**Local Phasing Delivery Plan**

**and Operational Guidance**

**Reopening of Schools**

**COVID-19**

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**Foreword**

We realise this is a very challenging time for our children and young people and for you as parents and carers. You have all had to adapt quickly to life in lockdown, including supporting your child with their remote learning.

There is now an easing of restrictions and we are all anxious to return to some sort of normality, including reopening schools. However, we must prioritise the safety of children, young people, staff and you as parents and carers.

Our renewal plan, therefore, incorporates what we are calling our Midlothian Promise, key principles shaping decisions around getting our children and young people safely back to school while keeping everyone as safe as possible.

Our Education Service promise to you is to bring your children back to school safely and maximise the amount of time children and young people spend in each school subject to availability of facilities and staffing, whilst adhering to the Scottish Government’s Education Directions which provide the legal basis on which we re-open our schools.

The renewal plan, which follows national guidance, contains more information about the shape of the school week and what this will look like for your child as well as our continuing support for key workers’ and vulnerable children.

Our renewal plan will continue to evolve as national guidance changes and I hope that this plan provides some clarity as to what to expect over the coming months. Your child’s safety, education and health and wellbeing is paramount.

**Councillor Jim Muirhead**

**Depute Leader Midlothian Council**

**Cabinet Member for Education and Children’s Services**

**Introduction**

To support our planning through the COVID-19 period, and into recovery, a Strategic Education Recovery Group was formed. We are extremely grateful to this group for their effective leadership and management of our recovery plan. The membership of this group is as follows:

Nicola McDowell (Chair) Schools Group Manager

Julie Fox Schools Group Manager

Andrew Sheridan Schools Group Manager

Leisa Randall Principal Educational Psychologist

Laurinda Renton Head Teacher King’s Park Primary School

Yvonne Gemmell Head Teacher Lasswade Primary School

Vicky Morgan Head Teacher Newtongrange Primary School

Sheryl Wallace Head Teacher Bilston Primary School

Donny MacDonald Head Teacher St David’s High School

Campbell Hornell Head Teacher Lasswade High School

Colin McCabe QIO Digital Learning

Phil Alexander EIS Representative

Sandie Gordon EIS Representative

Alasdair Mathers Communities and Lifelong Learning Manager

Rebecca Hooton Acting Service Manager Early Intervention and Prevention

The Strategic Education Recovery Group demonstrates the commitment of the education authority to an empowered system and the direct involvement of our staff and stakeholders in decision-making at an authority wide level. The groups’ main responsibility has been to support plans for the reopening of schools using the National Recovery Group workstream headings as a framework to inform this work, specifically:

|  |
| --- |
| Term 4 Learning / Preparing for Next Academic Year |
| Curriculum and Assessment |
| Supporting Learners from Disadvantaged Backgrounds |
| HWB/ Care for Children and Young People |
| Workforce Support and Planning |
| School Improvement in a New Context |
| Critical Childcare |
| Early Learning and Childcare |
| Additional Support Needs |

The central principle that our schools are working from is that all school recovery plans must comply with public health advice to ensure all learners, staff and parents/carers are safe when they return to school. As we move through Scotland’s Routemap through and out of the crisis our schools are planning, including contingency planning, with the information provided nationally to do so.

Our agreed principles provide the necessary consistency across our local authority and provide a clear and transparent basis for schools to make their local, school by school, decisions on an August reopening.

However, as we recognise in Midlothian that our schools are different, the following key principles are what all schools have agreed to use to underpin their planning as they prepare for an August return. Their plans will inevitably result in school by school differences in the learner experience. These are likely to be most apparent in our secondary schools due to the subject specialisms of our teaching staff and the curriculum delivery model in place in individual schools.

Our key principles of planning for recovery in Midlothian are encompassed in The Midlothian Promise. The promise was created by the Strategic Group and has been shared with staff, parents and carers:

1. All Midlothian schools will prioritise the safety of children and young people, staff and parents/carers as we plan and implement school recovery
2. All Midlothian schools, for session 2020/21, will adopt a common values base to support consistent decision making at a local/school level; Safe, Fair, Ethical, Clear and Realistic
3. All Midlothian schools will base approaches to the Health and Well Being of children, young people and staff on Building Resilience and Nurture
4. All Midlothian schools will apply a consistent social distancing and cleaning/hygiene plan, including PPE as appropriate
5. All Midlothian schools and ELC settings will adopt a ‘maximalist’ approach; with as many children and young people as possible returning to ELC and school as soon as it is safe
6. All Midlothian schools will establish and maintain clear communication channels to inform, and build confidence in, all our children and young people, staff and parents/carers
7. From Wednesday 12th August 2020 almost all Midlothian children and young people will experience a ‘blended approach’ to support their learning; this means time in school and time at home following e-learning programmes
8. All school-age Midlothian children and young people can request access to a ‘device’ and support to facilitate blended learning
9. All Midlothian schools will prioritise in-school learning for those with the greatest need; ie ASN, vulnerable families, young people’s achievement and attainment that is likely to be affected by equity issues (in effect the GIRFEC resilience matrix)
10. All Midlothian schools will follow our key principles as outlined within the blended learning guidance to ensure where possible a consistent experience for Midlothian students
11. All Midlothian secondary schools will collaborate on planning and implementation of approaches to ‘blended learning’ in the Senior Phase to ensure where possible a consistent experience for Midlothian students;  this will allow each school to achieve a robust evidence base for assessment and certification
12. Each school will develop their own data informed blended learning rationale and implementation plan, to cover August to December 2020, that reflects the above principles and best meets the needs of their children and young people in their local school context

As further national guidance is issued, our guidance will evolve and adapt. Detailed plans will be created at individual school level and schools will communicate these clearly to all of their stakeholders. Effective practice will be shared across schools and across the South East Improvement Collaborative.

