

SCHOOLS FAQ

This has been a tough few months for children and young people. Some might not have been too upset when schools first closed, but months without seeing many of their friends will have been hard. And as the months have gone on the lack of routine and structure might have become harder too.

After all this time it's understandable your child might be a little nervous about going back to school. You'll have your own worries as well. To ease your concerns we have put together answers to some of the questions you might have about the schools reopening.

WHEN ARE SCHOOLS GOING BACK?

Children in Scotland are due to go back to school full time from 11th August. In Argyll and Bute our teachers will return for an in-service day on the 11th August and pupils will begin their return on the 12th August. It may be the case that, in some schools, it will be necessary to phase pupils' return over the period of 12th to 15th August – plans are still being finalised to ensure our compliance with the guidance - but your child's school will be in touch with you in the normal way in relation to any specific arrangements for your school.

WILL IT BE SAFE?

How will the school keep everyone safe?

The school will be following guidelines to keep pupils and staff safe. The school will be cleaned more often and everyone will be washing their hands much more regularly. Classrooms will be well ventilated and pupils will have more time for outdoor learning. Other precautions may be put in place. Each school building is different, so for more details on what your child's school is doing you can contact them directly.

What can my child do to help keep themselves and everyone else safe?

All children and staff should follow the following hygiene practices:

- frequent washing/sanitising of hands for 20 seconds and drying thoroughly, and always when entering/leaving the building, before/after eating and after using the toilet
- avoid touching their faces including mouth, eyes and nose and
- using a tissue or elbow to cough or sneeze.

What about physical distancing?

Primary school children do not need to distance themselves from each other. However, wherever possible, teachers, staff and other adults should stay 2 metres away from each other, and from the children.

This may not apply to P1 and P2 children and some children with additional support needs, but measures will still be taken to keep them and their carers at home and school safe.

In secondary schools, steps will be put in place to try to encourage children to physically distance as much as possible from other children and staff. Schools will be doing everything they can do to maintain physical distancing while making sure everyone can go back full time.

Will my child have to wear a face covering at school?

No. Children will not be expected to wear face coverings or personal protective equipment at school. But any child or adult that has been advised or wants to wear a face covering or any PPE will be supported to do so. If coronavirus cases start rising your child's school may ask staff and older secondary school pupils to wear face coverings in school to help reduce the spread of the virus. [You can find out more about face coverings here.](#)

What about their school clothes?

School uniforms/clothing should be washed and cleaned as normal.

What if there's an outbreak of coronavirus at my child's school?

All schools will be on the lookout for potential outbreaks. This means that if you or your child shows symptoms of coronavirus you should book a test immediately. Your family must then follow self- isolation guidelines. Schools have plans in place if there is an outbreak. Health Protection Scotland will also prioritise school outbreaks through "[Test and Protect](#)".

What if there's an outbreak of coronavirus in our area?

If there's a local outbreak of the virus which affects your school, there will be a discussion between the school's headteacher, the local council and local health protection teams, and they'll decide what action needs to be taken. They might decide to temporarily close the school. If this happens your child will be provided with work to do at home, and learning will move online for a while.

What happens if coronavirus rates start to rise again?

If at any point the evidence shows that it's not safe for children to be in school on a full time basis, whether at a national or local level, steps will be taken to reduce the risks. This may mean that for a period of time, in some areas, measures such as a temporary 'blended learning' approach, where children spend part of the week learning from home, may be taken. Schools, local authorities and the Scottish Government will continue to monitor the evidence and health advice closely.

What should I do if my child has coronavirus symptoms?

It is extremely important that you continue to look out for symptoms of the virus amongst your own family. The most common symptoms are:

- new, continuous cough
- fever/high temperature (37.8C or greater)
- loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste

What happens if my child needs to self-isolate for two weeks?

Anyone with symptoms, or who has had contact with someone with symptoms should not attend school. They will be asked to return home and be tested. They should remain at home and everyone in the household should self-isolate until they receive their test results. If the test is negative, everyone can stop isolating (and return to school). If the test is positive, they must isolate for 10 days and those in the household for 14 days.

If your child needs to self-isolate, the school will have plans in place to allow their learning to continue.

WHAT WILL THE SCHOOL DAY BE LIKE?

Will my child's education be affected by all this?

There are no planned changes to the curriculum. Some schools may stagger reintroducing schoolwork, and there may be some changes to how some subjects are taught, to reduce risks.

At first schools will be focused on supporting children's health and wellbeing. This has been a difficult time for all of us, and particular for children, and it's necessary that teachers focus on helping children and young people feel more settled, which will support their learning. This might mean that your child's school will take a phased approach to reintroducing formal schoolwork. Your child's school will decide what makes most sense for their own pupils and adjust their approach to learning, teaching

and supporting their pupils as needed. Take a look at the [Scottish Government's plans](#) on reintroducing the curriculum to learn more.

What will the school day be like for primary school pupils?

As much as possible, teachers will keep lessons and the way children learn the same as they were before coronavirus, so they won't feel that anything is different. However, there may be some changes to the way classrooms are laid out, to give everyone more space.

