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Convener
COVID-19 Recovery Committee
The Scottish Parliament
EH99 1SP

Convener
Education, Children and Young People Committee
The Scottish Parliament
EH99 1SP

Our ref:

17 March 2022

Dear Convener

Routine COVID Protective Measures Guidance for Schools, Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and Daycare of Children's Services

I am writing to confirm that this afternoon we have published two guidance documents setting out:

- [Routine Covid Protection Measures in Schools](#)
- [Routine Covid Protection Measures in early learning and childcare, school age childcare and childminding settings](#) (bringing the three pieces of guidance together into one document)

In line with advice from the Advisory Subgroup on Education and Children's Issues, these updated guidance documents aim to ensure routine protective measures are a proportionate and appropriate response to the current balance of harms. The guidance seeks to ensure that only those measures that are necessary are retained and, where possible, that there is alignment with equivalent measures across wider society. For example, this alignment includes application to face coverings and physical distancing, where the updated guidance now links the position explicitly to the general guidance for safety in the workplace. While this means that there is no practical change to those requirements at present (e.g. face coverings will still be required in communal areas, as they are in other settings), we believe that locking in such consistency will help support ongoing ease of understanding and subsequent adherence.

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The Annex to this letter contains more detail, with this approach being consistent with the wider trajectory as set out in the Strategic Framework Update and the society-wide changes announced by the First Minister on 15 March.

To support ease of implementation, all updated guidance will come into force at the same time as the asymptomatic testing programme comes to a close – i.e. from 18th April. This data also coincides with the return from the Easter break for many schools.

The changes have been discussed with the members of the COVID-19 Education Recovery Group, the ELC Covid Reference Group and wider stakeholder groups. We are also working with other partners and stakeholders to raise awareness and highlight important messages. This includes updates to social media and online platforms, e.g. those hosted by Parent Club and Young Scot and a series of online Q&A sessions with clinicians and PHS officials for workforce unions. Finally, we are finalising the associated EQIA and CRWIA, which are likely to be published next week alongside a supporting evidence paper from the Advisory Subgroup.

As always, I would be happy to provide further detail where desired.

Yours sincerely

Shirley-Anne Somerville

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Routine COVID Protective Measures for Schools

The principles underpinning routine measures include:

- **Symptom vigilance** - children, young people and staff should stay at home and self-isolate if they:
 - have symptoms of COVID-19, whether they feel unwell or not
 - have tested positive, even if asymptomatic
 - are required to self-isolate for any other reason e.g. travel-related reasons
 - are identified as a close contact and are over 18 years and 4 months and not fully vaccinated
- good **hand hygiene and surface cleaning** in ELC and school environments and on dedicated school transport
- an ongoing focus on the importance of **good ventilation** and the potential for CO2 monitors to be utilised to ensure good air quality in enclosed spaces, with the goal that all school buildings, including all learning and teaching spaces, and ELC settings should be assessed regularly for ventilation issues with a view to remedial action being taken where required.
- the requirements for **face coverings** for staff and young people in secondary schools, for staff in primary schools, and staff in ELC to be in line with the general guidance for safety in the workplace.
- **physical distancing** will not be required among learners. Staff in all settings should follow the general guidance for safety in the workplace.
- requirement to wear face coverings on dedicated **school transport** in line with the position on public transport
- ongoing need for **outbreak management capability**, including active surveillance
- assessments on the use of **PPE** should continue to be undertaken for those who work in close contact with children and young people
- **asymptomatic testing** for children and young people in secondary schools and for school and ELC staff to be in line with the wider testing transition plan.

in addition to the above, that means we are asking schools to plan on the basis that:

- Children, young people and adults should stay at home and self-isolate in the circumstances outlined in the wider policy on **self-isolation**
- While **face coverings** will not be required in classrooms (or during exams), learners and staff should continue to be supported to wear them if they choose to do so.
- With regard to **physical distancing**, children, young people and staff should follow the wider societal guidance on physical distancing when in schools or on dedicated school transport. As in wider society it will remain important to be cautious and exercise personal responsibility, recognising that, where possible, it is safer to keep a distance from other people.
- There is an ongoing focus on **good ventilation and use of CO2 monitoring** in all learning and teaching spaces, to ensure good air quality. (Note: the main development in this section is a recommendation that all local authorities move to a 1:1 ratio of CO2 monitors to learning and teaching spaces over the course of the next term. A majority of local authorities have already indicated they are adopting this approach.)
- There are no restrictions on indoor and outdoor **drama activity, music, PE or dance**. Routine measures should continue to apply in relevant settings where these activities are taking place (e.g. good ventilation).
- School **day visits and residential stays** are permitted, in keeping with guidance on school visits and trips
- There are no restrictions on **assemblies**, although routine measures will continue to apply (e.g. good ventilation, regular cleaning, etc).

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- **Contact groups** are not required,
- **One way systems** are not required.
- **Staggered lunch and break times** are not required.
- **Staggered pick-up and drop-off times** are not required.
- There are no restrictions on **supply staff, other professionals or visitors** in general entering schools. All visitors will, however, be expected to comply with the school's routine measures and arrangements for managing and minimising risk.
- There are no restrictions on **parents, carers or wider family members** entering school buildings, although they will be expected to comply with the school's routine measures. There are therefore no restrictions on "in person" parent/carer evenings, parent/carer related events and meetings in school buildings. Parents, carers and family members are able to attend indoor and outdoor sporting and cultural events.

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Routine COVID Protective Measures for ELC and Daycare of Children's Services

The main components of the guidance include:

- Children, young people and adults should stay at home and self-isolate in the circumstances outlined in the wider policy on **self-isolation**
- **Face coverings** are not needed when working directly with children but should be worn by staff and visitors when they are not working directly with children, and staff and children should be supported to wear them if they choose to do so
- **Physical distancing**, staff and visitors should follow wider societal guidance but physical distancing is not required between children and adults or between children
- Actions to minimise child to child and staff to staff contact **through groupings** (i.e. 'bubbles') in indoor spaces are not required
- **Pick-up and drop-off** arrangements should be decided locally based on the best interests of children and families, and in line with the wider approach to risk assessment at the setting
- **Visits out and day trips** can take place and are encouraged
- There are no restrictions on **specialist, peripatetic and agency staff, or other professionals or visitors** in general entering settings, or movements across settings. All visitors (including parents) will, however, be expected to comply with the setting's routine measures and arrangements for managing and minimising risk
- **Parents** are welcome back into settings, recognising the important role that they can play in supporting children's development and wellbeing
- **In-house events such as plays** and activity to support parental engagement can take place
- Good **hand hygiene and cleaning practices** should be observed (in line with advice from Public Health Scotland (PHS) and clinical experts at Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare Associated Infection Scotland (ARHAI), with cleaning practices being enhanced in the event of an outbreak
- an ongoing focus on the importance of **good ventilation and the potential for CO2 monitors** to be used to ensure good air quality in enclosed spaces
- ongoing need for **outbreak management capability, including active surveillance**
- **assessments on the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**, which should continue to be undertaken for those who work in close contact with children and young people

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