

5 January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

Firstly, let me wish you and your family a Happy New Year. The Scottish Government in response to the changing situation with the Coronavirus made changes to national guidance and restrictions on the 4 January. The Highland Council must adjust plans for the reopening of schools and Early learning and childcare settings in response.

There are three initial key points to make:

- All schools will remain open but the only pupils who will be in school will be those identified as vulnerable by schools and the children of Key Workers (in nursery or in P1 to S2 - see Appendix for more details).
- Children attending school will be supervised as they access the same online learning as those children and young people who are not in school.
- Only sufficient staff as are required to allow supervision will be working in school. All other staff will be working from home, in line with the national rules, focusing on delivering remote learning.

From 6 January to 8 January 2021

During the first three days of the new term, the focus in school will be on putting in place arrangements for the supervision of any children and young people who will be attending in person. If you think your child(ren) would be entitled to be in school from 6 January you should be in touch with the school to confirm. The Appendix at the end of this letter explains which Key Worker children would be eligible for a place at school. Please note that a place in school will only be available when there are no other possible solutions for childcare.

Your school may be in touch to invite your child(ren) to attend school in person because they would benefit from support in order to ensure their wellbeing. If that is the case please try to enable your child(ren) to attend.

School transport will run as normal, as will school catering.

Vouchers will be provided for pupils eligible for means-tested free school meals to cover each school day until the end of January 2021.

From 11 January onwards

As was planned before the Christmas and New Year break, a period of remote learning will start from Monday 11 January. Rather than just lasting one week, this will now continue until at least the end of January. Your school will communicate with you about how this remote learning will take place, and you should direct any questions about this to the school.

Please note that those children and young people who are in school (Key Worker children and those invited in by the school) will not be receiving face to face learning. They will be accessing remote learning under supervision.

School transport and catering arrangements will continue.

Further Updates

As more information becomes available further updates will be communicated. Meanwhile if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Yours faithfully



Nicky Grant
Executive Chief Officer

APPENDIX 1 – Key Worker Categories and access to school

The children of Key Workers will be able to attend school from 6 January onwards provided the following criteria apply:

- The parent/carer is a Key Worker in category 1, 2, or 3 and any partner/spouse is also a key worker in category 1, 2 or 3.
- There is nobody else who could stay with the child/young person at home – spouse, partner, older sibling, family member etc.
- The child is in ELC, P1-P7 or S1-S2 (pupils in S3-S6 will be expected to learn at home).

In short, the expectation is that families will make every effort to make other arrangements and the children of Key Workers will attend school only where there are no other alternatives.

The Key Worker Categories are stipulated by the Scottish Government and are as follows:

- Category 1 – Health and Care workers directly supporting COVID response, and associated staff; Health and Care workers supporting life threatening emergency work, as well as critical primary and community care provision; Energy suppliers (small numbers identified as top priority already); staff providing childcare/learning for other category 1 staff.
- Category 2 – All other Health and Care workers, and wider public sector workers providing emergency/critical welfare services (for example: fire, police, prisons, social workers), as well as those supporting our Critical National Infrastructure, without whom serious damage to the welfare of the people of Scotland could be caused. All courts and tribunals staff and judiciary, and all legal professionals and jurors involved in court business.
- Category 3 – All workers (private, public or third sector) without whom there could be a significant impact on Scotland (but where the response to COVID-19, or the ability to perform essential tasks to keep the country running, would not be severely compromised

If you believe that your child(ren) would be eligible please discuss with the school, giving the following information:

- Which category of key worker are you – 1, 2, or 3?
- If your partner/spouse is a key worker, what category are they in – 1, 2, or 3?
- Is there anyone else who could stay with your young person at home – spouse, partner, older sibling, family member - yes/no?
- Who is your employer (please provide contact details)?
- Have you spoken to your employer about changing your shift patterns or work style to enable you to remain at home during the day – yes/no?
- Do you need to continue to use Council provided Out of School care?
- If you still need your child to be in school, will this be full time, part time or will it vary (depending on your work pattern)?

Please note that the advice from the Scottish Government is that the safest place to be in the current situation is at home and if at all possible, Key Worker families should make arrangements to provide their own childcare rather than using school.