

About arrangement for re-opening schools

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Why will pupils not be going back to school full-time?

This is due to the need to maintain physical distancing. There will be a blend of in-school and at home learning. Pupils will spend more time in school as soon as it's safe to do so. We are working to maximise the time children are in school and after the initial induction period from 12 August we are aiming for at least two days each week by 24 August. Our goal is to have all children back in school full time as soon as that is safe.

School rolls in Edinburgh have been rising as a result of a growing population in the city. This means many of our schools are at capacity making physical distancing more difficult. We must also make sure that when pupils are in school, they receive good quality learning and teaching.

When will schools reopen?

The City of Edinburgh Council will reopen schools on 12 August 2020. School staff will attend from 10 August. Your child's school will provide more details to you on your child's attendance pattern before the end of the current term on 26 June.

Why are children going back a week earlier than planned? What impact will this have on other holiday dates?

The date has been set by the Scottish Government for all schools across Scotland. All other session dates will remain the same except the summer term next year will now end on 25 June 2021.

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Is it safe for my child to go back to school? What assurance can the Council give parents?

All our schools are putting measures into place to make sure pupils and staff are safe and that all relevant guidance is in place and being followed. The decision to reopen schools is based on evidence that the virus is sufficiently under control. By putting measures in place to keep children and staff at a safe distance from each other and making sure everything is kept clean and hygienic, children can return safely.

What will schools be like when they reopen?

To keep everybody safe schools will be making changes to the way they operate. We are working with our headteachers and their teams to develop new ways of working which will ensure adherence to safety protocols such as physical distancing.

Where physical distancing is not appropriate to the needs of children, additional risk mitigation will be in place by organising children into small groups with consistent membership. The main change will be that fewer pupils will be in school at any one time to begin with and we will have risk assessments and health and safety measures in place.

There will be more cleaning and other hygiene measures such as hand sanitisers and hand washing facilities to make sure schools meet the required national standards for infection control.

Why can't children have more time in schools?

We aim to maximise in-school learning from 12 August and will continue to increase attendance as quickly as possible. Headteachers are working towards a 50% model of in-school learning, working with Government guidelines. When Government and health guidance changes, for example on physical distancing, we can increase the numbers. We aim to maximise in-school learning from 12 August and will continue to increase attendance as quickly as possible.

We're doing everything we can to get to 50% by August including looking at all potential options for space within and out with school buildings and talking to the Scottish Government about any necessary additional resources. We are also planning for changes, for example a reduction in the 2m rule.

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Who will decide which children go to school and when? Can my children all go to school on the same day?

Schools are currently planning for attendance in schools, taking into account factors such as school roll, classroom sizes, staffing and, in primary schools, family groups. This will allow sibling groups to go to primary school on the same day and with children in their own classes.

Will the Council make a blanket decision about school time arrangements or will there be flexibility for individual schools? If no blanket decision, how will equity of education be achieved?

Schools will plan the attendance pattern of pupils based on their own circumstances and context. The key factor is safety. All children will attend school for whole days and in Primary and Early Years children from the same family will be able to do so on the same day. Schools will advise parents of arrangements before the end of term to allow them time to plan for this.

What are the arrangements for Special Schools?

Special schools will open in August using a Blended Learning model. The safety of children, families and staff will be the paramount concern and we are working within current Scottish Government Health and Safety advice. Teaching will take place Mondays to Thursdays with 50% of children being in each special school at any one time. All children will attend two full days per week, or four full days per fortnight. Additional time will be offered to children of key workers as required. As and when Scottish Government guidance changes, our models will be reviewed to reflect this new guidance.

Special Schools have undertaken an audit to establish the number of digital devices required to support blended learning. Blended learning approaches will include virtual assemblies, virtual circle-time and live-streaming of lessons where appropriate. Families will also be supported to access online learning and resources through the Additional Support for Learning (ASL) Website.

Transport applications for children going to special schools are being reviewed in line with the usual process and transport will be in place from August.

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Will other premises be used for learning and teaching to support physical distancing? Will there be an opportunity to expand classrooms in school to allow more children to attend?

We are already planning to have as many children in school as possible, using all the space available in school settings. We are looking at additional venues and will use these where possible. There are additional risks in using non-school buildings, for example the experience can be unsettling for some children. This will be risk assessed and managed safely.

Can school hours be changed, or can we have sessions on a Saturday to make up for time lost with teachers when pupils return on a part-time basis?

While there may be an adjustment to school hours we will be keeping as far as possible to the familiar pattern of school days with in-school learning taking place Monday to Thursday. Where we can we will be keeping to the routines that children and families are familiar with. We are considering targeted support as part of the attendance patterns in schools.

How do schools being used as hubs throughout July prepare for the August return with facilities already being used?

Plans are well underway to keep the Hubs open during the summer holidays and make sure schools will be ready for pupils from 12 August 2020.

Will school meals be provided? If so, how will this be managed?

There will be no hot meals. If your child receives free schools meals, we will give them a packed lunch when they are in school and a direct payment on the days that pupils do not physically go to school.

For other pupils, we can provide a packed lunch which you will pay through ParentPay to avoid the circulation of cash. We are working on the choice of packed lunches at the moment.

Alternatively, parents may wish to provide their own packed lunch

Will schools be supported to make sure there are enough resources in class to prevent the need for sharing? Will children be expected to bring in their own pens/pencils etc? Can they bring in their own tablets/laptops and have access to school WiFi to help with learning?

Schools already provide many resources for children; however, Health Protection Guidance tells us that it is safe for children to bring their own resources to school. The Council is considering how we manage Digital Learning as part of Blended Learning. The current policy, and our long-term vision, is for school managed, one to one devices – but we are reassessing the risks to ensure this policy fits the new context. Over half of our learners use a Council provided, one-to-one device but we know that some families have bought devices for home learning. The decision will be in place for August and will depend on a range of factors, such as equity, safety and the extent to which digital learning is already in use.

Given the data coming from schools internationally and particularly in Europe as they adopt a phased return to education, will the Council look to learn from this and adopt good practice examples? What level of decision making in this respect is devolved?

This is something we have already been doing. Lessons learned from other countries have been shared as part of the initial planning for schools, and we will continue to do so.

How often will the return to school be re-evaluated? Will the part-time schooling arrangements be dropped if the statistics show that the virus is gone?

The Council will keep the return to schools under daily evaluation. We will continue to follow all current national guidance when considering for how long the blended model of learning and teaching will operate.

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