

Perth and Kinross

Thank you for your letter dated 26 February 2021.

The first thing I would like to say is that we are delighted to be, once again, welcoming back our children and young people to their schools to continue with their learning. The importance of physical schools was highlighted in a recent report from the International Council of Education Advisors in December 2020, it stated:

- “Physical schools are essential because they enable children and teenagers to gather together to be part of a community and develop senses of identity. Physical schools are also places where certified professionals can know and respond to their diverse students as whole human beings with distinctive talents and needs.”

In Perth and Kinross, we endorse this view and our staff teams work hard to ensure that the planned learning enables talents to be nurtured and needs met.

The following information is a high-level summary response to each of the questions you posed in your letter of the 26 February 2021.

What plans, measures and strategy are in place to help pupils “catch up” following the impact of the pandemic on school education, particularly for those moving from Primary 7 into high school;

In Perth and Kinross, we feel that language such as “catch up” and “lost learning” is not helpful and does not adequately reflect the many new skills and attributes that our children and young people have continued to develop whilst learning from home/remotely during the pandemic. Children have all been affected in some ways, and to different degrees because of the interruptions to their in-school learning since last March. However, all of our staff – teaching and support teams – have been focused on ensuring that they undertake contextual assessments which consider where children were in their learning pre-lockdown(s), what they have achieved whilst learning remotely and planning appropriately for the next steps in learning for all. We are planning to have a programme of transition activities for our P7 cohorts, as we would normally do. Likewise we will have carefully planned transition programmes in place for those children entering P1, and for those young people who will be leaving school.

Confirmation of how blended learning is being delivered in your local authority area

(See also attached letter to parents on this matter for your information)

Our secondary schools have prioritised learning in the senior phase during

the last three weeks of this school term. Every young person (S1-3) has at least a day of in school learning; and for those in the Senior Phase it is at least 2 days. Each of our schools operates within a unique context and the number of children who may be invited each day is dependent upon a combination of the capacity of the school building; the number of young people currently on the school roll; the number of young people currently attending due to their being the children of key workers or having been identified as requiring support; the capacity of our school transport and the timetabling priority for those in the senior phase.

Whether any school building capital projects have been delayed as a result of the pandemic.

There have been inevitable delays with some of the school building capital projects; however, this has not affected our ability to offer 1140 hours of early learning and childcare. A number of refurbishments and extensions to the ELC part of our built estate have, however, recently been completed. We were also able to open a renovated and extended primary school during this period. All essential building maintenance has been carried out as required.

What will be the immediate priorities as pupils again return to in-school learning?

In February 2021, as in August 2020, our staff teams worked long, hard and at speed to ensure that all necessary health and safety and hygiene mitigations and measures were in place for staff and for children and young people. Allowing time for relationship building and making connections with friends and staff has been important for everyone. Ensuring that all young people in the senior phase are supported in the learning essential for the alternative certification model and any learning required for courses accredited through Perth College will also continue to be a priority. Planning learning experiences that build on prior learning and which take account of progress made during periods of remote learning

How and when does the local authority plan to assess impacts of the pandemic on learning and wellbeing?

Since we first moved to learning at home back in March 2020, our school leaders and staff teams have continued to monitor engagement with, and progress in, learning. In addition, all school staff have continued to provide support required by our families. This has involved close working with colleagues in social work, CLD, housing etc. Our specialist ASN and EPS teams remain in close contact with those who need more targeted and specific support. Each of our schools has continued to record attendance, engagement with and progress in learning. After the first lockdown we undertook a wide-ranging survey to elicit feedback from children, young people, their families, and staff. This was to ensure that we understood their experiences, and plan to make any necessary improvements for those we seek to serve. It was also important that we learned about what had worked well and what we might want to keep doing that we hadn't previously. We will

be repeating a similar exercise this time round.

Does the local authority anticipate providing additional activities, learning opportunities or wellbeing support to pupils? If so, please provide examples?

Children and young people will be advised of additional learning activities which they may participate in as appropriate. As well as the focus on wellbeing in all of our schools we are utilising the monies provided by Scottish Government to support mental health and wellbeing to provide counselling in schools; provide support to those experiencing domestic abuse; provide specialist therapeutic input for those who have experienced trauma; work with colleagues in our community planning partnership around families in need; and work with partners in the voluntary sector around support to families.

Yours sincerely

Sheena Devlin
Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)

Annexe A

Delayed Office Opening for Employee Training

*This office will be closed from
8.45 am - 11.00 am on the first
Thursday of each month.*



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Contact Sheena Devlin

To Parent/Carer

Our ref SD/AMcE

Your ref

Date **4 March 2021**

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to update you on the latest decisions on the re-opening of schools.

The Scottish Government has announced that the next phase of reopening education will take place on Monday 15 March 2021, unless new evidence or new circumstances force it to reconsider. Detailed guidance from the Scottish Government is expected to be published next week, and we will provide a further update when we have this information.

Primary

Pupils in P4-7 will return to school on Monday 15 March 2021, joining P1-3 pupils who are already back at school. Arrangements for vulnerable children and the children of keyworkers will end, and these children will re-join their normal classes.

Breakfast clubs will start on Monday 15 March 2021, and after school clubs based in school premises will be able to restart from that date. Please contact your after school club for further details.

Schools will contact parents/carers as soon as possible, but by no later than Friday 12 March 2021, with any further details of the return.

Secondary

From 15 March 2021, all secondary pupils will receive some remote learning and some in-school teaching. Each school will decide how to safely balance remote and in-school learning based on local circumstances and needs. Senior phase students (S4-S6) who are taking national qualifications will have priority for face-to-face lessons in school.

Arrangements for remote learning for pupils who are currently not in school will be affected by these new plans, and schools will contact parents/carers to inform them of the changes which are necessary.

It is the Scottish Government's expectation that all secondary school pupils will be back in school on a full-time basis after the Easter holidays, which in Perth and Kinross will be from Monday 19 April 2021.

Schools will contact parents/carers by no later than Friday 12 March 2021 with further details of when individual pupils should attend school.

We will inform you of any changes to arrangements for minimising risk, for example face coverings and physical distancing, when Scottish Government Guidance is published.

ASN Schools and Units

Headteachers of ASN Schools have already discussed arrangements for individual children and young people for return from 11 January 2021, and these arrangements will continue to be discussed with parents and carers.

Transport

Pupils who travel by school transport will continue to be able to do so. If it is necessary to alter arrangements for any pupils, parents/carers will be informed by Friday 12 March 2021.

We will inform you of any changes to arrangements for minimising risk, for example face coverings and physical distancing, when Scottish Government Guidance is published.

School Meals

School meals will be available for primary pupils, and secondary pupils when they are in school at lunchtime, and those entitled will receive free school meals.

Direct payments to parents/carers of secondary pupils entitled to free school meals will continue until a full-time return to school is achieved.

Secondary Schools - Children of Keyworkers, and Vulnerable Children

We will inform you of any changes to arrangements for children of keyworkers and vulnerable children when Scottish Government Guidance is published.

Clinically Vulnerable Children and Young People

We will inform you of any changes to arrangements for clinically

vulnerable children and young people when Scottish Government Guidance is published.

Once again, I would like to thank you for all you have done, and continue to do, to support your child's learning. Our schools and centres are grateful for all the support you have given during the period of remote learning. We know how challenging this time has been.

Yours sincerely

Sheena Devlin
Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)