

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



EDUCATION EXECUTIVE

RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS - UPDATE

REPORT BY DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update the Education Executive on the re-opening of schools and early learning and childcare in line with the Scottish Government Guidance issued on 30 July 2020.

To inform the Education Executive of the key arrangements implemented to support the re-opening of schools and early learning and childcare.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Education Executive to asked to note

- the re-opening of schools and early learning and childcare in line with the Scottish Government National Guidance.
- the key changes to National Guidance and local Operating Guidance which have occurred since the re-opening of schools.
- the additional costs outlined in the report, and that reimbursement of these will be sought from the Scottish Government in line with the decision of the Council Executive at its meeting of 23 June 2020.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I	Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; providing equality of opportunities; developing employees; making best use of our resources; working in partnership
II	Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	Educational Continuity Directions and related statutory guidance; non-statutory Scottish Government guidance; an integrated impact assessment has been undertaken
III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	Delegated authority to the Depute Chief Executive to implement further changes to the Local Phasing and Delivery Plan.
IV	Impact on performance and performance	Potentially significant impact on education outcomes, with mitigation steps set out in this

	Indicators	and previous reports.
V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed.
VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	<p>The Scottish Government has stated that it will work with Councils to address resources issues that they face in reopening schools.</p> <p>The net 2020/21 revenue cost of the plan for the full reopening of schools is estimated at £1.668 million. This position is subject to further monitoring and review.</p>
VII	Consideration at PDSP	Due to urgency and short timescales it has not been possible to consult PDSP members and representatives.
VIII	Other consultations	Operational Services, FMU, Governance Manager, Headteachers, teaching and non-teaching trade unions.

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 Background

The Education Executive, at its meeting of 23 June 2020, approved a Local Phasing Delivery Plan based on the planning assumption that physical distancing would require a reduction in the number of pupils who could attend school at any one time, and that as a consequence Blended Learning would be required.

The Scottish Government subsequently changed its planning assumption to the full-time re-opening of schools to all pupils from the 11 August 2020. This was conditional on infection rates being sufficiently low to continue to control the virus, public health and testing systems being in place and protective measures and risk assessments being carried out in schools.

The full-time re-opening of schools to all pupils was confirmed by a ministerial statement on 30 July 2020, and an updated Education Continuity Direction was issued. The Scottish Government published Guidance to support implementation of a full-time re-opening of school to all pupils on 30 July 2020, following consultation with local authorities through COSLA.

D.2 Re-opening of Schools

Following publication of the Guidance on 30 July 2020 Recovery Plans and Risk Assessments were updated.

A special meeting of the Education Executive considered the revised Guidance on 4 August 2020. The Executive approved plans to re-open schools and early learning and childcare from 11 August 2020 on a phased basis, with all schools fully open to pupils by 14 August 2020, and that further local context to the Guidance would be provided in the Local Recovery Plan being produced under the delegated authority of the Depute Chief Executive.

Schools and Early Learning and Childcare establishments re-opened to children and young people on Wednesday 12 August 2020, with a return to full time learning in schools on Friday 14 August 2020, as planned and reported to the Education Executive at its meeting of 4 August 2020.

Schools and Early Learning and Childcare Establishments reopened subject to the public health measures and mitigations included in the risk assessment, as set out in the report to the Education Executive, including:

- enhanced hygiene and environmental cleaning arrangements;
- minimising contact with others (groupings, where possible maintaining distancing for young people in secondary schools and physical distancing for adults);
- wearing appropriate personal protective equipment where necessary;
- a requirement that people who are ill stay at home; and
- active engagement with Test and Protect.

D.3 Updated National Guidance – Face Coverings

The Scottish Government updated National Guidance on face coverings from 31st August 2020, based on the latest scientific evidence and the advice of the World Health Organisation regarding both protection of others and protection of the wearer; and the feedback received from stakeholders on the early experiences of school reopening.

The new National Guidance is that face coverings should be worn:

- where adults and young people in secondary schools are moving about the school in corridors and confined communal areas (including toilets) where physical distancing and maintaining appropriate distance is particularly difficult; and
- where adults and children and young people aged 5 and over are travelling on dedicated school transport

The reasons for the new National Guidance is that these are areas where mixing between different groups is more likely, increasing the potential for transmission of the virus. Experience and feedback have demonstrated that crowding and close contact in these areas is more likely, and that voices may be raised resulting in greater potential for creation of aerosols. The scope for effective ventilation is often less. For school transport, the new National Guidance is consistent with the current approach on public transport.

National Guidance remains that:-

- face coverings should not generally be worn in classrooms or other learning and teaching environments.
- face coverings should be worn by adults where they cannot keep 2m distance and are interacting face-to-face for a sustained period (about 15 minutes or more) with other adults and/or children and young people.
- anyone (whether child, young person or adult) wishing to wear a face covering in school should be permitted to do so.
- some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings.

Use of face coverings is just one mitigation within the package of measures contained in school recovery plans and risk assessments. Existing mitigation measures, including physical distancing for adults, environmental cleaning, personal hand and respiratory hygiene, grouping of young people and maintaining distancing between young people in secondary schools where possible, remain vitally important.

Updated local guidance has been given to schools, pupils, parent carers and transport operators to support the new National Guidance on face coverings. Schools will support pupils to comply with the National Guidance. No pupil will be excluded from school, or refused entry to school transport, on the grounds that they are not wearing a face covering.

