

LB/HM

22.12.20

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Dear Parent/Carer

Schools in East Lothian had been due to re-open to all pupils on Wednesday, 6 January.

However, as you may be aware, the Scottish Government has announced new plans for the return of children and young people in the New Year.

This is to support a phased return to the start of the new term. It comes as protections against Coronavirus (COVID-19) are tightened across Scotland to prevent the spread of the new, highly contagious strain of the virus. These are exceptional arrangements being put in place as a precautionary measure.

Some key points for East Lothian schools:

- For the majority of pupils, the holiday period will be extended until 11 January.
- Remote learning will begin for the majority of pupils on 11 January and remain in place until at least 18 January. **This means most pupils will be expected to work from home until 18 January at the earliest.**
- From Monday 18 January onwards, it is expected that schools will be open for in-person teaching and learning as normal, albeit operating in line with the guidance and procedures which have been in place over recent months to keep staff and pupils safe.
- School buildings in East Lothian will reopen to staff only on Wednesday 6 January and to children of key workers and the most vulnerable children from 7 January. The Scottish Government has granted East Lothian Council permission to use 6 January as a day for staff to plan for the safe return of pupils.

Whilst we appreciate this will cause some inconvenience, it is a reflection of the fact that COVID-19 continues to present a significant risk to public health.

### **Remote learning**

For the majority of children and young people who will be undertaking remote learning from 11 January, your school will be in touch by Friday, 8 January with more information about the arrangements for this.

Our expectation is that tasks and assignments will be available for pupils to access – such as through use of Google classroom.

Our school staff, who will return to work on 6 January, will be making arrangements based on the well-developed contingency plans which we have in place and our experience of providing remote learning during the Spring/Summer term.

Any pupil who does not have a device to access the work should contact the school office and we will arrange to provide one.

### **Key workers**

Any parents/carers who believe they are key workers under the criteria set out by the Scottish Government will be invited to complete our online questionnaire: You can find the application and criteria here: <https://eastlothianconsultations.co.uk/education/january2021-keyworker-application>

This should be completed by 29 December.

After reviewing all applications we will contact families with the arrangements for the start of the new session from 7 January.

The Scottish Government has stated that there should be a particular focus on key workers in posts which ensure that essential services can be delivered and cover tasks within the local community which support the vulnerable and aid community resilience.

### **Support for vulnerable children**

Schools will be contacting those identified as requiring additional support who will be able to return to school from 7 January.

### **Free school meals**

As most children will not be in school until 18 January at the earliest, we will providing families eligible for free school meals with a direct payment to cover the cost of lunch.

Pupils currently registered for free school meals that have already received a payment to cover the holiday period from 23 December to 5 January will receive an additional payment of £6.90 per child into their bank accounts on 6 January 2021. This additional payment is to cover the extended holiday from 6 to 8 January 2021. No action is required from parents and the payment will be paid automatically into the same bank account as previous payments.

A lunch will be provided in school for the children of key workers and vulnerable children who are attending for childcare from 7 January.

### **Reporting a positive test for COVID-19 during the Christmas holidays**

In recent weeks we have continued to have some positive test results reported to us from people in our schools. In the event that a pupil attending one of our schools returns a positive test for COVID-19 during the Christmas holidays, it is important that the Council is contacted.

This will enable us to investigate whether anyone has been in close and sustained contact with the person who has tested positive and, if required, advise them to self-isolate.

If your child / young person tests positive for COVID-19 during the holiday period please email the details to [covidinschools@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:covidinschools@eastlothian.gov.uk)

This mailbox will be checked regularly and will enable us to contact you to confirm details.

If you have no access to email call 01875 613921.

## **Protection Level 4 from Boxing Day**

It was also announced by the First Minister on Saturday that all areas of mainland Scotland would be moving into COVID-19 Protection Level 4 from Boxing Day. [You can read more about these on the Scottish Government website.](#)

## **Looking ahead**

I would like to record my appreciation for the support you have given our hard-working staff, who have had to adapt to new procedures to ensure everyone's safety and maintain learning and teaching. Although 2021 will continue to be a challenging year we are fully committed to ensuring our schools are as safe as possible and that we maintain the highest possible quality of learning and teaching for all.

I would like to wish you all a safe and peaceful Christmas and my very best wishes for the New Year.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lesley R. Brown".

**Lesley Brown**  
**Executive Director Education and Children's Services**