**Local Phasing Delivery Plan**

**In March 2020, due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Depute First Minister informed education authorities that Scottish Ministers had taken the decision to close all schools and early learning and childcare settings with the exception of critical provision for children of key workers and vulnerable groups.**

This Education Delivery Plan will evolve and reflect the statutory duties placed on education authorities as set out in the Education Continuity Directions from the Scottish Government given on 21 May, 10 June with another Direction due 1st July. These Directions provide us with the legal basis on which we can start planning the re-opening of our schools and the accompanying array of national guidance has informed our Local Delivery plan for reopening schools safely for all.

**Local Phasing Delivery Plan**

The Midlothian Council Education Service Improvement Plan 2020/21 sets out how the service will deliver on the Council’s key priorities to reduce the gap in learning and health outcomes; and in economic circumstances. The Education Service Improvement Plan also aligns with the priorities in the National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education:

* Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy;
* Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children;
* Improvement in children and young people’s health and wellbeing; and
* Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school leaver destinations for all young people.

### The Education Service Improvement Plan identified 5 key priority areas to improve the quality of provision and deliver on both the Council and NIF priorities.

### Education Service Priority 1: Attainment & Achievement

### Education Service Priority 2: Included, Involved & Engaged: Wellbeing & Equity

### Education Service Priority 3: Self-Improving Systems

### Education Service Priority 4: Life-Long Learning & Career-Ready Employability

### Education Service Priority 5: Finance & Resources : Recruitment and Learning Estate

Due to the impact of covid-19 and the subsequent closure of schools the Education Service is actively evaluating the impact of the closure on the attainment gap, children and young people’s wellbeing and planned destinations on leaving school.

School closures are likely to reverse some of the progress made to narrow the poverty related attainment gap despite the steps taken to mitigate against this. As a result, the extent of this gap will require further exploration and sustained support will be needed to help our more disadvantaged pupils to catch up. Catch-up provision, including assessment of lost learning and targeted support will be an integral part of our recovery plan. However, it will require a multi-pronged approach to compensate for lost learning due to school closures and our approach will be informed by evidence from research conducted by organisations such as the Education Endowment Foundation.

Midlothian Council’s Routemap Through and Out of the Crisis sets out how the council intends to work with its partners and communities to put the necessary changes in place to help us recover from the pandemic and to meet the huge challenges we now face. The Routemap contains a high-level overview of the steps being taken by the Education Service to reopen schools and further exemplification of these steps is provided in the Local Plan for a Return to Education (Appendix 2).

**Recovery Plan: Reconnecting; Rebuilding; Restarting**

The Education Service is adapting its current Education Service Improvement Plan to support pupils to reconnect with their peers and their teachers; rebuild their learning experiences and resilience and restart the routines and practice that supports their progress and achievement.

**Increasing attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy: and**

**Closing the poverty related attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged**

Research suggests that how much learning pupils will have lost during the school closure period will vary according to access to remote learning, the quality of remote learning activities, home support and pupil engagement with remote learning. In determining gaps in learning and retention of prior learning it will be important that we do not continually verbalise to pupils that they have fallen behind in every lesson or curriculum area. Therefore, reassessing previously taught areas of the curriculum will not be the best way to diagnose gaps or begin the process of re-building learner confidence. Planning learning, teaching and assessment will include opportunities to subtly identify learning gaps, inform future planning and activities can be targeted to address the gaps, including the use of home learning activities.

**Improve health and wellbeing of our learners**

Do we expect our pupils to be able to cope with full-time schooling on their return to school?

When our pupils return to school, or transition to their new school it will be important to reinforce relationships between staff and pupils. This will help pupils regain confidence and enjoyment in learning as well as move forward from the challenges posed during the lockdown period. Sadly, some of our pupils will have experienced bereavement, loss of opportunity and all will have missed the social interaction with their friends and peers. Our Recovery Curriculum will be based on solution focused approaches which put Building Resilience and Nurturing Practices at the forefront of all decisions.

**Secure improved employability and positive destinations for our young people.**

A number of segments of our school population will need additional support to enter or re-enter work. Midlothian Council’s positive destination data does not reflect the national picture in that a significant number of young people leave school to enter employment. Job density, the ratio of total jobs to total population aged 16-64, shows that there were fewer jobs available in Midlothian before the lockdown than there were people seeking work. An Employability and Continuing Learning Strategic Group has been established to support those at risk of a negative destination on leaving school. The Group will prioritise the following:

* An offer is being developed to retain as many leavers as possible in learning rather than entering the labour market. To date, 160 senior pupils will now be remaining at school as a result of support to continue education rather than enter a negative destination. The partnership will plan with schools, parents and young people toward positive destinations, including actions to route leavers into sectors where there are labour supply shortages, retain pupils into S5 and S6 to improve grades or study new subjects, expand the VLE + on line learning and teaching offer at schools, colleges and universities; enabling wider access to such resources, and expanding the Schools College Partnership Programme.
* For school leavers intending to attend University a number of factors are becoming clearer. Moving into student accommodation will be more difficult, Universities reliance on what will be reduced non- domestic student fee income will have a financial effect that may reduce staff, or may conversely open up more local places in the travel to work area. The Midlothian area is served by 4 locally based Universities , and planning with them needs to commence as soon as possible.
* A communication for parents and young people will go out offering options including
  + Schools curriculum flexibility and adapted capacity
  + School College Partnership (FE / Schools )
  + Foundation apprenticeships (FE and CLL)
  + Extended work experience ( Schools, RDYW CLL )
  + Volunteering programmes ( Third sector schools and CLL)
  + Wider achievement awards ( schools and CLL)
  + Employer offers ( RDYW)
  + Key worker support of vulnerable young people (CLL)
  + Enhanced on line guidance (SDS/RDYW) using the ‘My World of Work’ jobs hub. All agencies to promote awareness of the jobs hub as the national portal for many new employment opportunities.

