

People Directorate

Depute Chief Executive and Director - People: Douglas Hutchison

County Buildings
Wellington Square
Ayr

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Our Ref: DH/LD

Your Ref

Date: 8 February 2021



Dear Parent/Carer

My thanks once again for your continued support in home learning. I think we all now have a greater appreciation of the skills and talents of our teachers and wider school and early years teams. This letter is an update on the changes announced by the First Minister last week and what they mean for you and our children and young people. Not all of this will be relevant to all parents but there are many who have children at various stages across early years, primary, secondary and in some case special schools.

Return for Early Years, P1, P2 and P3: As stated by the First Minister it is expected that children in early years will return from the 22nd February to the same attendance pattern they previously had. Children at P1 to P3 are also expected to return on 22nd February.

Transport and school meals: Normal school transport arrangements will be in place for children and young people returning to school. Free school meals payments to families will stop once P1 to P3 return to school and the free meal provision for all P1 to P3 will start once again in school. All other pupils who received a payment for free school meals will continue to receive this until further notice.

Senior Phase (S4, S5 and S6): The First Minister indicated that between 5-8% maximum of the school roll can be in school in order to carry out specific practical lessons that can't be delivered on-line. 5-8% is a small number in each day and schools will contact individual pupils on the days they are requested to attend and the purpose for their attendance. The invitation will focus on the work or task required and will not be on a simple rotational basis. I recognise there is still a great deal of uncertainty around this year's SQA awards which causes anxiety to our young people. Please be assured that our secondary teachers are doing everything they possibly can to make sure our young people's learning and progress over the years is recognised.

Staff home testing and home testing of senior phase pupils: Scottish Government are rolling out routine asymptomatic home testing for staff and senior phase pupils. The school will be in touch directly about the arrangements for this voluntary twice weekly testing. The intention is to start this for all who are physically in-school from 22nd February onwards. The testing is for staff in all schools, not only in secondary schools.

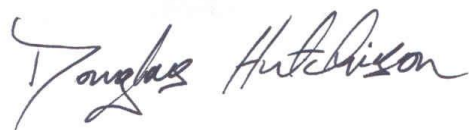
School Holiday Week: As set out in August, schools are closed during the week commencing 15th February and will not provide keyworker childcare. Early years centres that open all year will remain open for those children who would normally attend. A payment will be made for those entitled to free school meals during this week, but we will not be providing childcare. The Scottish Government's Educational Continuity Directive requires us to make provision during term time only.

Special schools and bases: Special schools and bases are currently providing a high level of direct learning and teaching to their children and young people. I am very grateful to staff for their continued support. Any change in the provision offered will come directly from the school but it is not likely to change at the moment.

Parent survey: My thanks to all those who completed the parental survey which closed last Tuesday. Around 2,600 parents/carers completed the survey and we will publish the results on the Council's consultation web-page. Around 71% of those who replied indicated that they were happy with the support from the school while 13% indicated they were unhappy and 17% had no strong view.

Thank you once again for all your support of our teachers and your children. My thanks to our staff who have shown a significant degree of flexibility and resilience in a period of extreme uncertainty. I will update you once again as the situation changes and hopefully the news will be better as the circulation of the virus reduces and the vaccination programme begins to have an impact.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas Hutchison". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'D'.

Douglas Hutchison
Depute Chief Executive and Director - People

NEW DATES

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