

# CORONAVIRUS BRIEFING

## Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020 – Latest Update

Firstly, we would like to thank all staff and pupils for the resilient way you are maintaining educational provision in this complex time. We very much appreciate the efforts everyone is making to try to keep learning going in our school buildings. We are very aware of the additional pressures that this puts on staff.

As you know, since yesterday's briefing the advice from the Scottish and UK Governments has changed consistently. The Highland Council continues to follow this advice in supporting the effort to delay the spread of the Coronavirus. The latest advice is as follows:

It has been announced by the UK/Scottish Government that as of 16 March anyone developing symptoms consistent with COVID-19, however mild, should stay at home for 7 days from the onset of symptoms as per existing advice. In addition, it is now recommended that anyone living in the same household as a symptomatic person should self-isolate for 14 days.

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are recent onset of new continuous cough and/or high temperature.

Information for the public on COVID-19, including stay at home advice for people who are self-isolating, can be found on [NHS Inform](#).

Further, people are advised to take social distancing measures to help reduce the transmission of COVID-19. In particular, this is strongly advised for people aged 70 or over, people with underlying medical conditions and pregnant women. Further advice on these measures will be available on NHS Inform shortly.

It is important that all staff in schools are aware of this new advice and we ask HTs and other Senior Managers to talk to staff to ensure they know what course of action they should take. Note that the advice for pregnant women is significantly different following yesterday's announcements.

Handwashing protocols: schools are reminded that we are following the government advice on handwashing, which is that basic hand washing is highlighted as the most effective way of preventing the spread of infection. HTs and class teachers should reinforce this message with children and young people, and should recommend hand washing whenever there has been a risk of infection. For example, it would be a sensible precaution for children and young people who have travelled to school by bus to wash their hands thoroughly on arrival at school. Children and young people should be encouraged to repeat this action after their return bus journey home at the end of the school day.

The detailed guidance for educational settings (and note that this applies to Early Learning and Childcare Settings as well as schools) has now been updated and incorporated into the following general advice for all non-healthcare settings: <https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-guidance-for-non-healthcare-settings/> You will see it has some specific material for educational settings in Section 2, as well as other advice that applies more generally.

If parents are in touch to ask about our approach, please stress that we are following national advice and direct them to [NHS Inform](#), drawing attention to the new national advice.

Today's briefing provides a number of updates.

## **Coronavirus and wellbeing**

### **Staff wellbeing**

This link is useful for staff and parents/carers for coping with self isolation/ stress and anxiety.

- <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

See also the section below in the briefing regarding ongoing digital learning, which contains advice about maintaining staff social contact in the event of school closure.

### **Student wellbeing**

Here are some examples of websites which may be useful for students over coming weeks and months to maintain their mental & emotional wellbeing. More of these will be added in the coming days and the links will be added to the [Highland Council Digital Learning Site](#) soon. We hope these will give you some ideas for supporting our children and young people through the current uncertainty.

<https://www.childline.org.uk/>

The Childline website has four main sections:

*Info and Advice*- lots of information on different topics that affect children and young people.

*Get Support*- you can call, online chat or email for specific advice and support from a trained counsellor.

*Toolbox*- lots of different resources, such as tips to help you manage your emotions, games to play or talk to other young people over the message boards.

*Get Involved*- you can talk to others, upload art work, or volunteer if you are aged 16 and over.

<https://young.scot/>

The Young Scot website has some useful tips on how to stay positive in times of change. There's also information on whether you may be able to claim some

benefits whilst still in school, and what discounts your Young Scot card can get you.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/support>

Bitesize not only offers you advice and activities for learning, but also has a dedicated page to wellbeing. Find information on managing stress, relationships and supporting others in your family who are struggling with their mental health.

## **Coronavirus and SQA exams/estimates**

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) continues to monitor the situation, in close contact with the Scottish Government and other regulators and awarding bodies across the UK. There is still no change to the published National Qualifications examination timetable or deadline dates.