**Operational Guidance for Early Learning and Childcare and Schools**

* + - 1. **Education Provision**

Blended Learning

While the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has changed many things, our curriculum framework continues to apply. The core principles of Scotland’s curriculum and the four fundamental capacities at its centre remain critical in putting learners at the heart of education.

During the Recovery Phase, schools and settings will be adapting their learning and teaching, particularly during the initial phased return with a strong focus on children’s wellbeing, good mental health, and engagement. Individual settings and practitioners will continue to be empowered to provide a curriculum that is adaptable and responsive to the full range of learners’ needs, reflecting each school community’s specific context.

Moving through recovery, the curriculum should include a focus on promoting and developing skills that will increase children’s and young people’s skills in independent learning, as part of the blended learning approach.

A blended model of in-school and in-home learning is reliant on consistent, easy to use in-home learning materials which are intended to support and complement, but not replicate, in-school learning. This includes consideration of the specific needs of children and young people with additional support needs and other families most in need of support.

We recognise that blended learning is complex. The following is a set of principles and guidance for all Midlothian schools that aim to support schools in getting it right for every child. These principles will support schools to develop their own data informed blended learning rationale and implementation plan, to cover August to December 2020, that best meets the needs of their children and young people in their local school context.

**Principles**

The following principles should feature in blended learning models within all schools:

* All schools will combine classroom based approaches with technology enhanced learning to ensure continued learning that promotes skills for learning, life and work
* All schools will ensure that in-home learning will take many forms and is by no means all I.T. based
* All blended learning models will include part-time in-school learning and part-time in-home learning for almost all children
* All schools will take account of their unique context and learners’ needs when creating their blended model
* All schools will ensure that their blended learning model brings about high quality and learning provision for children and young people
* All schools will ensure that blended learning models are flexible and consider the specific needs of learners
* Blended learning in the Broad General Education will focus upon the key areas of Literacy, Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing, with other curriculum areas being experienced
* All Midlothian secondary schools will prioritise planning and implementation of approaches to ‘blended learning’ in the Senior Phase to ensure schools achieve a robust evidence base for assessment and certification
* Blended learning supports formative and summative assessment approaches that inform teacher’s planning and identifies next steps in learning
* Blended learning empowers schools by allowing them to design solutions and make decisions specific to their school community ensuring every child has the same opportunity to succeed

**Purpose of the Curriculum**

When considering how we deliver a curriculum through blended learning to take account of a change in context for our staff and learners, all Midlothian schools will ensure that the purpose of the curriculum remains committed to helping children and young people become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

Further operational guidance on our model can be found below.



Digital Learning

Digital learning should be used to enhance a blended learning experience and complement, but not replicate, in-school learning. All home learning tasks do not require to be supported by digital technology but virtual learning environments such as Google Classroom, Seesaw or Microsoft Teams may be used to communicate tasks expectations and requirements. Schools should regularly check access to suitable digital technology and direct families toward the Chromebook Loan Scheme if access is required. A mobile phone is not considered, in isolation, to be suitable to support home learning. Internet connectivity can also be supported by the Digital Learning Team. Additional guidance on how digital learning can enhance blended learning will follow.

Early Learning and Childcare

Currently there are 5 funded providers and 7 childminders open to provide keyworker childcare. The remainder of the funded providers are closed and are currently making plans to reopen during phase 3.We will continue to work with the SCMA to support additional childminders to open as we go into the summer.

In phase 1 our fully outdoor setting at Vogrie was able to reopen 15 June to provide keyworker childcare. If there is capacity then the number of children will be expanded over the summer.

Our local authority ELC settings will reopen at the beginning of the new school session in line with national guidance issued on 15 June. There will be a consistent approach to opening ELC settings following core public health measures that underpin reopening of services:

* enhanced hand hygiene and cleaning practice
* caring for children in small groups
* minimising contact between these groups
* maximizing the use of outdoor spaces
* physical distancing between adults and older children in the setting including parents at drop-off and pick up times

All settings reopening will establish cohorts of children in ‘bubble groups’ who will work together consistently throughout sessions. These cohorts of up to 8 children will work with the same staff members as much as possible, throughout the session during both indoor and outdoor learning and play. Membership of the cohort should not change.

The ELC offer at the beginning of the session will be for 600 hours and children will attend for full days Monday/Tuesday or Wednesday/Thursday and alternate Fridays with lunches provided. Places will be allocated to keyworker children, vulnerable children and children entitled to their funded hours. Following guidance issued we will ensure that our most vulnerable children and families that are economically disadvantaged will be prioritised for additional hours as they become available. Our aspiration is to work towards the provision of 1140 hours as soon as we are able.

Transition activities and induction for children returning to ELC or starting in an ELC setting will take place in late June and in August when schools reopen.

Clear guidance has been given to our ELC settings and early stages of primary schools to develop the pedagogy of play for children working across the early level. Briefing sessions have been held and support materials have been provided. Additional information has also been produced to support parents regarding changes that have been made for this COVID period.



Primary Schools

Schools will follow the Midlothian guidance provided when planning the balance of in-school and in-home learning. Key groups of learners including children of key workers, vulnerable families and children with additional support needs must be considered when schools create their blended learning model to ensure equity of experience for all. In-school learning will be two consecutive school days for almost all children **in Primary schools**.

