

Schools to go back one week early

The City of Edinburgh Council has announced its plans to allow pupils to return to school while respecting safety and physical distancing.

Only one third of pupils will be in school at any one time and every pupil is promised a mix of teaching in school and learning at home. The days they attend will be determined by their individual school.

The Scottish Government announced new guidance for teachers and councils on 5 June 2020 to help them prepare for the blended model of classroom and home learning from August. That guidance explains the priority for physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of children and young people, practitioners and families. The Refreshed Curriculum for Excellence will be used as a practical tool.

The school week will run from Monday to Thursdays and Fridays will be a supported home learning day. There will also be limited key worker childcare support throughout the whole week during usual school hours.

The council says that nursery and primary children will be grouped together to enable family members to attend school on the same days and in secondary schools pupils will be grouped by year or family.

Pupils at special schools will attend for half the week with the majority attending school for two full days.

Schools will be in contact with parents and carers to let them know about final details.

Education Convener, Councillor Ian Perry, said: “The past three months have been very challenging for the world of education and I want to thank parents, carers and staff in our schools who continue to support our children with home learning and keyworker learning and childcare.

“The health and wellbeing of our children, young people and staff has been at the forefront of our planning for their return to their schools in August. We believe these plans represent the safest return to school as possible for them and in a way that best supports the quality of their learning and their safety.

“We are making sure the guidance and advice from both Health Protection Scotland and Scottish Government is being strictly followed when it comes to social distancing, hygiene regimes and risk assessments – it’s essential that we keep our children and staff safe.

“This new blended model is an improvement on the current home learning arrangements, and I want to reassure parents that where possible we review, refine and improve our approach so we can maximise the proportion of in-school learning.”

Education Vice Convener, Cllr Alison Dickie, said: “School recovery lies at the heart of helping our city back on its feet, and I want to begin with a thank you to our teachers and parents and especially the wonderful children and young people of our city.

“This has been an unprecedented time for all of them and I am acutely aware of those who already faced challenges on a daily basis, and to whom school is at times a haven. They are at the heart of our plans.

“Children and young people have missed their teachers, and

their teachers them. They have missed their friends and the inspiring and holistic learning environments of our modern classrooms. It's important too that we build on the home aspect of our blended learning, so that our children feel fully connected and supported.

“Lockdown has also reminded us that learning is wider than just the classroom, and this is an opportunity to realise the full potential of community learning. From our youth workers and After School Clubs, to a range of third partners and community organisations, all have a part to play in this recovery process.”

As schools are starting a week earlier than planned, the summer holidays in 2021 will begin one week earlier, with the school year finishing on Friday 25 June.