D.4 Other Updates to Operational Guidance

The Education Executive was previously informed that Operational Guidance to West Lothian schools was necessarily dynamic and subject to change. Operational Guidance continues to evolve in light of revised National Guidance, the experience of schools and early learning and Childcare Establishments in the early days of reopening, and consultation with pupils, parents/carer and staff and their representatives.

The Education Executive is asked to note that some aspects of Operational Guidance have been re-emphasised or amended, as follows:-

Advice regarding the attendance of pupils at school with non-COVID related symptoms

All West Lothian schools are following national Scottish Government National Guidance, which is based on scientific advice, and the additional health guidance issued by the NHS in relation to attendance at school. There has been some confusion amongst parents/carers on this issue as guidance continues to be developed and disseminated.

If a child or young person develops Coronavirus symptoms then they must not attend school, and parents/carers should follow the advice provided by NHS Inform (www.nhsinform.scot).

The most common symptoms of Coronavirus are a new continuous cough; fever/high temperature (37.8C or greater); and/or loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste (anosmia). A new continuous cough is a new cough that's lasted for an hour; 3 or more episodes of coughing in 24 hours; coughing more than usual. A high temperature is feeling hot to the touch on your chest or back (you don't need to measure your temperature), and/or feeling warm, cold or shivery.

If a child has other symptoms, but not any of the three listed above, parents/carers should make the normal decision they would make in relation to their child's attendance. If the child is not well enough to go to school then the child should remain at home. If the child is well enough to attend school then they should attend.

The Council's Website has been updated with information for parents on this matter.

Advice regarding the congregation of parents/carers at drop off and collection points

Local operating guidance to schools, based on the Scottish Government's National Guidance, asked schools to consider arrangements for drop off and collection times such as staggered start and finish times, and 'Park and Stride' arrangements, where drop off is at a location distanced from the school gates, with pupils walking the last portion of their journey. Prior to the re-opening of schools, parents/carers were advised not to gather at the school gates.

Since schools reopened, a number have voiced concerns about the lack of physical distancing among parents and carers at school gates. The Council wrote to all schools on 19 August, in partnership with local NHS teams, asking them to remind parents and carers that they have a key role in stopping the spread of COVID-19, thereby ensuring that the school can remain open. A poster that can be used at school gates, as a reminder to parents/carers, has been provided. In some instances schools have been asked to review arrangements, in partnership with their parent council.

Enhanced hygiene and cleaning regime

The cleaning regime in schools will change from electrostatic cleaning to twice daily cleaning. This will require additional resources to increase the frequency of cleaning of touch points and desktops in accordance with Scottish Government guidance. In addition, one cleaner will be located in each Secondary Schools during the day.

Alcohol based hand sanitiser will be available in all classrooms. A detergent will be used to clean desks and contact points and this will also be made available to staff for use.

D.5 Recovery of Learning

As previously reported, officers and Headteachers have prepared detailed guidance and plans which make use of the pupil engagement tracking and monitoring information which was gathered and analysed during school closures. These plans, which focus on support for continuity of learning and the curriculum in the recovery phase, and reinforce the importance of literacy, numeracy and wellbeing, are now being implemented in all schools.

All schools are also addressing children and young people's social and emotional needs will be a priority. Children and young people are being provided with additional time and support to re-adjust to the school environment.

Officers and Headteachers will continue to develop digital strategies and plans to ensure future continuity of learning. In particular, schools will have a focus on mitigating any widening of inequalities of outcome experienced by children and young people.

D.6 Additional Cost of Re-Opening and Recovery

The net revenue cost of the plan for the full re-opening schools is estimated to be in the region of £1.1668 million for financial year 2020/21, excluding further additional teaching costs. The costs mainly relate to school cleaning as outlined in the table below:

	£'000
Cleaning	1,377
Property related costs including posters and signage	40
Face masks, hand sanitiser and extra cleaning products in schools	122
Loss of income from School Lets	139
Net Revenue Cost	1,668

The Scottish Government has stated that it will work with councils to address resources issues that they face in reopening schools. Initial investment of £20 million is to be provided to aid logistical challenges in reopening schools and the council's share of this funding is expected to be in the region of £770,000. This is being treated as initial investment, recognising that the additional costs, while likely to be substantial, remain unknown. A further £30 million is also available to meet further costs and will be distributed based on need. This process has still to be identified by Scottish Government. The council will submit a claim to for additional funding from the second tranche to fully cover the net revenue costs from the re-opening of schools.

This position is subject to further monitoring and review. The additional pressures on the council's revenue budget will be managed by the Head of Finance & Property Services in accordance with Financial Regulations and reported to PDSP and Council Executive as part of the budget-monitoring process.

E. CONCLUSION

The Education Executive to asked to note the re-opening of schools and early learning and childcare in line with the Scottish Government National Guidance.

The Education Executive is asked to note key changes to National Guidance and local Operating Guidance which have occurred since the re-opening of schools.

The Education Executive is asked to note the additional costs set out in the report, and that reimbursement of these will be sought from the Scottish Government in line with the decision of the Council Executive at its meeting of 23 June 2020.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-preparing-start-new-school-term-august-2020/>

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-reopening-early-learning-and-childcare-services/>

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-reopening->

school-age-childcare-services/

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