As you know SQA estimate submission is due to happen after the Easter Break. We strongly recommend that schools work on this as a matter of priority. It is not yet clear what importance might come to be attached to estimated grades when further advice comes from SQA. **With that in mind we would ask that schools ensure that the estimate is of final performance in the whole course, including any internally produced/portfolio work and is not just based on prelim performance.**

Please note, any plans for SQA assessment verification across schools should be arranged virtually with the option of using Google hangouts. Staff would **not** be expected to visit other schools for this purpose.

The current advice from SQA regarding pupils self-isolating and therefore missing assessments is to ask for an extension at [extensions@sqa.org.uk](mailto:extensions@sqa.org.uk) and as advised on the SQA website, start to gather evidence for any exceptional circumstances requests as follows: 'Schools and colleges should be gathering any alternative evidence on candidate performance as they would do in the normal way, and as per our guidance every year, to support any consideration of exceptional circumstances.'

## **Coronavirus and other school matters**

### **Teacher lists**

Head Teachers should ensure that their admin has sent Claire McGonigal a list of teachers and the subjects they teach in order to populate Google classrooms.

### **Colleges**

Please note that as of Wednesday 18 March, there will be NO College campus provision for pupils. Note that College staff will attend in schools if the school is open and the college staff are not identified as being "at risk". Please allow this to continue and do not regard it as an inward visit. Online delivery is being considered and further information on this will follow tomorrow.

### **Visiting staff**

There was some misinterpretation yesterday about visiting school staff and apologies that this was not clearer. In yesterday's briefing we mentioned that there should be no inwards visits to schools. This was not intended to include visiting music tuition and Skills Development Scotland careers staff. As they are providing some of the school's core curriculum, and their involvement is on site, we ask that **these visits continue as usual**, in the same way that visiting CCR provision will continue. Other inward visits should be **cancelled**. See also comment above about college input.

### **Students in school**

GTCS have confirmed all Initial Teacher Education school placements will end as of yesterday throughout Scotland. Students will be assessed on professional practice undertaken to date, drawing on all available evidence. Where satisfactory progress has been made students will be able to proceed to their probationer year as normal.

### **School Lets**

The status of letting of school facilities outwith school hours is currently being reviewed, and further advice will be issued to ensure a consistent approach across all settings. At this time schools should take NO further action to cancel lets until further advice is issued. Apologies that yesterday's advice may have caused confusion.

### **School security and fire safety**

Reports have been received of schools propping doors open, presumably to avoid or reduce contact with door handles and surfaces and to assist with containment. To be clear, fire safety and school security concerns are paramount in terms of safety of staff and pupils and **schools MUST NOT prop doors open**.

### **School Crossing Patrollers and Council Staff Based outwith school grounds**

Can schools ensure that any Coronavirus updates are printed and made available to crossing patrollers, and any other 'school staff' who may not be on email or have access to information within the school. We need to be sure that all of our staff have access to the most updated information.

### **Absence reporting in SEEMiS**

It is extremely important that we can access up to date information regarding staff and pupil absence. Pupil and staff absence will be extracted from SEEMiS daily. Since our briefing yesterday, **new codes** have been created nationally for recording pupil absence and advice on using these is attached (for immediate use).

Further advice on the recording of staff absence will follow in the next update.

## Coronavirus and delivery of digital learning opportunities

Schools are encouraged to note the following supports and action where appropriate:

