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East Dunbartonshire Council

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EDUCATION SERVICE

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Dear Parents,

Back to School Information: Secondary Schools

We have been developing our plans for the reopening of schools taking account of the documentation from Scottish Government. In formulating our area-wide Local Phasing Delivery Plan, there has been consultation and engagement with the Trade Unions, Head Teachers and the Parent Council Steering Group. Head Teachers have also consulted with staff, pupils, parents and the Parent Council in formulating their individual School Recovery Plan.

It is important to recognise the need for flexibility in these plans. The changing situation in relation to Covid-19 and potential changes in guidance mean that our education plans may also need to change. We will of course keep you advised if that happens.

A full copy of our East Dunbartonshire Local Phased Delivery Plan is available on the Covid-19 Schools Update page of the Council website

www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/residents/council-democracy/covid-19-school-update

These principles informed our Local Phased Delivery Plan:

- The health, safety and wellbeing of staff and children is at the heart of decision making; taking account of advice from NHS Public Health and Scottish Government;
- A flexible approach to meet the changing context; this is particularly important as plans may need to change to take account of any revised guidance from Scottish Government and NHS Public Health;
- Working in partnership with parents, staff and pupils to deliver learning and support for children and families;
- Continuing to work to ensure equity and excellence.

The delivery model in our schools has been developed through a structured process. The Council provided detailed Guidance and a Planning Framework to head teachers, which took account of the Operational Guidance issued by Scottish Government. The capacity of each school was then assessed using three key requirements:

- Accommodation must provide high quality learning and teaching in a positive nurturing environment;
- Staffing can be deployed to ensure appropriate supervision and high quality learning and teaching;

- Measures to minimise the risk of infection and transmission are in place, including physical distancing, hygiene and mitigation.

The capacity was also informed by the layout of the school, the level of occupancy and the staffing entitlement. Once capacity was established, the possible delivery model for the school could be determined. Physical distancing is now part of our daily lives and we need to build this into the organisation of all schools. The current requirement for physical distancing when assessing learning space is 2 metres and this will be achieved by:

- Increasing separation; and
- Decreasing interaction.

It is particularly important in secondary schools that there are measures in place to support physical distancing, as it is not possible to create the small, consistent groups being developed in our primary schools. Classes will need to be taught by different teachers during the school day with changes of accommodation and, in some year groups, changes to the composition of pupils within a group. It follows that the need for stricter compliance with physical distancing is incorporated into the planning and assessment of capacity.

Delivery Model for Secondary Schools in August

We are planning for a blended model of learning with some time in-school and home learning on days when not in school. We are developing a Virtual School across all secondary schools to provide support for the home learning element, particularly for those pupils in S4 to S6. This will support the development of home learning taking account of feedback from staff, pupils and parents.

Our aim is to provide the maximum time possible for children in-school but this is dependent on the guidance from Scottish Government and the compliance with all health and safety requirements due to Covid-19.

In assessing the capacity of each secondary school, an extensive exercise was carried out by head teachers supported by the Central Education Team and the Council's Assets team. The first stage was to assess learning spaces to provide 2 metre physical distancing between individuals – pupils and staff. This confirmed that a maximum of **nine** pupils could be accommodated in each classroom in most schools. Having established capacity, head teachers then scoped different models of delivery, suitable for their school. Almost all secondary schools in East Dunbartonshire have very high occupancy due to the high demand for places. This means that there is very little spare accommodation within the school. Consideration was given to using large spaces within the school as well as other accommodation within the local area. This would have resulted in assembly halls and games halls being utilised as learning spaces and would have curtailed the provision of physical education for a significant period of time. These large spaces would have needed significant adaptation to create an appropriate nurturing environment for high quality learning and teaching in small groups. Accommodation out with the school would require to be risk assessed, with concerns including access to toilets and transport as well as adequate supervision and staffing.

Staffing is a significant constraint; additional staffing has been allocated to all schools to ensure it is staffed to its full complement as we anticipate that there will be a number of staff who may not be able to be in-school in August due to Covid-19. A significant number of additional staff would be needed to accommodate 50% of each year group in most schools, particularly if additional accommodation was required. Given the difficulties in recruiting teachers and that all councils would be recruiting for the same reason, there was a significant

risk that we would not have sufficient teachers to staff a model of 50% attendance for each year group attending, within the timescale.

Following consultation with head teachers and the teacher Trade Unions, it was decided that all secondary schools will progress planning for one third of the year group attending at any one time. This equates to approximately nine hours for each year group. However it is important to note that this is based on the current Scottish Government Guidance and if that changes, this model can be scaled up to give more time in-school. Establishing this principle has enabled work to change the school timetable to be progressed; this is a lengthy process usually completed much earlier in the session.

It was agreed that the following will be built into the planning by all schools:

- The timetabling could be scaled up to half year groups attending, if the default physical distancing measure changed from 2m to 1m. This could be achieved with no increase in staffing;
- Subject to available staffing and accommodation, additional time in-school can be provided to pupils, who have been most affected by the closure of schools; e.g. pupils in the Senior Phase and those who are vulnerable. There will be additional support for pupils in S4 to S6. Plans will be developed for an enhanced supported study programme;
- The recruitment of additional staffing will continue to be progressed and if there are suitably qualified staff available, schools can progress scaling up to half year groups, subject to approval by the Authority.

The Scottish Government has issued a directive that all schools should reopen on 11 August, with pupils returning on 12 August. This has meant adjustment to the School Calendar for 2020/21 and schools are now scheduled to reopen for pupils one day earlier than originally planned, on 12 August, subject to final, formal confirmation from Scottish Government. Your child's school will provide information on their attendance pattern for the first week.

All secondary schools will be open from 8.30 with support staff and senior staff providing supervision. This will provide a staggered start in secondary schools; this will be reviewed during the first phase of the reopening of schools. There may be some additional changes to the school day required, due to timetabling in a small number of schools. Information on this will be provided by your child's school.

There are many changes and adaptations required within a school to minimise the risk of infection and transmission. Further information is detailed in the attached Back to School Information Leaflet for Parents.

Arrangements are being made to review the provision of school transport taking account of the risk assessment due to the requirement for physical distancing. We are finalizing details about the provision of school lunches. More information will be provided over the summer.

We understand that it is a very difficult time for parents, particularly those who need to return to work, as children will not be in school full time. We are working to put in place additional childcare for the children of key workers. However this will be more limited than during lockdown as school buildings and our Education staff will be needed to provide the in-school provision and home learning support during the week. We would ask parents to explore all possible options before applying for a key worker childcare place. Information on

our final arrangements will be provided over the summer including details of the application process and the prioritisation we will use to allocate places.

We know this has been a very difficult time for children and families and please be assured that all our schools are planning ways to support our young people returning to school safely, with a focus on health and wellbeing. We will provide further updates as these become available over the summer through Group Call and social media. If you have any concerns about your child, please contact the head teacher of your child's school and they can make arrangements to support the return to school.

Finally, thank you once again for your understanding as we put these measures in place to keep our school communities safe when they return in August.

Kind regards

JACQUI MACDONALD
Chief Education Officer