

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



EDUCATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

EDUCATION RECOVERY UPDATE

REPORT BY DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform members of the updated Scottish Government Guidance on reducing the risk in schools from coronavirus (COVID-19), and the implications for mitigations in place in West Lothian Schools.

B. RECOMMENDATION

To note:

- the updated Scottish Government Guidance on reducing the risk in schools from coronavirus (COVID-19), and the implications for mitigations in place in West Lothian Schools; and
- the expectation that revised guidance will be issued at the end of September.

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)	Non-statutory guidance 'Coronavirus (Covid 19) – Reducing the risk in schools' published 3 August 2021.
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	Delegated authority to the Depute Chief Executive to implement further changes to the Education Recovery Plan.
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	Potentially significant impact on education outcomes, with mitigation steps set out in this and previous reports considered by Education Executive.
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)	The approved revenue budget includes one off resources of £6.958 million and specific Covid-

19 grants from Scottish Government for 2021/22 of £9.073 million, including carry forward of funds from 2020/21, for education recovery.

VII	Consideration at PDSP	24 August 2021
VIII	Other consultations	Headteachers; Teaching and Non-Teaching Unions, Financial Management Unit

D. TERMS OF REPORT

Updated Guidance

The Scottish Government published an update to its Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools on 3 August 2021, with its provisions to come into effect on 9 August 2021.

In summary, the Guidance requires schools to continue to apply the mitigations which were in place at the end of the last term, subject to some modifications. This position is expected to be maintained for up to six weeks, until the end of September, when it is expected that updated Guidance will be provided.

The modifications that should be made to mitigations relate to: -

- 1) An updated approach to self-isolation, contact tracing and testing for close contacts, which results in the ability to remove groupings in schools.
- 2) Further minor adjustments to mitigations reflecting changes to the measures in place in wider society.

As with previous versions, the revised Guidance has drawn from expert advice from the Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues, and also the input of stakeholders including young people. Consideration has been given to the evolving risk environment in schools and wider communities, and also of harms arising from mitigations recommended to date which are disruptive to education, including in particular self-isolation requirements.

Mitigations Which Remain In Place

The mitigations which remain in place without alteration are: -

- Risk Assessment
- Environmental Cleaning
- Hand and Respiratory Hygiene
- PPE in Specific Circumstances
- Face Coverings in Communal Areas
- Face Coverings in Secondary Classrooms
- One-way Systems
- Drop-off and Pick-up Arrangements
- Staggered Start and Finish Times / Break and Lunch Times
- Restrictions on Assemblies

New Mitigations and Modified Mitigations

Mitigations that should be modified from the start of term, and new mitigations, are summarised below.

Vaccination (new)

All schools should encourage staff to seek vaccination.

The Scottish Government has announced that it will offer children and young people with certain conditions vaccination, in line with the latest advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), before the majority of schools return on 16 August. Children and young people affected, or their parents/carers, will be contacted directly by their local Health Boards or by their regular healthcare professional starting from the week of 2 August onwards.

The Scottish Government has announced that the children and young people to be offered vaccination are: -

- around 4000 children and young people affected by severe neuro-disabilities, Down's Syndrome, underlying conditions resulting in immunosuppression, and those who have a diagnosis of Learning/Intellectual disability;
- young people aged 16 to 17 years of age who are at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19;
- children and young people aged 12-17 who are household contacts of adults or children who are immunosuppressed. A household contact is defined as someone living in the same house, or anyone the adult or child comes in to contact with face-to-face on most days of the week - such as a carer.

On 4 August 2021, the Scottish Government issued a further update to its plans to vaccinate young people. The NHS will contact all young people 16 to 17 years of age in Scotland to offer them the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination. In line with the latest advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), they will be offered a first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

From Friday 6 August, young people aged 16 and 17 were invited to register their interest through the online portal at NHS Inform, and will then be sent an appointment via SMS or email. In addition, drop-in clinics will be available for 16 to 17-years-olds. Anyone who doesn't register an interest or attend a drop-in clinic, will be sent an appointment through the post. It is expected that all 16 and 17 year olds will have been offered a vaccination appointment by the end of September.

All information regarding vaccination including consent forms will be issued by the NHS.

Self-Isolation, Contact Tracing and Testing

Staff, children and young people who develop symptoms or test positive must still self-isolate immediately. Staff, children and young people will be strongly encouraged to inform their school of any positive test when reporting absences.

Close Contacts

The advice for adults (18+) who are fully vaccinated and for children and young people (0-17), if they are identified as close contacts has changed, as follows.

