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East Dunbartonshire Council

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Date 13 March 2020

Dear Parent/ Carer

In light of the move to the delay phase of managing the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in the UK, the Council continues to meet regularly and plan for the impact of the pandemic in East Dunbartonshire.

The Scottish Government and the NHS have confirmed that there is no need at this stage to close schools and early years' establishments and that this will be regularly reviewed.

The Council has reviewed the national guidance that has been issued, and in support of the social distancing information in relation to public protection, has taken some early, precautionary decisions in relation to schools and educational establishments. These precautionary decisions have been taken to protect our children and vulnerable young people, and will remain in place up to and including the school Easter holidays. They are detailed below:

School Trips

Guidance has been issued that all overseas education trips for children under the age of 18 should be cancelled. This is because trip leaders would face significant challenges in making arrangements to ensure children's welfare, should adult supervisors or children be required to self-isolate.

The Council is also advising all East Dunbartonshire schools to cancel any UK based residential school trips planned to take place from now until the end of the school Easter holidays. Often residential trips are to remote areas or a significant distance from school and home localities and as with overseas trips, trip leaders may face significant challenges in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19).

We understand that this will have implications for children and their families. Each school will contact those that are affected and will be able to advise on the specific arrangements in relation to any financial implications as a consequence and to alternative activities.

The following link is the national travel guidance for the education sector, which the Council is implementing and extending: www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/covid-19-travel-guidance-for-the-education-sector.

School and Education Events

There are a number of school events taking place in the coming weeks, leading to the Easter holidays. Again, in response to social distancing benefits and reducing risk in relation to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, these events will also be cancelled. This includes all school performances such as pantomimes, plays, choir recitals and concerts, including the annual East Dunbartonshire Schools' Spring performance in Glasgow Concert Hall.

Parents Evenings

In line with this approach to implementing social distancing and reducing risk within our education communities, all school parent evenings scheduled from now to the school Easter holidays will be cancelled. I have asked schools to look at alternative methods of providing parents with progress reporting, and schools will share the local arrangements that they put in place with their own school communities.

Food Provision in school

There have been some recommendations in relation to the provision of food and food handling, particularly in relation to unwrapped food. As a further precautionary measure in the dinner hall environment, we are removing the self-service element of school meals and food will be served to pupils, minimising the numbers of people who handle food and again, reducing risk.

We would like to thank you in advance for your understanding in relation to these new measures and for your continued co-operation and support in relation to the measures in place to effectively manage coronavirus (COVID-19) in our schools.

Yours sincerely

JACQUI MACDONALD
Chief Education Officer