- Senior Phase to have Scholar passwords.
- All schools need emergency staff list with details (paper copy) of staff and pupils. The location of this should be shared with all school senior managers.
- Vulnerable students lists are being created centrally and will be sent to schools, but you should have your own list too.
- Google Classroom passwords and username. Have these written out and issue to parent / carer / pupil from Early years – P5. Please check P7 – S6 have access.
- For Early Years (Nursery - P2 or P3, please consider creating a generic account e.g. lochardil.pupil@invernessroyalacademy.org.uk using DigiLearn site digilearnhighland.co.uk/
- We have a new site created to support the use of G-Suite: <http://highland.gov.uk/digitalschoolshub/> This website includes digital skills information and digital skills learning for parents, schools and pupils. Staff can access training materials for G-Suite here, including Google Classroom and Hangouts.
- A Staff Google Classroom should be set up and the class code given to all staff. See website above for set up instructions if required.
- Staff could 'meet' at 9am via Google Hangouts to share any information. A break and lunch virtual coffee break could also be scheduled for staff.
- In order to use Google Hangouts for 'virtual' check ins, an invitation to the Hangout is required to be created either via a link or by inviting each member of staff. For a guide on how to do this, please go to <http://highland.gov.uk/digitalschoolshub/>. Please note, we are advocating the use of Google Hangouts rather than Google Meet.
- The Staff Google Classroom can be used as a communication tool for the staff and scheduled meetings and links can be added.
- Every school should set up Google Classroom's for their pupils. In primary schools we suggest not doing this by Class in case of absence. Use Stage Partner / CFE level /ASG or Cluster in the Google Classroom. In secondary schools this should be done for each subject area at each level rather each subject class.
- Pupils should be given the class code. This could also be sent to parents.
- Each Google Classroom could be used to communicate to pupils that a scheduled Google Hangout meeting happen at a given time each day e.g.10am (time to be identified by school) each day to check in with pupils. Schools should make local decisions as to what this looks like for staff and pupils, especially in the secondary setting.
- Pupils identified who haven't access to technology could use a school Chromebook (please sign out with parental permission).
- Please identify any children who do not have wi-fi or limited access to wi-fi (for example 4G access only with data limits) and support with packs of work.
- Managers and Teachers to ensure that they log in daily am and pm to their highland.gov emails.
- CLPL opportunities - Teachers could work through G-Suite for Educators training at home and staff could access skills based courses at home. e.g. Google Educators Level 1.
- Teachers who have not got a laptop need to take a bank laptop and if not available, a Chromebook. Teachers will need to ensure that they sign into the laptop in school before they take it away or it will not work at home.

- Clericals who need a laptop, need to take a bank laptop. Clericals will need to ensure that they sign into the laptop in school before they take it away or it will not work at home.
- HT is empowered to sign out spare devices including school I-pads and Chromebooks (from the P1-5 allocation) e.g. where there are pupils who are known NOT to have access to devices at home.
- Schools should ensure that plans are in place to manage the school website and social media websites (share corporate messages only on social media) and contingency plan for staff to manage in case of absence.
- If teaching staff are unable to access SEEMiS, it is important that staff keep attendance registers for input at a later date as per school emergency SEEMiS contingency plan.
- For resetting of Google passwords, parents should be encouraged to contact school staff in the first instance, who will then use DigiLearn site [digilearnhighland.co.uk](https://www.digilearnhighland.co.uk). Please use: <https://www.digilearnhighland.co.uk/> to do this.

**In line with current Union advice, staff should be mindful of workload when completing these tasks and reduce workload in other areas to compensate if possible. HTs and other SMT should be mindful of the needs of staff in developing new approaches to delivery.**

## **Coronavirus and school closures**

The number of school/ELC setting closures in Highland remains relatively small and we are doing well in terms of following national advice to keep schools open wherever possible.

As indicated yesterday, although we very much appreciate that you are in the front line of queries from pupils, parents, staff and partners, we would ask that schools **do not** issue update information via Facebook, websites or letters to parents **unless the information has been included in an update email from the Highland Council**. It is also important that all staff refrain from direct communication with elected members and the media. We wish to avoid unnecessary rumour and speculation that may have an adverse impact on your own school community and other school communities and their staff. Advice on school closure was updated in the email sent at 20:56 on Monday 16 March.

There will be a further briefing tomorrow.

Thank you very much for your continued understanding at this time and for all of your efforts. The picture is changing rapidly and we greatly appreciate your resilience and versatility.