- 1) Book a PCR test and self isolate until they receive the result.
- 2) If the test result is positive they must continue to self isolate.
- 3) If the result is negative, and the close contact remains without symptoms, they can end self isolation, and resume daily life including return to school, even if they have ongoing contact with the close contact.
- 4) Adults and young people in secondary school should continue to test twice weekly using LFDs available from their school. Parents may also wish to encourage primary pupils to test twice weekly using the universal testing program.
- 5) If they have had a positive PCR test in the last 90 days, close contacts do not need another PCR test to be exempt from self isolation, provided they remain asymptomatic.

People aged between 18 and 18 years and 4 months, who are not fully vaccinated should follow the advice for fully vaccinated adults.

Children aged under 5 who are identified as close contacts will be encouraged but not required to take a PCR test before they resume daily life including return to ELC and school.

Contact Tracing

Only those close contacts aged under 18 who are at the highest risk of being exposed to infection will be contacted directly by Test and Protect. This group will include household contacts, overnight (sleepover) contact, or other clear, prolonged close contact.

The approach of requiring whole classes or groupings of pupils to self-isolate as close contacts will no longer be followed in normal circumstances. Schools will send 'warn and inform' letters to staff, parents/carers and young people when they are made aware of positive cases, in order to ensure vigilance for symptoms and close following of mitigations and to encourage testing.

Schools and early learning and childcare establishments will no longer be extensively involved in supporting contact tracing.

Groupings

The revised approach to contact tracing means that maintaining pupils in groupings or bubbles is no longer required. Schools should continue to avoid assemblies and other large gatherings.

Physical Distancing

Physical distancing of at least 1m is required between adults, and between adults and pupils. The Guidance states that it is expected that most schools will wish to retain their current 2m distancing arrangements for logistical reasons and this will be the case in West Lothian schools. Maintaining distance between secondary pupils continues to be encouraged where possible.

School Visitors

Visitors that are necessary to support children and young people or the running of the school (including supply staff, visiting teachers, psychologists, nurses, social workers, youth workers, outdoor learning specialists, Higher Education Institution tutors and those providing therapeutic support) can move between schools.

Parents/carers may accompany children onto school premises where this is agreed with the school and strictly necessary to support children and young people.

Dedicated School Transport

Face coverings will be required by young people of 12 and over only. Physical distancing between passengers is not required, but pupils should be encouraged to maintain distance from other people where possible. 1m distancing between drivers and children and young people should continue where possible. Existing arrangements for cleaning, hygiene and ventilation should continue.

Drama, Music, PE and Dance

Children and young people can now engage in all drama, music, PE and dance activity in schools, indoors and outdoors, although safety mitigations including good ventilation and enhanced hygiene should continue.

Ventilation

Strengthened guidance on CO2 monitoring should be followed. All schools will have access to CO2 monitoring. Remedial action will be taken in any building that does not meet requirements following assessment.

Asymptomatic Testing Programme

Staff and secondary pupils have been asked to take one test one or two days prior to their return to school. Schools will continue to promote actively twice weekly at home LFD testing to staff and secondary pupils, and encourage participants to record their results. Schools will be provided with improved communication materials, and a new type of LFD test kit involving a nasal only swab when supplies of existing tests run out.

People In The Highest Risk Group (Previously Those On The Shielding List)

The Chief Medical Officer's advice to everyone on the list, at Level 0 and Beyond Level 0, is to follow the same advice as the rest of the population.

Everyone on the Highest risk list is encouraged to ask members of their household over 12 to use at-home LFD testing.

Pregnancy

It is now recommended that pregnant women have the vaccine.

Outbreak Management

Schools are no longer required to notify Health Protection Teams of every single confirmed case.

Readiness and Assurance

Schools should familiarise themselves with the revised planning scenarios in order to ensure that schools are able to deal with future outbreaks.

Risk Assessment

Each school has an individualised Risk Assessment in place. The risk assessment template was updated by Corporate Health and Safety and Education Services in light of revised guidance, and was subject to consultation with teaching and non-teaching trade unions.

E. CONCLUSION

All schools continue to operate in accordance with national guidance. School risk assessments are produced and updated to reflect changes in national guidance and national and local circumstances. West Lothian schools continue to implement their recovery plans.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on reducing the risks in schools – 3 August 2021

Appendices/Attachments: None

Contact Person: Andrew Sneddon, Service Manager, Education Services.

Elaine Cook, Depute Chief Executive

Date of meeting: 24 August 2021