

22 December 2020



Dear Parents and Carers

Following the First Minister's announcement on Saturday, we wanted to update you on our plans for your children and young people returning to education after the Christmas break.

The First Minister has extended the break until 11 January. From that date, most children and young people will learn from home until 18 January.

New Scottish Government guidance issued last night allows local authorities to request an exceptional closure for the first day of return after the festive break, to allow planning to take place for the safe return of vulnerable children and children of key workers. Midlothian Council has applied for this for 6 January. If this is granted, on 7 and 8 January, schools will provide **critical childcare only** for key workers and for our most vulnerable children and young people. If this is not granted, then critical childcare will also be provided on 6 January. We will confirm as soon as possible.

We have created a survey for you to fill out to apply for a space if you are a Category 1 or 2 key worker. There is a link in the survey which will give you further details about the categories.

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/mlc-jan21keyworker/>

Applications need to be completed by 31 December to allow us to plan. Schools and ELC settings will be closed until 6 January at which time all staff will return. You will be contacted by your child's school on 6 January if your child is to attend on 7 January.

Please do not assume you have a space until you have heard from the school.

During this time, school transport will run as normal and there will crossing patrols in place for those who have been asked to attend, or who have a critical childcare space. Children and young people who attend school and ELC on these dates will be provided with a school lunch.

There will be further information provided to families of children and young people who are currently in Saltersgate School and our special provisions.

Schools will be providing home learning from 11-18 January. This learning experience will be different, however will still be based on children's current learning targets. For

ELC, home learning activities will be provided. Schools have been planning for the possibility of home learning experiences for some time, and are well-prepared. Further details about this will be sent out to you by your child's school by 8 January.

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

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-risks-in-schools/>

The main changes that we would like to highlight to you as we move from Level 3 to Level 4 are as follows:

- The level 4 advice is that children on the shielding list should not attend in person. However, there will be further consideration of how individualised risk assessments can be used to maximise school attendance, and remove barriers to access to regulated childcare services, for children who continue to shield during Level 4 restrictions. It is expected that these should be informed by the secondary care (hospital) clinical team caring for the child or young person.
- Due to our being in level 4, face coverings should continue to be worn by pupils and staff in the senior phase (S4-6) in classrooms, subject to the existing exemptions.
- Face coverings should be worn by all visitors to schools/ELCs and also outside at pick-up and drop-off times whenever on school/ELC premises, even outside.
- Our staff continue have to wear face coverings in communal areas such as corridors, etc
- Our staff also have to wear face coverings in schools when in close contact with your children and other staff.

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.

Please visit the NHS Inform website for all the latest advice and updates about coronavirus in Scotland:

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19>

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 children, young people and staff at this time.

We would like to thank you for your continued support as we put our plans into action from this very recent announcement. We will keep you updated with any further information via our usual channels of communication.

We hope you have a very enjoyable Christmas break.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Robertson

Executive Director, Children, Young People and Partnerships

- 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.