



ELLON ACADEMY UP-DATE FOR PARENTS/CARERS

To: All Parents and Carers
From: Pauline Buchan, Rector
Subject: Information Up-date
Date: 15th May 2020

Quote of the Week beginning 18.5.20:



Message from the Rector – 15.5.20

Having had an exceptionally busy week in virtual school, I'm pleased to be in touch again with up-dates and information you may find helpful. Particularly at this time, we are reminded of the importance of communication with parents and carers and this week, we had a virtual Parent Council meeting, which was helpful, supportive and informative. There are few up-dates this week:

On-line Learning:

The feedback regarding our 'Ellon Academy On-Line Lockdown Learning Weekly Schedule' has been very positive and we will continue to issue this on a weekly basis to help and support pupils and parents/carers. This week's schedule will be published today (Friday 15th May) ready for the week beginning Monday 18th May. This will help and support pupils and parents/carers to see the work posted for the coming week on one document.

We have also been in touch with families who have required support with ICT at home and we are about to write to parents/carers once more to try to support those young people who may have found it difficult and challenging to access working from home and therefore have been unable to engage fully with on-line learning. We have a range of supports we can offer to them.

Moving Learning Forward:

Staff continue to post work, tasks and activities related to pupils' new course choices as we move towards a virtual change of timetable on the 2nd of June. Most pupils will move forward with their chosen courses and as I have previously said, school staff will be in touch personally with individual pupils/families if there are any issues or clashes of subjects. Some parents have expressed that there may not be enough work for the new courses at this stage or that the interface between pupils and staff is less than they feel it should be, so therefore, with that knowledge, we will address this concern. As is usual practice, there will be a 2-week window in August/September for pupils to change subject options in light of course award results.

On-line Weekly Assembly:

We aim to continue with the on-line weekly assembly for the purpose of reaching out to pupils to let them know that we are continually thinking of them and to give positive messages of encouragement and reassurance.

Primary 7 Induction

Some of you may have children, or know families who have children, who are about to make the transition from Primary to Secondary. Clearly, with school premises being closed, we are unable to offer the usual calendar events to support P7 Transition as we normally would. However, Mr McLachlan, DHT has been working closely with the Ellon Cluster Primary Head Teachers and also with the P7 Teachers, and they have opened a new Ellon Academy P7 Transition page on Facebook. The page is designed to provide information for parents/carers and P7 pupils. It will be populated gradually over the next few weeks with information, videos and briefings from Academy staff and pupils, including our Head Boy/Head Girl and Depute Head Boys/Girls.

Mr McLachlan has written to all P7 parents/carers and will write again in June with the latest updates.

Our Faculty Principal Teachers have also agreed to post P7 Transition tasks and activities for P7 pupils to access, like those activities they would have been able to access during the usual 3-day Induction Programme in June.

Those P7 pupils who receive Enhanced Transition, will also have specific supports and inputs for them, and the usual discussions re specific needs for a smooth start. We intend to have those meetings in June.

Staff Up-date:

Our staff continue to undertake all the other tasks we would be doing at this time of year, but this week, staff have been working hard to produce estimates for pupils' awards considering exams having been cancelled.

Staff recruitment up-date:

We have appointed:

- Two new English Teachers
- One new Technical Teacher
- Two new PE Teachers

We currently have a vacancy advertised for:

- 0.6 Depute Head Teacher

We have requested Probationer Teachers for:

- Physical Education
- Science
- Modern Studies

SQA, Estimates and Awards:

As I said last week, school staff across Scotland have now been provided with training regarding submitting pupil estimates to contribute towards final grades and our staff are currently working hard on this as per SQA guidelines and deadlines. Aberdeenshire Council has informed schools that we are not permitted to share pupil estimates at this stage, but we will ensure that you have all information as we receive it regarding this going forward.

Our teachers and principal teachers are exceptionally busy over the next 2 weeks compiling pupil estimates for all senior pupils for all courses. This is a huge piece of work and we have set in place our own Quality Assurance checks to ensure that the process is as robust as it can be.

The final QA of this process involves Ms Booth (DHT, SQA Co-ordinator) and I meeting with all Faculty Principal Teachers individually next week as part of our Centre Sign Off process, and we will be reviewing how all estimates have been arrived at.

