

**Date** 08 October 2020

**Your ref**

**Our ref** S&LL/AG/JR

Dear Parent/Carer,

Before our school October holidays begin in just over a week, I wanted to thank you, as well as our children and young people, for your patience and understanding during this term. It really has been remarkable how well school communities across the city have adapted to the new arrangements.

You will be aware there have been a number of cases where children, young people and staff have tested positive for Coronavirus and we continue to follow health guidance. I'm grateful for your cooperation in observing the requirement to keep your children self-isolated as required by Health Protection Lothian.

As we approach the winter months, it will be essential to keep our focus on making sure we have the safest possible arrangements for pupils and staff, and on keeping our schools open. Face coverings and hand washing are important measures to minimise the spread of the virus as is maintaining physical distancing wherever possible. Headteachers have commented positively on how parents have avoided gathering at school entrances and we appreciate all of the efforts that families and carers are making.

Our experience in schools over the last few weeks has allowed us to reflect on some of our arrangements. As you know, we expect our learners to wear face coverings in our secondary schools and the level of cooperation with this measure has been very much appreciated. For those who cannot observe this request for medical reasons, individual schools have arrangements in place to avoid unnecessary embarrassment.

Schools have particularly appreciated parents telling the school when they are taking their child for a Covid-19 test. This allows the school to make preliminary arrangements should the test prove positive. It is essential that you inform your school as soon as possible when the result has been received, whether it is positive or negative. If you receive the test result out of school hours, please contact 0131 200 2000.

In line with the First Minister's appeal to parents, I would reiterate her message to avoid holidays abroad this mid-term as schools may not always have the staff available to support pupils who must quarantine.

**Communities and Families Directorate**

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Finally, as our schools resume after the October break, we will continue to ensure the safest possible environment for learning in every school setting. As part of this, classrooms will require to maintain adequate ventilation and, while school heating systems will be fully utilised, it would be wise to consider extra layers of clothing.

May I wish all our children and young people a happy holiday and thank you all once again for your continued support and cooperation during this difficult time.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andy Gray', enclosed in a light gray rectangular box.

**Andy Gray**

**Chief Education Officer**