Your child's teacher may also plan more of their lessons outside or in other areas of the school and the focus will be on ensuring that your child is supported as much as possible in their return to school.

What will the school day be like for secondary school pupils?

Most pupils will continue to study the same range of subjects as they usually would. There may also be changes to the S1 to S3 school timetable so that year groups and classes can stay together in the same area, meaning children will move around buildings and classrooms less.

Will my child's choice of subjects be affected?

Most senior school pupils will have already picked their subjects for the new session. These should not be limited by any measures in place to keep children safe at school and your child's school should support them to learn in a way which is best for them. There may be some courses where external partners are used that may be affected eg National Progression Awards and Foundation Apprenticeships – schools will work with pupils where these are affected. To make sure everyone stays safe, there may be some changes to lessons with lots of practical activity that usually require pupils to share equipment (for example, chemistry, art or design and technology) but generally these subjects will still be taught. If you have any concerns you should speak to your child's school.

Can they still do practical subjects like PE and Music?

Yes, but some may not be available immediately when they go back. They will be reintroduced during the term once guidelines on how to do it safely have been developed. These are just as important as more traditional subjects, and ensuring children are able to do them again is a priority.

Schools understand that being active is important for children's physical and mental health so will be planning how they can best use outside spaces to allow children to take part in sport and physical activities.

What will happen at lunchtime?

Schools may introduce staggered break and lunch times. This means that children may have their lunch at slightly different times and in smaller groups. Individual schools will update pupils regarding the local rules surrounding lunchtimes.

What's happening about exams?

The Scottish Qualification Authority have planned a full timetable of exams for next year. [Visit their website](#) to learn more.

WHAT'S HAPPENING ABOUT BREAKFAST AND AFTER-SCHOOL CARE AND CLUBS?

Will there still be breakfast and after-school care?

Measures will be taken to ensure that children who attend after school clubs are kept safe and that the chance for the virus to spread is minimised.

Where possible, try to limit the number of out of school care settings your child attends, as it's still important to minimise the number of people they have contact with. Contact them or your school directly to find out more.

What about after-school clubs?

At first, after-school clubs like sports clubs, bands, choirs and other groups probably won't be running, but will be reintroduced later in the term. Further guidance is still being developed to provide more detail.

HOW WILL MY CHILD GET TO AND FROM SCHOOL?

How will my child get to and from school safely?

Where possible your child should travel to and from school on foot, bike or scooter while maintaining physical distance. You and your child should wash or sanitise your hands before and after travelling.

If your child uses school or public transport they should wear a face covering while they travel. Exemptions include children under 5 years of age or have a health condition or disability which would make the wearing of a face covering uncomfortable or distressing.

Your school will be providing you with local guidance on how your child can get to and from school safely.

Will school drop offs and pick-ups be the same?

Your child's school will be considering how to keep everyone safe during school drop offs and pick-ups. They will be in touch to let you know these arrangements.

HOW CAN I STAY IN TOUCH WITH THE SCHOOL?

Can I visit my child's school?

There are still physical distancing restrictions in place for parents and families so schools will not want to encourage visitors. This might make you feel less welcome but your child's school will still want to hear from you. They'll encourage as much involvement from parents as possible, even if they can't enter the school.

What about parent's evenings?

Keeping you up to date with how your children are doing will be more important than ever. While parents' evenings won't happen in the same way, your child's school will make sure they take place in a way that allows physical distancing. Contact the school to find out more about their plans.

I AM WORRIED ABOUT MY CHILD, WHAT SUPPORT IS THERE?

My child is starting P1 or S1, how can I help them?

Having schools closed has been hard for children who are going into P1 or S1. They will have missed out on things like induction days that they would normally have when starting school. Schools will have plans in place to help them settle into their new school. We've got some tips to help you get them ready for the change to [primary school](#) and [secondary school](#).

My child is worried about returning to school, how do I help?

This has been a hard time for everyone and it's no surprise that some children are worried about returning to school. We have a number of pages on how you can support your [teenager](#) or [younger children's](#) mental wellbeing. We also have a page on helping them get used to [being around more people](#) again after such a long time away from most other people.

My child has additional support needs, I'm worried about them going back to school

We have information to help you and your child settle back into school. We also have some advice if they're starting [P1](#) and [S1](#). See our page on [supporting your child with additional support needs](#) for more information.

What if my child has been shielding?

We expect all children, young people and staff who have been shielding to be able to return to school in August, unless given advice from a GP or healthcare provider not to. You may want to discuss any concerns with your child's school. If your child is unable to go to school due to health advice, the school will have plans in place to allow their learning to continue, through blended learning. For more information on shielding go to our page on [coming out of shielding as schools reopen](#).

Will there be support available for members of the BAME community?

The Scottish Government, educators and childcare providers recognise the concerns within BAME communities, and individual requests for additional protections should be supported where possible. Schools should ensure that BAME staff, pupils and families are involved in decisions about additional protections.