



ELLON ACADEMY WEEKLY INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/CARERS



To: All parents/carers
From: Pauline Buchan, Rector
Subject: Weekly Information Up-date
Date: Friday 9th October 2020

Quote of the Week beginning 26.10.20:



Thank you once again to all parents and carers for your continued support this week. We've made it to the end of term 1 and we can't quite believe the October break is here.

Here are the updates for this week:

Virtual Assembly:

Next week's Virtual Assembly will be shown on Monday 26th October and registration will be extended for 5 minutes to ensure that there is enough time to view and for the Register Teacher to read the daily bulletin notices to all learners.

October break 2020

Today (9.10.20) is the last day for Term 1 for all pupils and staff, and what a term it has been. We have successfully managed to have all staff and pupils back in school despite the Covid-19 situation and learning and teaching has been our one focus since our return, working with all our pupils to ensure learning is front and centre in our priorities. Pupils and staff will return to school on Monday 26th October, ready for the usual 8.25am start.

Parent Council News:

1. Next Parent Council Meeting

- It was agreed that the next Parent Council meeting will be on **27th October at 6.30pm.**
- The meeting on the 27th October will be our AGM.
- We are looking for a volunteer to take on the Secretary post – support will be offered.
- Parent Council Meetings will continue to be online at present due to COVID19 restrictions.
- We plan to use Skype for Business again for the next meeting.
- All parents/carers have the option to attend our Parent Council. You will be invited to register your interest in attending the next one approximately a week before the meeting.
- You should then receive a meeting invite. If you do not receive an invite by 3pm on the 26th October, please contact the Parent Council or the school to let us know so that we can make sure you receive the details in good time for the meeting.
- Parent Council committee members will again be monitoring the side bar where parents can submit questions which relate to items on the agenda during the meeting.
- There will be an opportunity for additional questions at the end too (through the sidebar).
- This is new to all of us so please be patient as we work out the best way to ensure as many parents as possible can be involved.
- All parents/carers are again encouraged to contact members of the committee or the generic Parent Council email or to comment on Parent Council Facebook posts if there are specific questions or topics you wish to be raised. This can be done at any time.

Ellon Academy Staffing Up-date:

This week we interviewed candidates for the following teaching posts and we are pleased to report that our new colleagues will join us after all recruitment checks are complete and they have given a notice period to their current schools:

- Teacher of Biology – Mrs K Bond
- Principal Teacher Pupil Development – Mr N Coe

Google Meet – Contingency for Lockdown Learning:

We have now over 1000 permissions received from parents/carers, so thank you all for your response to our pleas for these consents. We will be able to take this initiative to the next stage after the holidays.

Reminder - Parentsportal

If you have not yet signed up for Parentsportal.scot, please do so as soon as you can by following the link below

<https://parentsportal.scot/home/>

You will need to have a MyAberdeenshire account to do this. If you pay for school meals online through IPayImpact, you will have this already. If you require any help with setting any of this up, please contact the school office on 01358 281150.

In previous years, we have sent you our Annual Data Check Forms in paper format. These forms ensure the school holds accurate and up to date information for children and parents/carers. This year we shall be asking for this information electronically. This is done through parentsportal, hence the reason for our request.

If you are still experiencing issues with parentsportal.scot, please phone the school office (01358 281150). I have been in touch with Aberdeenshire Council and they have had similar concerns from parents of other schools too. They have committed to looking into this on our behalf.

Strategic Planning:

This week, the Senior Leadership Team has been working on:

- Faculty Attainment 2020 Results Reviews
- Working Time Agreement - Workload implications of new SQA arrangements
- Contingency planning for local/national adjustments to lockdown – learning from the Fraserburgh experiences of positive Covid-19 cases in school.
- Curriculum structure 21/22
- Whole school calendar – Will be issued after the October break
- Implications of SQA announcements

Dress Down Day 9.10.20:

Thanks to our Exec Team and members of the Charities Committee for a very successful dress down day today. It was good to see so many pupils supporting 'Wear Yellow' for the Young Minds Charity. The money will be counted after the holidays because we must leave it untouched for 72+ hours. We will let you know the total raised during the first week of the new term.



Update on SQA Exams 2021

In a statement to Parliament on Wednesday 7 October, Deputy First Minister John Swinney announced Higher and Advanced Higher exams will go ahead in 2021, while National 5 exams will be replaced by a system where grades are awarded based on coursework and teacher judgement.

Due to ongoing uncertainty caused by the pandemic, combined with the fact that pupils have already lost significant study time as a result of the lockdown last academic year, normal exam plans were simply not possible, according to Mr Swinney. Replacing the National 5 exams makes space in the timetable to push the Higher and Advanced Higher exams back until May, making up some of the lost learning time. These exams will now begin on 13 May, around two weeks later than usual, and will run until 4 June 2021.

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) will put in place a clear contingency plan, however, in case it proves impossible for Higher and Advanced Higher exams to go ahead due to public health advice. The Scottish Government has stated in those circumstances and only if necessary, the SQA will award Higher and Advanced Higher grades based on teacher judgement, supported by SQA quality assurance, taking account of assessment evidence.

January Assessment Block 2021

Due to ongoing public health restrictions, Ellon Academy will not be able to run Prelim Exams in January in the traditional sense. Instead there will be a planned Assessment Block, which will run from **Monday 11 January to Wednesday 27 January**, where pupils will sit assessments in a double period of class time. The Assessment Block has been planned to avoid pupils sitting more than one assessment per day and to spread the assessments over the two-and-a half week period. There will be no requirement for Study Leave as a result, nor could the school justify pupils missing further learning and teaching time. More information about the January Assessment Block will follow in due course.

Thank you once again for your continued support and I hope that if you are having a break from work during the next 2 weeks that it is restful and enjoyable despite current restrictions.

Yours sincerely

P Buchan

Pauline Buchan
Rector
9.10.20

