

Dear Parent/Carer

I write to update you all now that the national guidance has been published.

www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-school-re-opening-arrangements-for-january-2021

www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-childcare-provision-from-26-december-to-18-january

The central team has been working to ensure that the service are well placed to implement the guidance in the New Year and I can now share some of the finer details promised in my letter of 21st December.

You will see that the national guidance advises of the ability to request an additional closure day to enable school staff to be ready to implement both keyworker childcare and remote delivery. Having worked through the practicalities of the updated guidance I plan to request an additional closure day for the 5th January so that we are able to open safely and confidently. I realise that this is far from ideal for those of you eligible for key worker childcare but given the scale of the logistical challenges of establishing such a change over the holiday period it feels like a necessary step to ensure the safe re-opening of schools.

On the 5th January the school will be closed to all pupils. This will give staff an opportunity to:

- Update their school risk assessment in keeping with the Protection Level 4 measures and agree and implement amended procedures
- Consider children and young people who will be asked to attend school due to their vulnerability and contact families
- Establish childcare provision and plan delivery
- Begin to consider changes in approach to assessment across the senior phase where assessment windows are impacted by the change
- Review risk assessments for individual staff on the shielding list
- Determine the staff team who will support the delivery of childcare and supervision of key workers and vulnerable learners in school

I am now able to share a form to enable eligible parents and carers to register for Key Worker childcare. The application form is now live on the city website and I would appreciate if you would complete the form at your earliest opportunity so that your child can access childcare from 6th – 8th January.

https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPage.aspx?fragment=FormId%3Daw-pJD2_E02ip4k2nOs166-HGcg5ucFAt4iEP4qY5uJUNE84MIYyNIZXQUQ3TkJSVDIENFBBQ1QzMCQIQCN0PWcu

As the new term gets underway on the 11th January the children of keyworkers and more vulnerable learners will be supported in school buildings to engage with their Google Classroom as the curriculum will be delivered remotely to all learners. This

approach will ensure that all children and young people have equal access to their curriculum and is in keeping with the national guidance.

Children and young people who are allocated a key worker placement will attend their own school setting with staff they already have pre-established relationships with. Support will be provided for children and young people who attend Me2 provision or who are aged 3-14 and registered to attend a school or setting in Aberdeen City.

Demand for childcare provision was very high during the lockdown period and Officers will allocate placements to keyworkers in category 1 and 2 in the first instance. This arrangement will enable us to manage the numbers accessing spaces in each establishment to ensure that sufficient staff not directly involved in delivery of the remote curriculum are available to support children and young people.

It is essential that only eligible families apply for provision in order to ensure that places are allocated based on greatest need. Please note that to be eligible you must confirm that you have no other means of accessing childcare and that all parents/carers living in the household are key workers. If you have other childcare support, including one parent/carer working from home, this must be used instead of an immediate return to school and therefore we ask that you do not complete this form.

I will share information with schools prior to the start of term so that they can make arrangements to welcome those eligible back into school buildings from 6th January at the usual school starting time. Regulated wrap around care is still able to operate at Protection Level 4 so your usual breakfast and afterschool arrangements will be operational for the children of key workers.

I have had a few enquiries from parents and carers of senior phase pupils. I am keen to offer you some reassurance that young people will in no way be compromised by the changes being put in place in the New Year. Any planned assessments such as Prelims will be either rescheduled or rethought to ensure that we have a firm evidence base to help determine proposed grades. I realise that this is an area of considerable concern for young people so please do assure them that this remains our highest priority. Individual schools or I will write with detailed information at the start of the new school session.

My team are working with catering and finance colleagues to ensure that those in receipt of free school meals who are learning at home are provided with either a voucher or direct payment to cover the costs of providing lunch. More information will be provided at the start of the year.

I can also confirm that transport arrangements will be in place for those children attending school who usually access school transport services.

I thank you for your patience over this really challenging period and will keep you updated if advised of any further changes. In the meantime I wish you all a pleasant festive period and look forward to continuing to work in partnership with you in the New Year.

Yours sincerely



Eleanor Sheppard

Chief Education Officer