

Safe Learning in Scotland: Building on our Success

This document is intended to support your ongoing work to continue to keep schools safe places to work and learn. It provides a brief overview of current expectations and summarises changes that the COVID 19 Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues has recommended. Where appropriate, please share these changes with parents through your ongoing engagement with them. It may also be helpful to share the diagram on how Scotland's five protection levels will impact on schools.

Continuing Expectations

In schools, approaches such as following and reinforcing physical distancing advice, having a staggered start and end to the school day, staggered lesson change overs, amendments to timetables, scrupulous hand-washing and respiratory hygiene help to contain the spread of COVID 19. It is very important that these and other measures continue to be followed rigorously. Teachers should continue to be vigilant in all areas of the school building and ensure risk assessments are live documents that are reviewed as appropriate.

Updates on Physical Distancing and Face Coverings in Schools Early Learning and Childcare Settings

- Complying with **physical distancing** advice continues to be very important and requires regular reinforcement.
- **At Levels 0-2 face coverings** should be worn by adults where they cannot keep two metres from other adults and / or children and young people across primary and secondary (but with ELC models permitted for early stage, P1-2, as before). The "sustained period" 15-minute caveat no longer applies.
- **At Levels 3-4 face coverings** should also be worn by adults and young people in classrooms in senior phase.
- **At all Levels face coverings** should be used by adults when not working directly with children, for example when moving around settings or when in staff rooms, administrative areas or canteens across all school settings.
- **Face coverings** should be worn by parents and other visitors to the school site (whether entering the building or otherwise), including parents at drop-off and pick-up.
- **Classroom assistants and those supporting children with Additional Support Needs** who routinely have to work within two metres of **children and young people** should wear **face coverings** as a general rule. However, the use of opaque face coverings should be balanced with the wellbeing and needs of the young person - appropriate use of transparent face coverings may help in these circumstances.
- In **special schools and units**, and where there are groupings of children with complex additional support needs, the balance of the staffing complement, the groupings of children and young people and their needs, and therefore the staffing and resources required, (PPE, cleaning of equipment), should be considered/assessed throughout the school day and adjusted where appropriate/necessary.

Updates on Ventilation

- As winter approaches, local authorities will support schools to **adopt strategies that help balance the need for ventilation with keeping people warm**. Expert advice identifies that using pragmatic approaches which recognise the importance of people being comfortable may help everyone to stick to guidance in relation to ventilation.

Updates on Handling Jotters and Other Equipment

- Careful hand washing with soap and warm water/use of alcohol-based hand sanitiser before and after handling jotters (or other pieces of equipment) **mitigates the need for quarantine for 72 hours before, and 72 hours after**. Staff should also avoid touching their mouth, nose and eye area.

Updates on Curriculum Changes

Physical Education

The current position on physical education in schools is as follows:

Levels 0-3 – Children and young people within school settings can participate in contact and non-contact activities, both indoors and outdoors.

Level 4 – Children and young people within school settings can only participate in activities that are non-contact and outdoors.

Please Note: Where a school is in a community under protection level 4 mitigations, physical education within school settings should only take place out of doors. If weather is extremely bad then schools may use their judgement as to whether it is safe for children to be outside.

Other Curriculum Areas

- Guidance on other subjects with practical experiential learning, such as music and drama has not been altered at this point. All advice is kept under review and will be updated as appropriate.

Updates on Assessment

National Qualifications

- There will be **no external assessment of National 5 courses** this year and an alternative certification approach is being put in place based on teacher judgement, supported by assessment resources and quality assurance.
- The SQA published broad guidance on evidence gathering and estimation with a clear focus on the quality, not quantity, of evidence. This is accompanied by an SQA Academy Course on quality assuring estimates.
- Subject specific guidance on the work that learners need to complete will be published by the SQA.
- Higher and Advanced Higher exams are planned to start on Thursday 13 May 2021 and finish on Friday 4 June 2021, with Results Day on Tuesday 10 August 2021.
- A clear contingency plan will continue to be developed, including key checkpoints up to the February break to assess public health advice and its impact on the plans for exams.

Supporting and Engaging Parents During COVID 19

The following will help you support and engage parents:

- A **communications plan** which has been agreed and shaped by parents and staff will help in the event of an establishment having to close. The plan should cover how two-way communication will continue in such an event.
- A **remote learning contingency plan** will help all staff and parents understand what will happen in the event an establishment has to close.
- Where possible, **virtual communication** and meetings can be very helpful. The use of virtual communication has enabled some establishments to:
 - keep parents up-to-date, in almost real-time, on recent developments;
 - continue meeting with the Parent Council Forum and Youth Council;
 - provide an opportunity to directly communicate with parents and answer questions;
 - ensure families have the information and support they need;
 - co-ordinate online events and celebrations such as end of term parties and catch-up mornings/evenings to support children and families; and
 - organise question & answer sessions with local authority staff to address parental concerns and anxieties.

Remote Learning

Remote learning is the term being used to describe when learners and teachers are not physically present together in the traditional classroom environment.

As advised by previous (CERG) guidance, schools and local authorities have been putting their own arrangements in place for localised remote learning for individuals or groups as required since August 2020.

The advice is based on the assumption that practitioners know their learners best, and can arrange learning which is appropriate to the needs and circumstances of their learners. It should also be assumed that learners will know what they are to do when remote learning and that parents/carers are fully informed of the contingency plans in place. Going forward, should learners be asked to self-isolate or a school move to a situation where it is required to close due to PHS advice, the same underpinning assumptions apply.

Wherever possible, remote learning approaches should endeavour to enable practitioners to maintain contact with learners through the use of technology. This will vary from authority to authority depending on local virtual learning environments and capabilities. Schools and local authorities should continue to make the decisions about which elements of remote learning are right for their children and young people and that decisions may vary within cohorts of learners, dependent on their needs and circumstances. Continued engagement with learners and their parents will help to establish what works well.

Main elements of **remote learning** can include:

- providing learners with physical resources where needed such as learning materials, textbooks and digital devices
- providing live learning and teaching sessions with children and young people, for example through Glow (either by communicating through the chat function or through live video links with learners).
- providing access to recorded learning sessions and tasks
- setting learners tasks for completion and submission to / discussion with practitioners
- using the opportunity for 'live sessions' (as above) to check in, discuss and engage in person with learners following a learning task, but not to deliver lessons or content
- engaging regularly with learners through email or an agreed platform.

Support for remote learning

Resources to support remote learning have been developed within local authorities and Regional Improvement Collaboratives, and through national initiatives and partnerships. Education Scotland, e-Sgoil, ADES and Regional Improvement Collaboratives are working very closely with all 32 local authorities to help strengthen the overall national offer of support for e-learning through partnership working. This includes access to support for

live lessons, recorded lessons and practitioner-developed support materials for practitioners to draw on in preparing online remote learning. [National e-learning offer](#)

In addition, live and recorded webinars and blogs for practitioners with advice on learning and teaching online and on making the best use of digital platforms continue to be made available through [digilearn](#).