



COVID-19 SCHOOL REOPENING NEWSLETTER

Edition 3: 6 August 2020

In this latest newsletter please find a series of new FAQs which will provide you with further information on the return to school.

These have all been informed by our meeting with Parent Council Chairs this Tuesday, which was extremely helpful and will be repeated. Thank you to all the parents who contacted Parent Council with their queries. We would encourage you to continue to do this.

Further new FAQs and information can also be found on our dedicated webpages at www.scotborders.gov.uk/schoolreopening. Please continue to check these pages regularly as these will continue to be updated and added to.

Reopening arrangements

Q. Why has the Council decided to have all pupils return in full on 11 August?

A. The Scottish Government confirmed on 30 July that schools will reopen on 11 August and encouraged local authorities to enable children and young people to return to school full-time as quickly and safely as possible. The full return of pupils was our 'Plan A' and therefore we are well prepared for that and confident that we can accommodate pupils and staff safely in full from Tuesday 11 August. Bringing everyone together as soon as possible also provides the most time for all pupils and staff to adjust to the new arrangements and routines that will be in place and therefore minimises the educational impact on our young people. We fully expect the first week to be a transitional week for all our young people.

Q. How will pupil transitions be supported?

A. We understand that the move to a new school is challenging at the best of times and that a range of transitional opportunities for new P1s and S1s have not been possible due to COVID-19 and the closure of schools since March. Schools will be supporting all pupils to transition to the new arrangements and routines that will be in place, but with a particular focus on new pupils. Each school will be putting in their own arrangements to make the transition as smooth and enjoyable as possible, including for P1s staggered start times on the first day where appropriate.

Q. How will the P1 staggered starts look?

A. Primary schools will be making individual arrangements to support the transition of new P1s to school from Tuesday 11 August. This may include staggered start times. Schools will be communicating these details to parents this week.

Q. Will parents be allowed into schools?

A. No. We are required to restrict all non-essential access to schools.



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Q. What arrangements are there for shared headships/visiting staff?

A. In accordance with Scottish Government guidance, staff should not be accessing more than one setting in a day wherever possible. This will mean that Headteachers where they are responsible for multiple schools will be based in only one school on a daily basis. This also applies to staff from a range of services and partners and specific guidance is being put in place for them. Normal arrangements apply for contacting Headteachers by phone or email.

Q. What measures are there to help older pupils socially distance?

A. In accordance with the Scottish Government guidance there is no requirement for any pupils to socially distance but we will be encouraging older secondary school pupils to socially distance wherever possible, especially outwith classes. Individual schools will be able to share details on school-specific arrangements.

Q. How will breaks and lunches be managed?

A. Where required schools will put in place staggered break and lunch times to avoid particularly large groups of pupils gathering and mixing. These arrangements are for individual schools to make.

Q. Will pupils be allowed to mix in schools?

A. No. We are required to restrict all non-essential access to schools.

Q. What arrangements will there be for children who have been shielding or who have family member who has been shielding?

A. The Scottish Government 'paused' shielding on 1 August. Therefore the full return of pupils on 11 August will include those who have been shielding. Where there is any specific health guidance for individual young people who have been shielding to stay safe we will work to accommodate any requirements in school. Where schools are aware of existing health conditions they will be in contact with parents during the first week to discuss any concerns or arrangements required. If your child has developed a health condition recently, or that the school are not aware of, please contact the school during the first week to make them aware. Schools would be very keen to hear of any parental concerns about a pupil's health.



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Teaching/Learning

Q. What will secondary school timetables look like, especially for S3-S6?

A. Timetables will as far as possible provide the full range of subjects and subject choices as normal. The delivery of some subjects, particularly practical subjects, may be impacted to some extent by ongoing restrictions. Further national guidance on specific subject areas is still awaited and as soon as we can we will share details of how practical subjects will operate/will be impacted by restrictions. Extended periods of learning and the use of 'home rooms' will be in place to minimise pupil movement wherever possible, with teaching staff moving between classrooms wherever this can be accommodated.

Q. Will practical subjects be able to run as normal?

A. There are a variety of restrictions which will affect the ability of some practical subjects to be delivered as 'normal'. Our focus is on ensuring the safe return of pupils on 11 August and the transitional first week to ensure that our schools are COVID-safe spaces. Because each school's departments may have to adapt their practice to undertake activities safely, not all practical activity will begin immediately.

