

People & Partnerships

Midlothian Council
Fairfield House
8 Lothian Road
Dalkeith
EH22 3ZG

Executive Director
Ms Fiona Robertson

Midlothian



12 June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I would like to thank you for your continued support and understanding as we continue to develop our plans for re-opening schools. I know that you will have found the past 12 weeks particularly challenging at times, not least supporting your children with learning at home while managing other challenges during the lockdown period.

I am sure you will appreciate the efforts of our teachers and other council staff who continue to work hard to provide distance learning activities and critical childcare for children of key workers and vulnerable groups.

You will be aware that your child will begin to attend school, within a blended model, from 12 August and I know that many of you may be anxious about what this means for your child. We aim to ensure that your child is fully supported on re-starting school and we have been working hard to develop our plans for re-opening schools. To support our planning, we have developed a set of key principles, our Midlothian Promise, which you can find on your school's website/ app and on the Midlothian website. These principles will support our schools to ensure a consistent approach across Midlothian while allowing for local arrangements to suit the individual contexts of our schools.

Teachers and other education staff will return week beginning 15 June on a rota basis. This will allow them to prepare and plan for the forthcoming academic year. I have already shared with you our transition arrangements for new P1 and existing P7s, and you should have received further information from your child's school if your child is in either of these stages.

Home learning activities during the last two weeks of term will be more activity based, possibly with more use of learning grids and less individual feedback. This will allow our teachers to plan for next session, facilitate transition activities, do essential training and ensure classroom environments adhere to health and safety guidance.

The health and safety of our staff and your child is a key priority and essential part of our planning for re-opening schools. Risk assessments have been completed in all of our settings, which include assessment of social distancing measures, hygiene control and restriction of visitors to our buildings. Head Teachers are also working on a range of options to ensure safety within social distancing measures including staggered start times, end times and break times. They will also maximise the use of all spaces within their schools to ensure social distancing can be maintained for each group of learners. Signage will also be used to support everyone to remember our strict hygiene and social distancing rules.

The use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for support staff, teachers and Early Learning and Childcare staff may be required in some settings where close contact with learners is required, however there is no requirement for them to wear PPE as a general rule.

Health and safety remains a key priority, along with the health and wellbeing of our learners and staff. When your child returns to a blended model of learning in August, staff will have an increased focus on children's health and wellbeing. In particular, there will be an emphasis on resilience and nurture in schools to listen and respond to how children and young people have coped and are still coping with the impact of the COVID 19 outbreak. Our staff are aware of the need to focus on your child's wellbeing on their return to learning after the summer break given this will look and feel very different to their previous experiences either in nursery or in school.

In the meantime, maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle will have a positive impact on Mental Health within your family. Some examples of this could be:

- Keeping a positive sleep routine
- Exercising regularly
- Keeping social contact in line with national guidance

Midlothian Council is committed to continuing its support for you over the summer break and the following information and contact numbers can be used to provide you with a range of supports:

- 5 Ways to Wellbeing information (attached)
- Educational Psychologist Helpline (0131 270 5615)
- Listening Line (0131 271 3834)
- Children and Families duty line (0131 271 3413)
- Educational Psychology Service website <https://mideps.edublogs.org>
- Support for Food (0131 270 7500)

In terms of what your child can expect on their return to school we have been working on a blended learning model, which will provide learners with a mix of in-home and in-school learning. This model is required at the moment because we need to be mindful of social distancing measures. National guidance requires us to prioritise children of key workers and vulnerable children first.

I understand you may also be anxious to hear more about transition and arrangements for children with additional support needs. Individual arrangements are being planned for and Head Teachers will be in contact with parents of children with additional support needs to discuss these, to ensure a smooth transition.

Schools are currently working on transport plans and a survey will be sent to you next week to allow us to explore a range of options in this regard. I will provide you with a further update on the outcome of this survey and outline our plans for school transport.

I will be in touch with you before the end of term to provide you with further details on our plans, and you will also receive further details from your own schools to support the return to school for Midlothian learners. Please note that these plans may change over the summer period subject to updated national guidance and we will contact you again with an updated plan if this is the case.

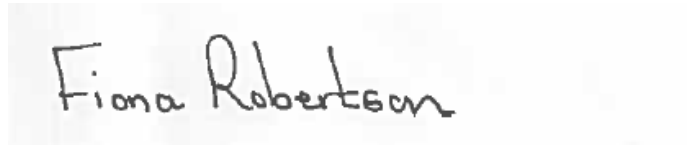
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Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fiona Robertson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

Fiona Robertson
Executive Director Children, Young People & Partnerships
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