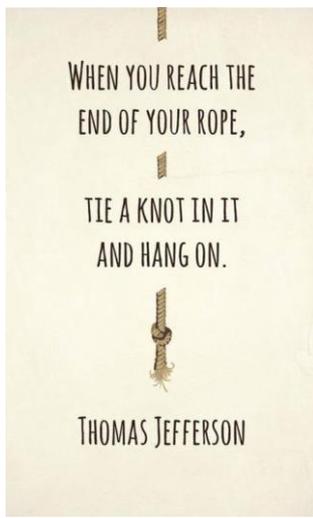




ELLON ACADEMY UP-DATE FOR PARENTS/CARERS

To: All Parents and Carers
From: Pauline Buchan, Rector
Subject: Information Up-date
Date: 7th May 2020

Quote of the Week beginning 11.5.20:



Message from the Rector – 7.5.20

It's hard to believe that another week is almost over and I'm writing to you all again. At Ellon Academy, we feel that it's good to keep in touch and to ensure that parents and carers are reassured by our communications during this very challenging time. There are few up-dates this week:

On-line Learning

Staff have been working on our new weekly up-date of on-line learning '**Ellon Academy On-Line Lockdown Learning Weekly Schedule**' and this will be published tomorrow (Friday 8th May) ready for the week beginning Monday 11th May. This will help and support pupils and parents to see the work posted for the coming week on one document. We hope that this will be easier for all to manage and we will be pleased to receive any feedback on this going forward.

On-line Weekly Assembly

This week we trialled our first on-line assembly for pupils. The purpose of this is to reach out to pupils to let them know that we are continually thinking of them and to give positive messages of encouragement and reassurance. We experienced a degree of technical issues with this, but we are hoping these will be resolved ready for the next assembly, week beginning Monday 11th May. It will be posted on the school Facebook page, the school website and will also be sent to parents via email through Groupcall. All correspondence sent by school office will be by email as a number of parents/carers are having difficulty with Xpressions – this will ensure everyone receives all information.

Staff

Our staff continue to undertake all the other tasks we would be doing at this time of year, including:

- Volunteering to supervise the Ellon Child Care Hub at Ellon Primary school
- Planning courses for next session
- Attending faculty and whole school on-line meetings
- Career Long Professional Learning
- Discussing and agreeing improvement priorities for faculties and whole school contributing to learners' SQA results by submitting estimate grades, and staff are currently working hard on this important piece of work.

Staff recruitment continues during lockdown, and these are the posts we have appointed during this period since the schools closed:

- Two new English Teachers
- One new Technical Teacher

We currently have a vacancy advertised for:

- 0.6 Depute Head Teacher
- 2 PE Teachers

We have requested Probationer Teachers for:

- Physical Education
- Science

SQA 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. 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 improvements that most pupils gain between prelim time and final exams.

'Moving Learning Forward' - New timetable – June '20

This most challenging issue we currently have regarding pupils' subjects for next session, is those pupils who have chosen Health and Food Technology. We are physically able to deliver only one HFT class in senior phase based on our staffing and our kitchen space in school, but unfortunately over 60 pupils have chosen this course and there are only 20 spaces. This is hugely concerning, and we are working in the most fair and transparent way to allocate places. Letters have gone out to pupils advising the outcome.

There are a small group of pupils who started on this course in June last year, and they have been offered the first places because they had to make alternative choices when one of our previous HE teachers moved onto a new post in the city. As you will be aware, we were able to recruit a new HE Teacher, but by the time her contract started, all courses were well underway and we could not feasibly put this course back into the curriculum for this session because there would not have been time to fully complete the course, thus disadvantaging pupils. With our 2nd HE teacher on board now, we committed to running this course for next school session 20/21. However, we did not anticipate the huge response to this subject, which clearly is a stunning affirmation of the success of the 2 HE teachers we have currently. That success has caused this issue, sadly. We have had to resort to 'names from a hat' to fill the other places in this class. This is the fairest way of allocating these spaces. If we were to request that our HE teachers made these selections of pupils, we would be treading in 'favouritism' territory. This would be morally unfair and we cannot put our 2 exceptional teachers in this position, so hence the random selection. Mr McCabe and our Principal Teachers of Guidance are working with pupils and parents to review timetables and new choices.

Celebration of Learning

Staff continue to work on a Celebration of On-line Learning by compiling a video with examples of work pupils have been engaging in on-line since the closure of schools. Hopefully we will be able to share this with you very soon. We continue to see some stunning pieces of work from many pupils.

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 first edition will be published on Friday 8th May in preparation for learning week beginning Mon 11th May
- **Weekly On-line Assembly for pupils**
- **Celebration of Learning** – staff are working collaboratively on producing a video to showcase some of the wonderful work pupils have completed during the school closures/lockdown
- **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 have all completed the **SQA Preparing Estimates** training and are now working to strict SQA guidelines and deadlines to take the necessary steps to making estimates.
- **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 has posted a message for our new P7s this 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, if and 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

8.5.20