

# All pupils to go back to school in August

**Schools will return full-time in August if Scotland continues to make progress on suppressing coronavirus, Deputy First Minister John Swinney announced today.**

**The move comes after significant progress was made in reducing incidence rates of the virus, putting Scotland on a more positive trajectory than previously expected.**

Speaking in Parliament earlier today, Mr Swinney said that schools will be able to reopen to all pupils from 11th August so long as the spread of the disease “is sufficiently low to provide assurance that we can continue to control the virus”.

Blended learning – where pupils have a combination of face-to-face teaching in schools and home learning – will be the Government’s “contingency” if it is deemed unsafe for schools to reopen without social distancing.

Mr Swinney said that progress made suppressing the spread of Covid-19 has allowed the Government to aim for a return to full-time schooling.

He said “If we stay on track, if we all continue to do what is right, and if we can further suppress this terrible virus, the Government believes that we should prepare for children to be able to return to school full-time in August.

“I must stress, this is the aim that the Government is now working towards.

“However, because it has to be achieved safely, it inevitably remains conditional and dependent upon ongoing scientific and health advice.

“If we continue to make progress at the rate we envisage by August, it is possible.

“I have to be honest with parliament and admit, but when we prepared our plans back in May, I frankly could not have imagined that we would have made as much progress in virus suppression as we have.

“But it is a change born out of the hard work and sacrifice of people in every part of the country. sticking to the guidance, staying at home and suppressing this virus.”

As a result, The Scottish Government has now made it a central planning assumption that pupils will return to class full-time in August.

This is conditional on infection rates being sufficiently low to continue to control the virus, public health and testing systems being in place and protective measures and risk assessments being carried out in schools.

A new sub-group of the Covid-19 Advisory Group will monitor progress and provide further advice to Ministers shortly.

The Education Recovery Group will also meet over the summer to oversee next steps. Councils will continue to prepare blended learning models as a contingency and these will be scrutinised by Her Majesty’s Inspectors of Education.



fbpic- Scottish Parliament Holyrood.

John Swinney MSP Deputy First Minister and Education Secretary  
Ministerial Statement: Update on Education Recovery today at  
the Covid-19 social distancing Scottish Parliament, Holyrood  
Edinburgh.

Scotland Lockdown Coronavirus.

Scotland Scottish politics Schools Scottish Education.

Poolphoto/Fraser Bremner/Scottish Daily Mail

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Picture FRASER BREMNER

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**Mr Swinney also revealed that an additional £100 million will be invested over the next two years to tackle the impact of lockdown on schools and**

**pupils, including ensuring every current probationer teacher who meets the standard for full registration having a teaching post for the year ahead.**

Education Scotland will work with E-Sgoil, the digital training platform, to develop a national e-learning provision for all senior phase pupils to access high quality lessons online learning by qualified teachers. This is in addition to the investment of £25 million to provide tens of thousands of laptops for disadvantaged children and young people.

Scottish Liberal Democrat leader Willie Rennie said:“Parents will be relieved by this change of heart as it means that children will get the education they deserve and we can start to catch up on the lost months during which the inequality gap has grown.

“It stretches credibility for the Deputy First Minister to claim the decline of the virus was a surprise which led to this sudden change by the government.

“The next challenge for the government is to fix the childcare availability for parents returning to work over the summer when. Normal childcare arrangements are closed off to them such as families or childminders. It is an urgent matter that needs fixed now.”

Scottish Greens Education Spokesperson Ross Greer MSP said:“A great number of people will be breathing a sigh of relief at the announcement that pupils will return to school full-time in August, but for teachers, school support staff and their families, the anxiety will now have dramatically increased.

“The Greens have proposed regular testing of all school staff. So has Scottish Government adviser Professor Devi Sridhar. I’m glad that Mr Swinney is now supportive of this proposal but he needs to confirm immediately that it will be a reality when

schools return in August. Children aren't immune to this virus and adult members of staff certainly are not. They deserve this reassurance before they go back to the classroom."



John Swinney MSP Deputy First Minister and Education Secretary arriving for Topical Questions and Ministerial Statement followed by Bruce Crawford MSP wearing a mask today at the Covid-19 social distancing Scottish Parliament, Holyrood. Picture FRASER BREMNER

**Education Leaders at The City of Edinburgh Council have welcomed the news that schools may be back full time in August with no physical distancing**

## measures in place.

The Council will continue to make contingency arrangements and today submitted its plans for blended learning to the Scottish Government.

**Councillor Ian Perry, Education Convener,** said: "This is obviously welcome news and will come as a great relief to all parents and carers across the city. We will make sure we're doing everything possible to ensure our schools are safe to reopen by following the most up to date Government and Health Protection Scotland advice.

"Obviously the major caveat to this announcement is that the suppression of Coronavirus has to stay on track. That's why it's so important we make sure we have robust plans for schools reopening in August with the blended model of learning that may be required.

"Our schools and other Council teams have been working tirelessly on these plans for many weeks and I want to thank them for all their efforts. We submitted our plans to the Scottish Government today and we will continue our dialogue with them over any additional funding that may still be required.

"I really hope that the virus continues to be suppressed and our contingency plans are not required. However, if they are needed, then I am confident the detailed plans we are proposing demonstrate our commitment to ensuring the best teaching and learning for all pupils across the whole city."

**Cllr Alison Dickie, Education Vice Convener,** said: "I know parents will be delighted to hear the announcement that schools should be planning for 100% reopening as the past few months have put a terrible strain on family life, with many juggling work commitments and home learning.

"Ultimately though, I'm pleased for the children and young

people themselves, particularly those who have already faced challenges in their daily lives and to whom school is a haven. This has been a particularly difficult time for them, and that's why it's important that the wellbeing of all our children be placed at the heart of their education on their return.

"Of course we need to have robust contingency plans in place and our plan has always been never to compromise on the quality of learning and teaching and to deliver it in a safe and equitable way.

"Everyone will continue working to achieve the same goal of getting every child and young person back to school where they belong and our detailed preparations for anything other than a 100% school return will continue over the summer.

"We will of course continue to communicate with parents as we move forward together and keep them updated over the summer."

**UNISON's Scottish Secretary Mike Kirby said: "This is a significant about turn which, given the lack of scientific evidence available at this stage, seems to be driven more by politics than by safety.**

"The safety of staff and pupils must be paramount and any return to school must be led by the scientific evidence at that time and be dependent on crucial risk assessments to ensure everyone's safety.

"Education budgets were already squeezed before the pandemic hit. While the Scottish Government's pledge of £100m over the next two years to support children with their lost learning is to be welcomed, schools also face increased practical costs to implement the required safety measures. It is vital the

Scottish Government steps up and provides local authorities with the additional funding urgently needed to ensure that schools can open safely whenever science shows the time is right.”