This will be:

* Monday and Tuesday

**OR**

* Wednesday and Thursday
* On a Friday, vulnerable children can attend. This will also allow schools to provide a more equitable experience for children they have identified. This group of children may vary from week to week.
* Friday can be used to provide staff non-class contact cover, allowing schools to use visiting specialists to teach groups of children on other days. This will be decided on an individual school basis.
* In Midlothian it is expected that 50% of the school roll will attend on any given day Monday to Thursday. Schools should ensure that they maximise their school capacity based on their primary school capacity document and work in partnership with central staff to identify additional capacity within community spaces. Space constraints and staffing availability may require some schools, in collaboration with central staff, to implement alternative attendance patterns where required.

Secondary Schools

All secondary schools will follow our key principles as outlined within the Midlothian Promise and Blended Learning Guidance to ensure where possible a consistent experience for Midlothian pupils. Key groups of learners including children of key workers, vulnerable families and young people with additional support needs must be considered when schools create their blended learning model to ensure equity of experience for all.

* Schools will develop curricular models that best meet their local circumstances and ensure equity of experience.
* Schools will plan for 50% of the school roll to attend and identify additional provision to maximise attendance
* All schools will aim to have pupils in school for the equivalent of 2 days per week. The structure of the pupil week will be dependent on staffing and individual school capacity.
* Schools will collaborate on planning and implementation of approaches to ‘blended learning’ in the Senior Phase to achieve a robust evidence base for assessment and certification
* Schools will use Friday as a flexible day to allow additional teacher input for targeted groups and blended learning preparation. Children of key workers and vulnerable children will attend on Fridays.

It is expected that the children of Category 1 key workers, including those of Midlothian teaching staff will have childcare provided in a separate location on the days they are not in school.

Vulnerable Children

Vulnerable children will receive a childcare offer in addition to the in school learning offer. This will be based on an individual decision as is currently in place through gatekeeping. The additional childcare offer can take many forms such as a place within a hub, a support worker delivering outreach or respite through a walk, visit to a park etc.

Vulnerability should be determined with consideration of if a child is:

* On Child Protection Registration or previously on CPR
* Looked After at Home or previously LAC
* Looked After away from home (in fragile placement) or previously LAAC
* Living in Kinship Care
* Social and welfare concerns (e.g. domestic abuse, parental mental health parental substance misuse, large families, pregnancies)
* Young Caring role
* Significant additional support needs or health needs
* Families on low or no income, including those eligible for FSMs
* Families who needs escalate significantly due to COVID 19 situation and school closure

Additional Support Needs

Where pupils have a multiagency plan and this was due for review schools should plan to hold further meetings as soon as possible upon return to school.

Coordinated Support Plans should continue to be updated and agreed as per the Council’s statutory requirements.

Schools should continue to update risk assessments for pupils of concern or where professionals have raised issues.

Midlothian Council will engage in a full additional support needs review starting in August to ensure all children who require support are offered the most appropriate and timely response to their needs. This review will encompass emerging needs following on from the pandemic, and support us to identify any new gap.

Universal Supports

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic all vulnerable or complex needs families have been allocated a school key worker. This has typically been a member of promoted staff. The allocation of a key worker should continue to ensure that families are fully supported throughout the blended learning experience.

Support for learning teachers have set up standalone google classrooms in addition to supporting the class teacher in their google class. The individual classroom has been able to focus on supporting literacy and numeracy development and continue the programme pupils were following. Literacy interventions such as read, write, Ink have continued for pupils with relevant assessments completed by the support for learning teacher. This support should continue to ensure all needs are appropriately met.

Schools should continue to utilise supporting programmes for pupils with ASN such as; Fresh Start, Nessie, Art Therapy, Play Therapy, SEAL and MUMP.

Within secondary schools differentiation should continue to be provided through Support for learning departments in conjunction with Curriculum Principal Teachers and class teachers. Learning Assistants (LAs) have been assigned to support individual pupils with their work.

Targeted Supports & Transitions

Multi-agency meetings and discussions should be scheduled as soon as possible via virtual forums for those families most in need as regularly as possible.

Throughout the last two weeks of the academic term secondary guidance staff will join zoom meetings with primary groups to ensure there is a recognisable face for the new S1s upon their return in August. Virtual tours of each school are online and booklets or social stories have been provided for some youngsters where this has been identified as a need.

Specialist Support Services

These specialist services will continue to link with schools for transition activities and then for supporting the recovery curriculum across Midlothian.

Complex Additional Support Needs

Saltersgate School and all Midlothian Enhanced provisions will follow our key principles as outlined within the Midlothian Promise and Blended Learning Guidance to ensure where possible a consistent experience for Midlothian children and young people with additional support needs. Key groups of learners including children of key workers and vulnerable families must be considered when schools create their blended learning model to ensure equity of experience for all.

Many of the rooms within Saltersgate and the enhanced provisions are smaller than a standard classroom to support the needs of our children and young people, therefore the number of pupils and adults within these rooms is significantly less. This means that the initial offer may be below the aspirational figure of 50% in school learning however we are working hard to ensure an equitable experience for all.

For some settings an increased allocation of time is needed for thorough cleaning due to medical needs. This may mean that the length of day children and young people are in school may be adapted to reflect this.

The following principles have been developed by the ASN sub group and agreed with all Head Teachers.

