like and hope the information provided from school will offer some reassurance. I will continue to communicate with all families through Groupcall over the holiday period to ensure that you are fully informed of how decisions taken by Scottish Government will impact on the start of next term.

Yours sincerely



Eleanor Sheppard
Chief Education Officer