

People Directorate

Depute Chief Executive and Director - People: Douglas Hutchison

County Buildings
Wellington Square
Ayr

KA7 1DR

Our Ref: DH/LD

Date: 15 June 2021

Your Ref



Dear Parent / Carer

Rise in Covid Cases across South Ayrshire

You will be aware that there has been a significant rise in the number of positive cases of Covid in South Ayrshire generally. The rise in the community is reflected in a rise in cases affecting schools. When there has been a significant rise before now, schools have been closed or on the point of closure. In addition, we have been in a situation where large parts of our lives were restricted. That is not the case this time and we remain on Level 2 restrictions which mean large parts of society remain open. As a result, the virus has more opportunities to pass on, including within schools. The decision to close all schools is made by Scottish Government rather than the Council. We will take the decision to close an individual school in conjunction with NHS Ayrshire and Arran Public Health colleagues where cases are rising uncontrollably or we do not have enough staff to open safely. So far, we have closed four primary schools throughout the pandemic. On advice from Public Health, we will not be moving staff into a school where there is an outbreak and will not be moving children between groups to create larger groups. The risk of spreading infection is considered too high.

While many of the recent cases originated in the community or at home, once there is a positive case in school our experience is that this variant is impacting on more close contacts and circulating more rapidly in school than previous variants. As a result, we have taken the decision with Public Health that where a school has an outbreak then siblings of contacts will be required to isolate. An outbreak is defined as two or more linked cases in a school and evidence of in school transmission. Decisions about whether or not a school has an outbreak are taken in conjunction with Public Health and an outbreak letter will be sent to all parents once that decision has been made. The main consequence of defining a school as having an outbreak is that siblings of close contacts will also be required to isolate.

Schools have received a number of enquiries from parents about siblings isolating and about the date for ending isolation. You will understand that neither we nor Public Health can share any details about positive cases due to patient confidentiality. Isolation dates are carefully worked out because we are aware of the inconvenience to individual families. I am very grateful for the support you give to schools in exceptionally challenging circumstances and I realise the impact on families of children being required to isolate. We will continue to do everything possible in the remaining few days before the summer holidays to ensure schools continue to operate safely. I know you will understand if there are last minute changes to planned events, including end of term events for those leaving at S6 or moving on at P7 or early years. Our clear advice is only to have essential events that bring people together in any numbers. At this point in time, South Ayrshire has the second highest number of cases in Scotland so it is not possible to plan anything with certainty or expect business as usual. My thanks once again to all staff in schools who continue to do everything possible to provide a meaningful education for our children and young people in a very challenging environment.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Douglas Hutchison".

Douglas Hutchison
Depute Chief Executive and Director - People