**Shared Placements – Complex Needs Provisions**

* Pupils will only access 1 "placement" in term 1 - either school or their complex needs provision.
* Pupils will only access their local school/classes if they typically spend more than 75% of their weekly time in local school.
* The lead for meetings will remain with staff in the local mainstream school.
* A Multiagency Meeting will be planned to discuss planning the return to local school when this is deemed appropriate.

**Home-School Blended Learning**

* The responsibility for setting and assessment of home learning tasks will be with the local mainstream school in conjunction with provision staff to ensure a continued joint approach.

**Shared Placements - Saltersgate**

* There will be no shared placements taking place for pupils at Saltersgate.

Community Link Team (at Saltersgate) will investigate options for pupils to access local community.

Learner Groupings

Children and young people will return to school in smaller numbers for limited periods of time to ensure adherence to social distancing measures. Schools should take account of the following in their planning:

* The physical capacity of the building
* Key workers and vulnerable children must be prioritised
* Minimise contact between children and ensure as far as possible that the same groups of children remain together in primary schools. This is not possible in secondary settings due to the range of subjects they experience.
* Sibling groups within but not across sectors
* Transport
* Range of needs to ensure appropriate planning and additional support
* Lead professionals and parents/carers should be involved in the planning for return to school of children with complex additional support needs
* Children shielding should not return to school until health advice dictates that this is possible
* Schools may wish to consider more compositing within the school to maximise use of appropriate staff and their availability.

In ELC all settings opening in phase 3 will establish cohorts of children in ‘bubble groups’ who will work together consistently throughout sessions. These cohorts of up to 8 children will work with the same staff members as much as possible, throughout the session during both indoor and outdoor learning and play. Membership of the cohort should not change.

Organisation and Structure of the School Day

This will reflect the multiple pupil groups in operation, timetabling restrictions and rotations of learners required during the school day. A staggered start and end to the school day may be required to support social distancing rules.

Timetabling within secondary schools should, where possible minimise the need to move around the school. Where possible, staff should move rather than children and young people.

Schools should consider what activities can be delivered outdoors.

There should be no school assemblies unless these are delivered remotely.

Break times should be staggered so children are not moving around the school at the same time.

Cleaning will be carried out during the school day in accordance with COVID-19 – guidance for non-healthcare settings. Desk surfaces, chairs, doors, light switches, banisters, sinks and toilets will all be cleaned more regularly. There should be routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched objects and surfaces (e.g. telephones, keyboards, door handles, desks and tables). In secondary schools, young people will clean with wipes provided the surfaces they have used, before moving to another location.

Each setting will be cleaned every night/ morning or when pupil “sessions” change, in preparation for a new group of pupils being present the next day/session.

Where possible, work-stations should be allocated consistently to the same staff and children rather than having spaces that are shared.

Careful consideration will be given to the cleaning regime for sensory rooms and soft play areas, to ensure safe use. Surfaces in dining halls should be wiped down and disinfected in between each sitting.

Arrival at and Leaving School / Visitors in School

Protocols will be required due to the number of entrances requiring to be used by children and young people as well as parents and carers. Plans should be clearly communicated and signage applied to support the protocol and social distancing rules.

Schools should inform parents and carers that only one parent/carer should enter the school playground with their child to minimise the number of adults in in the vicinity of the school.

The following should be considered by schools for their agreed protocols:

* Contact between children, parents and carers with other families should be minimised
* Parents and carers should be encouraged not to gather in playgrounds or at entrances to schools
* Pick up and drop off points should be communicated clearly to parents and carers (children should be met on arrival and escorted through the building)
* Handwashing/ sanitising should be available to everyone entering and leaving a building
* Different buildings and local contexts will require different arrangements for staggered entry and exit
* There should be no visiting staff in schools except Visiting Specialists and supply staff and professionals from Midlothian, including colleagues from Children’s Services. They should follow the same hygiene protocols as other staff. Foyers should have clear guidance for any such visitors. If possible, the exit for visitors should be separate to the entrance.
* Schools should already be in discussion with services with whom we have a Service Level Agreement, for example Play Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Visual Impairment Service to ensure continued support while adhering to public health guidance
* Any other visitors should use Zoom/ Teams to communicate with schools

Movement Around the School Building

Careful timetabling should be used to minimise movement around the school building. A one-way system should be used where possible. If classrooms have doors to the outside of the school, these should be used for entry and exit, with appropriate risk assessment of security.

Bells should be switched off to allow for staggered movement at changeover times eg break and lunchtimes and movement between classes in secondary schools.

Toilet areas should be carefully controlled to ensure that they do not ever become crowded and that they remain clean.

Fire Action Plans should be reviewed to ensure muster points and exit points allow for physical distancing where possible.

All changes to movement around the school, including entrance and exit arrangements need to be clearly communicated to staff, children and young people and parents and carers. Schools should consider how they will support staff and children to orientate themselves to the revised layouts and circulation patterns described above. The following approaches should be considered:

• A map could be displayed in the educational setting detailing entry/exit points and new circulation patterns, for use by pupils, staff and parents

• Clear signage and colour coding on walls and floors could be implemented prior to return to help with wayfinding, along with taping off of specific areas

• Appropriate visuals will be particularly important for younger children and for some children with additional support needs. These will need to be clear and child friendly to enable them to be understood by as many children as possible. These could include signs in braille (with appropriate arrangements made for hygiene) or signs that display meaningful symbols. Any signage that involves direct interaction from pupils will need to be cleaned regularly and further methods of communication should also be considered

Classroom/ Other Rooms Layout and Organisation

The layout for furniture in classrooms and other areas needs to take account of the 2m squared rule. Tape has been provided to every setting to allow every second desk to be taped over. Extra chairs should be removed. Other factors that will need to be considered include those involving children and young people who require specialist equipment and furniture. This may limit the number of people that can use a classroom space. The following should also be considered:

