



Education Resources
Executive Director **Tony McDaid**
Head of Education

Ms Elizabeth Thomson
request-599593-801a788e@whatdotheyknow.com

Our ref: EDU/FOI/2019/197
Your ref:
If calling ask for: Molly Magee
Phone: 01698 454512
Date: 20 September 2019

Dear Ms Thomson

Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002
Request for Information: Climate Strike Action

Thank you for your request for information, received on 26 August 2019. Your request has been dealt with in accordance with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA).

Please find listed below your request for information and our response:

1. The position of your local authority towards climate strikes and authorised/unauthorised absences from school in order to attend any Friday climate strikes, as of the date you respond to this request.

In response to your request, I can advise you that South Lanarkshire Council takes a proactive approach through our schools and educational establishments to promote democracy and support young people to become politically literate.

Political literacy promotes equalities through positive values such as empathy and respect and, through the curriculum, it supports the development of higher-order thinking skills such as knowing, understanding, analysis, synthesis and evaluation, helping learners to make up their own minds and express their own views.

In line with this approach, we recognise the climate change protest but we are encouraging schools to enable pupils to support this without taking time off school.

We have a strong focus on encouraging children and young people to attend school to help improve their learning and to benefit their overall wellbeing and, in this context, our approach – in common with that taken by other councils – is that if pupils are taking part in action as part of UK wide climate change protests which involves them being off school, it should be classed as an authorised absence from school as long as permission has been granted from a parent or responsible adult through the normal school attendance procedures, such as writing a letter. This ensures that no further steps are taken in this regard but, conversely, absence with no explanation from parents will mean that it will be recorded as unauthorised.

This approach also helps to ensure we are aware of which children are in school, and those who are not. As an authority, we have a duty of care to ensure that children attend school and to record when they do not. We feel that attendance at school is something that should be continuously encouraged and that parents, carers, children and the school all have a part to play in encouraging and stressing the importance of attendance."

Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton ML3 0AE Phone: 01698 454512
Text Phone: 01698 454039 Email: Lynn.Sherry@southlanarkshire.gov.uk



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2. Confirmation of whether climate strikers will be recorded as authorised or unauthorised absences by schools in your Local Authority area, and whether any punitive action will be taken against pupils or schools for involvement in climate strikes.

Please refer to our response to Question 1.

3. Details of any changes to the position or policy towards climate strike actions and authorised/unauthorised absences in your Local Authority during 2019.

The Council has not changed its policy as described above.

4. Copies of any letters that your Local Authority has sent to schools or to all parents/carers in your authority area during 2019, that relate to climate strikes or the Fridays for Future Movement.

An email was sent to South Lanarkshire Schools on 13 March 2019 which included the following advice;

If a parent/carers asks for permission for their child to participate in this activity, then via the normal school attendance procedures (i.e. writing a letter/informing the school), the school will mark the absence as authorised.

This approach also helps to ensure we are aware of which children are in school, and those who are not. Clearly, absence with no explanation from parents will mean that the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. The use of authorised absence will ensure that no further steps are taken in this regard. Our approach concurs with that taken by other Councils in that if pupils are taking part in action, it should be classed as "an authorised absence from school" as long as permission is granted from a parent or responsible adult.

In our approach to raising attainment and achievement it is recognised that attendance at school is something that should be continuously encouraged. Parents/carers, children and the school all have a part to play in encouraging and stressing the importance of attendance at school. As an authority we have a duty of care to ensure that children attend school, and to record when they do not.

It is also worth highlighting that we take a proactive approach through our schools and educational establishments, to promote democracy and support young people to become politically literate. Many of the attributes within the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence underpin political literacy. These include, for example,

- *'openness to new thinking and ideas',*
- *'secure values and beliefs',*
- *'commitment to participate responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life', and*
- *'resilience and self-reliance'.*

Political literacy promotes equalities through positive values such as empathy and respect for others and through the curriculum, the development of higher-order thinking skills such as knowing, understanding, analysis, synthesis and evaluation help learners to make up their own minds and express their own views. A wide range of approaches take place within our educational establishments, classrooms and other settings. These approaches typically include:-

- *discussions,*
- *debates,*
- *topic work and interdisciplinary studies,*
- *personal research and reflection,*
- *voting and mock elections*
- *the use of partnerships including visits and visitors, and*
- *'learner voice', amongst others.*

I hope the above information helps to confirm our position and shows that we have platforms which enable young people to air their views and influence change, whilst at the same time having in

place procedures which help to record non-attendance in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

Request for Review

The Council has an internal panel (the review panel) to deal with complaints from people who are not happy about the way that their request has been dealt with. Staff not involved in the original decision will handle any review. If you want to complain about how we have handled your request for information, you can ask the review panel to reassess our actions. Please note that if you wish to complain, you must do so by 21 November 2019.

In requesting a review, it would be helpful if you could quote the reference number found at the top of this letter and state the matter which has given rise to your dissatisfaction. You should send your request for a review to:

- Mr. W. Dunn, Information Compliance Manager, Finance and Corporate Resources, Floor 11, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton, ML3 0AA.

Alternatively, you can request a review at foi.reviews@southlanarkshire.gov.uk.

Please note that the review panel can only assess the way we have handled requests for information. It cannot consider complaints about delivery of a service or any decisions made by the Council or its authorised employees. If your complaint relates to one of these matters, you should contact the Resource responsible.

Should you not be satisfied with the outcome of our review, you will then have the right to appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner. The Commissioner will decide whether your request has been dealt with properly, in accordance with the Act. The Commissioner's contact details are as follows:

- Scottish Information Commissioner, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, Fife KY16 9DS; Telephone: 01334 464610; Fax: 01334 464611; e-mail: enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info

For further details, please see the Commissioner's website at www.itspublicknowledge.info.

Yours sincerely



Lynn Sherry
Head of Education (Support Services and School Estate)