

Colleagues,

I hope that you are enjoying, as best you can under the current circumstances, the summer holiday period.

It is clear from the most recent statements by the First Minister to the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government's updated route map on COVID-19 restrictions that the direction of travel in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic is consistent and positive here in Scotland.

As a result the Scottish Government's position remains that, conditional upon ongoing scientific and health advice, a full return of young people to Early Years settings and schools can take place on 11 August. This also remains the Council's Plan A, and we continue to work to finalise all aspects of it.

I can reassure you that we have a detailed blended learning contingency plan (Plan B) and will be able to communicate the necessary detail of that to you extremely quickly should the need occur.

The following is an update on our arrangements for Plan A – a full return of pupils – and we will continue to provide updates throughout the summer holidays, as far as possible on a weekly basis, around subjects such as cleaning arrangements, school transport and wellbeing.

### **Plan A – Full return:**

In respect of a full return of staff and pupils, it is important to emphasise that whilst the school week/day would be as normal, it will be a different experience for staff and young people from that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As I am sure you would expect, there will be measures in place to ensure the safety of staff and pupils as far as possible. These include:

- Requirement for regular hand washing and hand sanitising
- Significant additional cleaning of schools and equipment
- Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) available for staff in all settings to ensure safe first aid can be provided when required and full PPE for staff in settings where any personal care is required
- Procedures in place to manage the requirements of the Scottish Government's Test and Protect programme should any pupil or staff member test positive for COVID-19
- Any other requirement in line with future Scottish Government guidance on the reopening of schools

### **Early Learning and Childcare**

Due to COVID-19 the Scottish Government has paused the statutory requirement for the delivery of 1140 hours of early learning and childcare for all 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds, which was due to start in August.

However, Scottish Borders Council had plans in place to deliver this pre-coronavirus, therefore should a full return be confirmed by the Scottish

Government we will be in a strong position to deliver the 1140 hours entitlement across all our settings and through partner providers as appropriate.

In a small number of settings where construction work was not possible over the summer contingency arrangements will be in place to ensure the eligible hours are provided.

### **Other Plan A arrangements**

Details of school transport and school catering arrangements will be provided prior to 11 August.

Childcare Hubs for key workers will close on 9 August if a full return of young people to school is confirmed.

To further reassure parents about the measures in place for the safe return of young people we will provide you with more details on various elements of our plans in the coming weeks.

### **Plan B – Contingency arrangements**

Only if a full return of pupils is not possible will our contingency plan be put in place. We will only provide the full detail on this if the Scottish Government announce this is required.

However, below are some key points of our Plan B for your information:

- All schools would be open Monday to Thursday, which would provide a 72-hour virus control period and opportunity for deep cleaning
- All secondary pupils would attend school two days a week – either Monday and Tuesday or Wednesday and Thursday
- The vast majority of primary school pupils would attend school four days a week
- Childcare Hubs would be available for key workers

### **Ongoing communication**

We are committed to providing you with further information and reassurance over the coming weeks, as far as possible on a weekly basis.

Staff FAQs can be found at [www.scotborders.gov.uk/staff](http://www.scotborders.gov.uk/staff) and these will continue to be updated and expanded upon ahead of 11 August. Parental information and FAQs can be found at [www.scotborders.gov.uk/schoolreopening](http://www.scotborders.gov.uk/schoolreopening)

Regards

Tracey Logan  
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Scottish Borders Council