* For younger children who may find the 2m rule challenging, zones should be considered to support them to maintain physical distancing
* Children should sit at the same desk on the 2 consecutive days they are in school, exception is in secondary settings where schools will minimise movement but make available specialist teaching areas as well as base classroom provision
* In line with the agreed cleaning regime, cleaning should take place after movement of classes
* Physical distancing should also apply to all other spaces eg staffroom, resource area, school office
* In staff areas, staff should use their own mugs, cutlery etc and should wash them straight after use. Dishes should not be left lying in sinks and on worktops, or in classrooms.
* Rooms should be well-ventilated where possible
* Doors, **except fire doors**, should be propped open where possible to minimise touching of door handles and bottlenecks of pupils

Use of Outdoor Spaces

In order to maximise the use of space, and to enrich the learning experiences delivered, use should be made of outdoor spaces as often as possible. Scientific evidence suggests that outdoor environments can limit spread of the virus and can facilitate social distancing more easily.

Breaks and Lunchtimes

During break times, it is essential that social distancing rules continue. The following should be considered:

* Use outdoors for breaks as often as possible
* Lunchtimes should be limited to a maximum of 30 minutes where possible
* Packed lunches will be eaten in classrooms

Equipment and Resources

**ALL** unnecessary resources should be removed from classroom areas to facilitate thorough cleaning. Teacher should try to ensure as far as possible that resources are only used by one child, and are cleaned before being used by anyone else. The following should be considered:

* Limit resources being taken home and brought to school
* Practical activities can still take place as long as equipment is cleaned thoroughly between different groups of users
* There should be no soft furnishings/ toys in classrooms or anything that is difficult to clean
* Sensory rooms and soft play areas must be thoroughly cleaned after each use
* Only easily cleaned play equipment can be used and play dough etc should not be used

Transport and Travel

Local arrangements and advice to staff, parents, carers and pupils for travelling to and from their school will be consistent with the latest national guidance. Schools are liaising directly with the council’s transport team to inform their individual local planning needs. Parents are being surveyed to assess their ability to drive their children to schools to minimise disruption cause by limited numbers being allowed on buses due to social distancing.

Schools will:

* encourage pupils and parents/carers to follow physical distancing when travelling to and from school and to wash or sanitise hands before and after travelling
* encourage children and young people to walk or cycle to school where possible
* minimise the number of staff and pupils travelling at peak times, for example through staggering start and finish times
* ensure understanding is shown to parents/carers and children who may be delayed in getting to school due to transport issues
* respond to the survey results and incorporate these into their plans
* consider measures such as “park and stride” to minimise activity around school gates

The latest National guidance will always be followed with regards to use of school/public transport and travel arrangements.

* + - 1. **Health, Wellbeing and Safety**

**Health**

This guidance supports risk assessments and detailed planning at school level for reopening schools. The safety of our staff, children and young people is of paramount importance and should never be compromised. Templates for risk assessments and staff planning have been issued, along with relevant guidance notes and communications.

In cases of a child or member of staff taking ill during the school day, the guidance in *COVID-19 Guidance for Non-Healthcare Settings* should be followed.

There is a clear procedure for dealing with a child or member of staff who becomes unwell in a childcare or education setting. Every setting has at least one isolation room.

If anyone in a childcare or education setting becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of taste or smell, they must be sent home and advised to follow the HPS non-healthcare settings guidance:

* If a child is awaiting collection, they should be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door, depending on the age of the child and with appropriate adult supervision if required. Ideally, a window should be open for ventilation. If isolation is not possible, move them to an area where they are at least 2 metres away from anyone else.
* If they need to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they should use a separate bathroom if possible. The bathroom should be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else.
* PPE should be worn by staff caring for the child while they await collection if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained (such as for a very young child or a child with complex needs).
* In an emergency, do not hesitate to call 999 if they are seriously ill or their life is at risk.
* Schools should adhere to the Test and Protect Guidance.
* Once a possible case has left the premises, the immediate area occupied by the individual, e.g. desk space, should be cleaned with detergent and disinfectant. This should include any potentially contaminated high contact areas such as door handles, telephones and grab-rails. Once this process has been completed, the area can be put back into use.
* Any public areas where a symptomatic individual has only passed through (spent minimal time in), e.g. corridors, and which are not visibly contaminated with any body fluids, do not need to be further decontaminated beyond routine cleaning processes.

Scottish Government guidance advises on requirements to protect and shield certain groups of adults and children. Schools will continue to follow this guidance during the reopening of schools phases and recognise the impact this may have on attendance at school. Proposals for changes to SEEMIS attendance codes are here, and will be confirmed as soon as possible:



Children and Staff who are Clinically Vulnerable

All schools should follow the latest guidance for staff and children who have health conditions or who are pregnant. Those who are living with people with health conditions or who are pregnant must also be considered. The staff survey has identified those who are in these groups and guidance has been issued with the associated procedures for support.

Clinically vulnerable individuals should not return to work voluntarily without advice being sought from occupational health and Schools Group Managers. A person-centred risk assessment will be required in this instance.

Parents and carers of children who are clinically vulnerable should ensure that they take responsibility for following National guidance in relation to their child’s health conditions.

Children and Staff Living with a Clinically Vulnerable Person

Children living in these circumstances can attend their education setting unless the person is clinically extremely vulnerable.

Children and Staff who are Shielding

Shielding is different to being clinically vulnerable. Adults and children who are shielding are extremely clinically vulnerable and require more robust measures to keep them safe.