Estimates are submitted to the SQA every year as part of a comparison process, to allow schools to review how close their estimates have been compared to the actual results. The purpose of this is to afford us the opportunity to moderate if we are marking pupils too generously or too harshly, so the estimates process is not new to us. However, it is crucially important this year, due to the situation we find ourselves in.

It is extremely important to ensure that parents/carers are aware that we are looking at Ellon Academy attainment data from the past 3-5 years, to review trends and patterns in pupil attainment and to take into account the natural improvements that most pupils gain between prelim time and final exams.

The last 3-5 years data is only a guide to support the estimates. The SQA scrutinise estimate data for all schools as part of their quality assurance procedures. However, staff are making evidence-based estimates, looking at range of evidence, moderation of coursework, quality of evidence including coursework, homework and prelims, bearing in mind the natural increases in progress and attainment that would usually occur following prelim exams, when pupils usually 'up their game' in terms of work and study.

This year, the SQA have reintroduced an Appeals process. Trained SQA Markers and Team Leaders will be involved in this process and we anticipate that appeals will be processed in time for Further and Higher Education course offer confirmations for pupils who are leaving school. However, we are awaiting more details to inform us how this process will work, so we will ensure that parents/pupils know all the information regarding Appeals as we receive it.

Work Experience:

Sadly, our S3 pupils who would have been out on a week-long work placement this month, will not be able to attend their workplaces. However, we are in conversation with Aberdeenshire's Work Experience Unit and will pass on any information going forward.

School Leavers:

Sadly, our school leavers will not be able to enjoy the same experiences during Term 4 as their peers have done in the past. Support and advice are still on offer from school staff, and, from our Guidance Team, who are always willing to support pupils as they move on from school. Skills Development Scotland will continue to track school leavers and follow up if they have been able to achieve a positive destination. Also, we are working on how we ensure that school leavers can return library books, textbooks, locker keys etc in a safe way.

More importantly, we do not want our school leavers to feel abandoned and hopefully, we would like to offer something for them in the future when we can have everyone together again. As the school leaving date approaches (31st May), we will plan how we can mark the occasion of leaving school for these young people with the current restrictions in mind.

Celebration of Learning

I hope you were able to see our Celebration of Learning video posted on our school Facebook page and on our website. Thanks to Mr McLean in Humanities for putting this together, and it was lovely to see some examples of excellent and innovative pupil work.

Summary

Here is a list of our continued plans:

- **Weekly Rector's Newsletter** to be issued to all parents on Fridays via Groupcall email, up-loaded on the website and signposted on Facebook, detailing up-dates and on-going information
- **Ellon Academy Weekly On-line Lockdown Learning Up-date** - The next schedule will be published on Friday 15th May in preparation for learning week beginning Mon 18th May
- **Weekly On-line Assembly for pupils** to be published Friday 15th May for week beginning Mon 18th May
- **Moving Learning Forward** - Teachers have been asked to post work for pupil progression to next steps in the new timetable. We will virtually change timetable in the first week of June, but in the meantime, our 'Moving Learning Forward' will ask pupils to attempt the work and tasks on their new subjects to consolidate skills, knowledge and understanding, providing a secure basis by which they can start their new courses.
- **SQA Estimates** - Staff are working on estimate for all pupils awards for all courses and the QA process begins w/b Mon 18th May.
- **Supporting family engagement in learning** – On-going work supporting vulnerable pupils and families to access on-line learning
- **P7 – S1 Transition** - We have now launched the Ellon Academy P7 Transition Facebook page: **Ellon Academy P7 Transition 2020**. This work has been done in collaboration with our P7 Transition Working Group comprising of staff from the Academy and our Cluster Primaries. Mairi McKeown, our current Head Girl posted a message for our new P7s last week.

The Parent and Pupil Zones on our school website for information and up-dates, which are listed chronologically, newest posts first and I have included some other signposts to links you may find helpful:

- <http://ellonacademy.aberdeenshire.sch.uk/parent-zone/>
- <https://covid19.nhsgrampian.org/pages/for-the-public/mental-health-covid-19/how-do-you-self-refer-to-the-psychological-response-hub/>
- Aberdeenshire Educational Psychology Service telephone line: 01779 403721

And, of course, contact us, when you need to.

We hope that our Ellon Academy families will continue to keep safe and well and that together, we can ensure that our pupils will be able to thrive in these challenging times, and that we will be back to school as soon as the Scottish Government deems it safe to open our doors again.

Warmest wishes,

Pauline Buchan

Pauline Buchan
Rector

15.5.20