

Email to CEC
20 December 2020

Good morning

You will be unsurprised to find me writing to you to ask you to *urgently* reconsider your decision to not move to remote learning on 21st and 22nd.

You will be aware of the EIS view that the Scottish Government's attempts to force local councils not to accede to EIS Local Associations' requests to move to remote learning went beyond its powers - I attach the [letter](#) that was sent to you on 9th December for ease of reference. More pertinently, perhaps, the Public Health advice that CEC cited as the main basis for its decision is now completely outdated. In his letter to us, outlining the reasons behind the refusal to grant our request, Councillor Perry referenced relatively low infection rates in Edinburgh schools - clearly this has ceased to be the case, and there has been a very rapid and concerning rise in positive cases and in disruption caused by large numbers having to self-isolate. I am sure you all share my fears that this may be due to this new, highly transmissible, variant of SARS-CoV-2. Certainly, the marked rise in infections in schools means that this is a hypothesis that cannot be dismissed out of hand, and the precautionary principle surely means you should act as if this is what is happening unless and until it is confirmed that none of these cases are linked to this new variant. I hope I do not need to outline to you the consequences of failing to act decisively now to break transmission chains and contain any new outbreak - outbreaks that will hit our most vulnerable communities, who live in high density housing and are more likely to have multi-generational households, the hardest.

For this reason, it is the view of the Edinburgh Local Association that the best course of action is an immediate move to remote learning. To be frank, at this very late stage, full school closures would actually make more sense, as we have nothing like the time we would have had to plan properly had this been your decision on 11th December, but I do realise the legal issues this would present.

Should you feel that you cannot go to full remote learning (or even school closure), the following measures should at least help to mitigate the worst impacts of that decision.

- Anyone who has been self-isolating, and has been told that they should return to school on 21st and/or 22nd, due to the recent decision to shorten the self-isolation period, should be recontacted and told to stay at home (given that the basis of the change was that the chances of someone transmitting the virus is *reduced* in the later stages of infection, this would seem a sensible precaution).
- All parents/carers are contacted today and urged to keep their children at home if at all possible. This message should be promoted on social media and the press, as well as the usual council channels. It is confirmed to families that no absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- All staff with underlying health conditions which would make them more vulnerable to infection are told to work from home.
- Headteachers have support from CEC to look at their likely pupil numbers, and their staffing - schools where there may be shortfalls are identified and actions taken appropriately.

I am happy to discuss any of the above at any point today.

Please act now to protect our city, and to fulfil your duty of care to school staff.

Kind regards

Alison

Alison Murphy
Local Association Secretary
Edinburgh Local Association
EIS
46 Moray Place
Edinburgh
EH3 6BH

Mobile: 07948 280 906
<http://www.eis.org.uk/edinburgh/>
Twitter: @EdinburghEIS

Domestic abuse an issue? Go to <https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/Contact-us> for help.