The most up to date guidance on underlying health conditions that require shielding can be found on the NHS Inform website under Shielding.

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-shielding>

Children and Staff who are Living with Someone who is Shielding

People living in these circumstances should only attend the education setting if they are able to stringently adhere to social distancing measures. A person-centred risk assessment will be required.



**Wellbeing**

We are taking a positive and solution-focused approach to supporting the mental health of children and young people, recognising that this is a time of emotional challenge for many. The underlying principles for promoting the Health and Wellbeing of staff and pupils on return to schools are Resilience and Nurture. A multi-agency Health and Wellbeing (Young People) Strategy Group has created a range of practical resources for school staff on a new Health and Wellbeing Portal on GLOW. Some of these documents are shared here;



A Health and Wellbeing Survey has been sent out to all parents/carers and pupils in the secondary sector to gather information on how families have managed the challenges of digital learning during lockdown. At the start of the new session, this survey will be extended to include primary schools as well as secondary so that we can understand how well children and young people and their parents/carers are adapting to the return to school.

A range of other resources and actions have been taken to support our young people, their families and school staff, with plans focussing on COVID 19 specific issues such as bereavement and loss.

The Educational Psychology Service continues to support allocated children and young people and has extended support to those not already known to the service through a weekly telephone Helpline.



Further support from Children’s Services through a Listening Line for children, young people and their parents is provided on a daily basis.



Resources for parents, carers and professionals are also available on the Educational Psychology Service website <https://mideps.edublogs.org>

**Safety**

Social Distancing

As per national guidance, children and young people should maintain a 2 metre distance in indoor and outdoor environments. We will continue to be guided by national guidance in this regard.

It is recognised that social distancing can be difficult to maintain at all times in a school environment, and particularly when working with younger children. Schools may wish to consider using smaller groupings in circumstances where social distancing will pose particular challenges.

This guidance also applies to other spaces within schools such as staff rooms, kitchens and facilities areas. Risk assessment should reflect appropriate use of these spaces.

Social distancing will be considered in all relevant areas of our schools, including classrooms, indoor and outdoor spaces, and those not used for learning and teaching, e.g. cloakrooms, entrance halls, staff rooms, kitchens and janitorial areas. These areas have all been risk assessed.

The implementation of social distancing will look different across the various ages and stages of learning. For instance, how social distancing is implemented for very young children, for children with complex needs or disabilities and for pupils in the senior phase will be different but reflect their needs and stage.

We recognise that this is an anxious time for pupils and staff. The education service and schools will ensure that the right support is in place to meet the physical and emotional needs of children and staff, and that school staff are aware of the most up to date Covid-19 information on the NHS Inform website. Our Recovery Curriculum will provide support to our pupils in in-school as well as in-home learning activities.

For children and young people with the most complex additional support needs, schools will involve lead professionals and parents to decide how best to meet their needs whilst adhering to national guidance.

All schools will implement social distancing measures with a view to being able to ease these as soon as it is safe to do so, to ensure the maximum benefit from in-setting learning is gained as early as possible.

Safeguarding

New stresses arising from Early Learning and Childcare, school and business closures, family confinement and isolation alongside physical and psychological health impacts, could be a trigger for abuse and neglect. School staff must be alert to signs that individuals or groups have been and/or are continuing to use the pandemic as an opportunity for criminal or sexual exploitation of children.

This is occurring at a time when children and families will be less visible to a range of professionals who are normally engaged with them and when services and practitioners working with children are under acute pressure. We must be vigilant that:

* Some children could be at risk of harm and neglect, where that would not otherwise have been the case.
* Children may be exposed to more risks online.
* Further, instances of domestic abuse and coercive control may increase in frequency.   High stress home environments can and does increase the likelihood of domestic abuse.
* Instances of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) could go undetected/unreported for many months and years.
* Evidence from other epidemics and disasters suggest that the risk of harm to women and children experiencing or recovering from domestic abuse and other forms of gender based violence such as rape and sexual assault, commercial sexual exploitation (CSE), trafficking, forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) will continue to increase post-disaster.

Agencies and practitioners working with children and families will maintain and develop their awareness of the dynamics of coercive control, ensure that they prioritise the needs of the non-offending parent and her children and continue to apply the approaches outlined in ‘**Equally Safe**: Scotland's strategy to eradicate violence against women and the **Safe and Together** model and principles to ensure the protection of women and their children. 

Child Protection and the Safeguarding of Children and Young People continues to require good professional judgement, based on assessment and evidence, informed by the perspectives of the team around the child, including the child and family.  Any streamlining of processes to take account of current challenges need to ensure actions to protect children are not compromised.  **The protection of children will continue to be prioritised during this period.**

An updated training programme has been sent to all schools to deliver to their staff on one of the August in-service days.



Handwashing and Hygiene Practices

Scottish Government guidance for non-healthcare setting should be used.

Schools must continue to reinforce to all building users that handwashing practice is of utmost importance and as many opportunities to do so should be facilitated.

* Handwashing/ sanitising should take place on entering and leaving the building
  + Wash hands for 20 seconds and dry thoroughly
* Where classroom and other areas do not have sinks available for handwashing, sanitiser should be made available
* Surfaces should be as clear as possible, with no clutter lying around so that surfaces can be thoroughly cleaned
* The surface of electronic devices (keyboard, display, touchscreen, mouse and exterior) should be cleaned with isopropyl alcohol solution, ensuring never to spray cleaner directly on an item to avoid damage to internal components

Risk Assessment and PPE

There will be areas and activities in schools not covered by the generic risk assessment. Schools should ensure that these are revisited often and updated as necessary. The risk assessment should include the use of PPE:

* All staff viewed the PPE Safe Use video in week beginning 15 June- any staff absent that week, or new staff starting next session should view the video as soon as possible
* There will be some circumstances in which 2m social distance cannot be maintained and PPE will be required- schools should include specific circumstances in their risk assessments
* A link to the latest national guidance on the use of PPE is included in Appendix 1 of this document
* Rachel Tulloch is the contact for the ordering of PPE [rachel.tulloch@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:rachel.tulloch@midlothian.gov.uk)

Risk assessments should be in place for children and young people with more complex needs, including those with social, emotional and behavioural needs. These should be updated for the return to school, to reflect staffing, hygiene, PPE requirements and environment.