Q. What PPE will teachers be wearing?

A. There are an extremely limited number of circumstances where staff members will be required to PPE. This mainly relates to where any intimate care is required or provision of First Aid etc. An individual teacher may, if they wish, wear a face covering or visor.

Equipment

Q. Can pupils bring in pencil cases/school bags etc?

A. Yes, each pupil should bring in any essential resources they would normally take to school. Resources will also be supplied as normal by schools for use of individual pupils. Pupils should not share any resources with others.

Q. What should pupils do with PE kit and other equipment?

A. PE kit etc should be brought to school and taken home after each use. Pupils should not leave any equipment or clothing in school other than pupils allocated individual lockers.

Q. Does school clothing need washed every day?

A. School uniforms/clothing should be washed/cleaned as normal.

Q. Are there any items pupils should not take to school?

A. We would encourage pupils to only take essential items to school.



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Attendance

Q. Will children who have to self isolate or cannot attend due to medical reasons be supported with their learning?

A. Where young people are not able to attend for health reasons schools will support home learning.

Q. If I choose not to send my child to school will you provide home learning?

A. No. However, it is recognised that some parents and carers may be concerned about their child returning to school and in these circumstances please contact the school to support attendance.

Early Learning and Childcare

Q. What is happening with the rollout of 1140 Early Learning and Childcare?

A. We are pleased to be able to provide 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare from many nursery age children. Ensuring the provisions for children are safe means that split placements are not being permitted unless no alternative childcare is in place. We recognise that this may mean that a small number of children will not be able to access the full 1140 hours whilst COVID-19 restrictions are in place.

Q. What is the position on split/blended placements?

A. The Scottish Government guidance is clear that that in order to minimise the number of contacts and risk of COVID-19 transmission attendance at multiple different Early Learning and Childcare settings should be reduced as far as is possible. Parents and carers are encouraged and supported to limit the number of settings their child attends, ideally ensuring their child only attends the same setting consistently.

Cleaning

Q. What chemicals are being used to clean schools?

A. In addition to our normal cleaning programme we are using a range of technology and approved chemicals to provide enhanced cleaning to protect against COVID-19. The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) information for these chemicals can be found via links on our dedicated cleaning page.

Q. My child has allergies and I'm concerned the new cleaning programme will cause health issues

A. We are using cleaning techniques, equipment and chemicals which are approved. If after reviewing the COSHH information on the chemicals being used you have a specific concern please contact the school to discuss.



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Transport and Drop Off/Pick Up

Q. What are the arrangements for privilege lifts from 11 August?

- A.** To maximise space for pupils entitled to free transport and minimise pupils travelling on public services we are not able to accommodate any privilege lifts at this time.

Q. Why are the Council not making it mandatory for face coverings to be worn on school transport?

- A.** The Scottish Government guidance on schools reopening, and specifically on school transport, makes it clear that face covering are not required in school or on dedicated school transport. This decision is based on scientific and public health advice therefore the Council has no basis to require pupils to wear face coverings.

It is entirely up to the discretion of pupils/parents as to whether young people wear face coverings on dedicated school transport or in school.

Wherever possible we have moved pupils on to dedicated school transport routes so only a small number of pupils who have SBC bus passes will be required to travel to school on public services.

Only on these routes will pupils need to wear face coverings.

We are aware that a number of pupils who are not entitled to free transport due to the distance to home use public services buses to travel to school. Where they do so they will need to wear face coverings and social distance from other passengers as set out in legislation. Parents should be reminded that bus operators have a duty to ensure all passengers socially distance and this may mean services have restricted capacity. They should not assume that pupils will be able to travel on their normal public service bus.

Q. What are the arrangements for drop off/pick up of pupils?

- A.** All schools have been encouraged to consider arrangements for drop off/pick up of pupils to make this as safe as possible and ensure that adults can social distance. This may include restricting parental access to playgrounds, for example. As normal we ask that all children and parents/carers travel to school on foot or by bike wherever this is possible and it is safe to do so. It is essential that parents/carers who choose to drive their children to school make use of existing 'Park and Stride' arrangements where these are in place to minimise the number of vehicles close to schools due to the significant road safety risk this poses to children. Where schools do not have formal 'Park and Stride' arrangements parents/carers should park/drop off pupils away from the immediate vicinity of the school. Details will be provided to parents by schools this week.

Q. Do parents need to wear face coverings when picking up/dropping off pupils?

- A.** No, because this will take place outdoors. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that they maintain social distancing requirements with other adults when around schools.