

29 May 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

I would firstly like to express my gratitude to all our children and young people for their understanding and fortitude during this unprecedented emergency. It must never be underestimated the disruption young people have endured as well as the additional burdens placed on families during this time.

Following the First Minister's announcement last week of her 'Routemap' to releasing lockdown in four phases, and her confirmation yesterday that the first phase would commence today, we are aware this will raise many questions about exactly how and when children and young people will return to their school.

The City of Edinburgh Council is considering very carefully the arrangements for the safe return to what will be a very different school experience because of the need to maintain social distance. We also need to consider the arrangements for returning to school for children and young people for whom social distancing is not possible, both for those attending mainstream schools and those attending specialist provisions. For all children and young people, learning will involve a blend of home learning as well as in-school attendance.

The First Minister announced that all schools in Scotland will open on Tuesday 11th August 2020 for pupils. As schools in Edinburgh will open a week earlier than we had anticipated, we will need to adjust the published City of Edinburgh Council school session dates for 2020/2021, after consulting parents and staff.

You will be aware that our staff have been working extremely hard to support learning during this challenging period both in the busy key worker hubs, as well as supporting home learning. During June, we will all be working hard to implement the safest arrangements in our schools. Headteachers will be in contact with parents to provide clear details of how the blended learning model will operate in your child's school as soon as possible. The Council is aware you will have a range of questions which may include issues such as school transport, SQA exams, transition arrangements, school meals, cleaning regimes, personal protective equipment, hand washing as well as precisely when your child will be expected to be in school and when they will be expected to be home learning.

School staff, council colleagues and partners are working together. Where possible, we will consult with parents and young people too, to refine and improve arrangements to ensure the health and safety of children and staff, at the same time providing the highest quality of learning and teaching possible.

Andy Gray, Chief Education Officer
Level 1.1 Waverley Court, 4 East Market Street, Edinburgh, EH8 8BG
Tel 0131 529 2217

In the meantime, support for the children of key workers continues. Parents are eligible for support where both are unable to provide or arrange alternative childcare and who are working directly to support the national effort to reduce Coronavirus. Arrangements are being made to offer support over the summer school holiday period which will be similar to what was offered over Easter. Further information about applying for key worker support in mainstream schools over the summer holidays will be available on the council's website by Friday 5th June 2020.

Supports for children affected by disability will be provided within identified special schools, working with a range of partners. Parents requiring Key Worker support will be contacted directly regarding arrangements for this provision. If you are a Key Worker requiring support for your child over summer and your child does not currently attend a special school hub, please contact the Headteacher of your child's school in the first instance to make them aware of this.

I can assure you enormous effort is being made to ensure the arrangements will have the health and safety of your child at the heart of all we do and although school will look different in August, we very much look forward to welcoming your children back in the new school session. I will write again with more details as they become available.

Thank you for your patience and understanding.



Andy Gray

Chief Education Officer