Face Coverings

Handwashing, respiratory control and physical distancing remain the most important means of infection control in schools.

School staff and children and young people should only wear face coverings in line with national guidance, ie on public transport or for particular health conditions.

Test, Trace, Isolate and Support (Test and Protect)

School staff should be familiar with the Test and Protect Strategy which can be found in Appendix 1 of this document.

There will not be a requirement in Midlothian to take children and young people’s or staff temperatures on entry to our buildings.

If anyone in a school shows symptoms, isolation procedures in line with the latest health guidance should be followed.

Staff and children who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 should stay at home, self-isolate and contact the NHS for advice on testing. Those who do not test positive for COVID-19 should continue to self-isolate for 7 days and their close contacts, identified through contact tracing will be asked to self-isolate for 14 days.

Schools should contact the local health protection team and their Schools Group Manager if they have two or more cases or an increased rate of background illness.

Registers should be kept up to date and should indicate where absences are due to confirmed or possible cases of COVID-19.

Intimate and Personal Care

Some children and young people may require intimate care, including some personal care relating to medical procedures and assisted feeding. Such circumstances need to be risk-assessed and staff will need to increase their level of self-protection. Health advice should be sought from the multiagency group around the individuals concerned. The risk assessment will detail the level of PPE required.

Disposable gloves should be available for all staff for the spillage of blood and other body fluids, and for disposing of dressing or equipment. There should be a clear procedure for the washing of clothes, towels etc, and of equipment such as wheelchairs and hoists.

Handwashing remains of paramount importance in the above circumstances.

* + - 1. **Staffing**

Head Teachers haves submitted their staffing plans to their Schools Group Manager to assist in the distribution of staff across schools to maintain appropriate levels of in-school and in-home learning.

Additional staffing, circa 34.9FTE has been procured to support the blended model and the reopening of schools.

Staff who require childcare make up a large group who have said there are factors preventing them from returning to work. National guidance in this regard is anticipated and will be sent to Head Teachers as soon as possible.

Individual schools will plan for how in-home and in-school learning will be managed by their staff.

As agreed at the MNCT, working time agreements should remain the same as last session, until further guidance is received and reviewed at an appropriate point in partnership with professional organisations.

Head Teachers will have in place contingency plans to ensure that the absence of any teacher does not prevent in-home or in-school learning from being delivered. Any significant issue in this regard should be discussed with their Schools Group Manager.

The Employee Assistance Programme is still available to support any member of staff who requires support. Staff should contact 0800 243 458 or email [assistance@workplaceoptions.com](mailto:assistance@workplaceoptions.com)

* + - 1. **Communication**

During the reopening of schools, communication with all stakeholders is of paramount importance to minimise the anxiety that may arise on the reopening of schools and caused by the very different environment learners are returning to.

The central education team will continue to communicate regularly with parents and carers to ensure that consistent plans and expectations are expressed. Schools should follow this up with communications to their own school community about their local arrangements and this communication should be available in a range of ways ie letter, website, app.

Engagement with Chairs of Parent Councils will continue in phase 3, following two engagement sessions in June, to ensure that they are kept up to date with latest policy and guidance.

Consideration should be given to methods of communication with children and young people to ensure their concerns are heard and that appropriate action is taken. The Recovery Curriculum sets out guidance on how this could be done.

Parents and Carers may be worried about sending their children back to school, or their safety while they are there, so clear and supportive communication is required.

National information from the following organisations will be useful:

* Parent Club

<https://www.parentclub.scot/>

* National Parent Forum Scotland

<https://www.npfs.org.uk/>

* Parentzone

<https://www.parentzone.me/>

* Education Scotland’s Scotland Learns

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/scotland-learns/>

Appendix 1

Key Guidance

Coronavirus Act 2020:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2020/7/schedule/16/part/2/enacted>

Scottish Government Coronavirus (COVID-19); Framework for Decision Making

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-framework-decision-making-further-information/>

Health Protection Scotland COVID-19 Workforce Education Information and Resources

<https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/covid-19/workforce-educational-resources/>

Health and Safety Executive

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/coronavirus.htm>

National Transport Guidance Portal

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Outdoor Learning Directory

<https://outdoorlearningdirectory.com/>

Physical Distancing in Education and Childcare Settings

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-physical-distancing-in-education-and-childcare-settings/pages/hygiene-measures-including-ppe/>

The Correct Order for Donning and Doffing PPE

<https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-the-correct-order-for-donning-doffing-and-disposal-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe-for-healthcare-workers-hcws-in-a-primary-care-setting/>

COVID-19 Guidance for Non-Healthcare Settings

<https://hpspubsrepo.blob.core.windows.net/hps-website/nss/2973/documents/1_covid-19-guidance-for-non-healthcare-settings.pdf>

Test, Trace, Isolate and Support Strategy

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-test-trace-isolate-support/>

Appendix 2

Midlothian’s Route Map through and out of the crisis

 

Appendix 3

ADES – Audit Tool to support planning for reopening schools (attached)

