



ELLON ACADEMY WEEKLY INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/CARERS

To: All Parents/Carers
From: Pauline Buchan, Rector
Subject: Weekly Information Up-date
Date: Friday 21st May 2021

We have now completed week 4 of our 5-week Assessment Block and staff are exceptionally busy with marking, feedback, and moderation. We hope to hear from the Director of Education soon regarding how and when schools should present provisional grades to our young people in S4/5/6 who are working towards qualifications in National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses. We will forward that information to staff, pupils, and parents as soon as it becomes available.

We must commend our pupils for their perseverance, resilience, and determination. We see some very tired faces, and we are proud of our learners in how they are doing their very best in exceptionally difficult circumstances.

Quote of the Week beginning Monday 24.5.21



Here are the updates for this week:

Next Parent Council Meeting:

The next virtual Parent Council Meeting is on Wednesday 9th June at 7pm via Zoom.

Please contact them via this email address: ellonacademyparentcouncil@gmail.com

Senior Phase Assessment Block Up-date:

The Assessment Block continues to run smoothly, so thanks again to parents and carers for supporting their children as they take these assessments. Learners who have missed assessments due to absence/self-isolation will be supported by Principal Teachers Guidance and Faculty. We still await guidance from Aberdeenshire Council regarding a co-ordinated approach to releasing provisional grades for senior pupils.

SQA Up-date National Qualifications 2021 – an important message from organisations working across Scottish education

14 May 2021

The National Qualifications 2021 Group* was established last autumn and has been meeting weekly. The group developed the Alternative Certification Model (ACM) in use this year and has continued to revise it considering the second period of lockdown and remote learning.

We want to reassure students that everyone in Scottish education is working hard on their behalf to ensure that the ACM allows learners to achieve fair and credible grades, with every step possible being taken to ensure young people's wellbeing is protected through the process.

At the heart of the model is demonstrated attainment, that is evidence of learning and skills. Based on that evidence, teachers and lecturers will exercise their professional judgement to determine provisional grades for learners. Those grades will not then be altered by the SQA unless an administrative error is discovered.

We understand that this is a challenging time and that the extended period of remote learning during lockdown has meant that many learners are producing evidence (undertaking assessments) over a shorter period of time in schools and colleges than originally planned.

Notwithstanding this, teachers and lecturers in schools and colleges are working hard to deliver the qualifications students deserve and we call on everyone to support both that effort and our young people through what will naturally be an anxious and stressful period for many.

It is important to highlight the following facts about the model:

- the ACM gives schools and colleges flexibility around the timing and nature of assessment to ensure that, as far as possible, there is maximum opportunity for learners to undertake the required learning and be given the best chance to succeed in any course assessments.
- the timeline for submission of provisional results has been extended to 25 June, providing as much time as possible to schools, colleges, and students.
- local and national support is in place to ensure provisional results are based on national standards.
- the SQA is working with schools, colleges, and local authorities to ensure grades are fair and its feedback from the SQA will be important in informing the judgements that teachers and lecturers make but the SQA will not change individual learners' grades because of any moderation process.
- the support available on national learning platform e-Sgoil has been extended to learners who, for a variety of reasons, have experienced extreme disruption to their learning.
- contingency arrangements are being developed for later certification for a small number of learners who have completed their course but have experienced particularly significant disruption that has meant they have been unable to complete all the required evidence.
- an appeals process for learners is being developed and will be published shortly.

Our key message to learners is that your grades will be judged by your teachers and lecturers, based on your assessment evidence and every effort is being made to ensure equity and support your wellbeing throughout the process.

We all remain committed to working together to ensuring that learners get the national qualification grades that they deserve.

* Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES), Colleges Scotland, Education Scotland, the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFs), School Leaders Scotland (SLS), the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS), Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), the Scottish Government and the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP).

Change of Timetable:

Our new timetable for session 21/22 will start on Monday 7th June.

Senior pupils who are 16 prior to the 30th of September 2021 are able to leave school from Monday 31st May when all coursework and deadlines will be completed.

Staffing Up-date:

- This week we have interviewed candidates for our Principal Teacher Digital Learning to take over from Mrs Moir as she moves on. Mr Ewan Armstrong was the successful candidate and he will join us in August 2021.
- During Mr Findlay's paternity leave, Keith House will be ably covered by Mr N Coe, Miss K Bond and Mr F McLachlan.

Mental Health Matters at Ellon Academy

Please see below some links from the Wellbeing Team to external websites involved in Mental Health week as well as some links to internal support tools:

[Mental Health Awareness Week 2021 - Mental Health UK \(mentalhealth-uk.org\)](https://www.mentalhealth-uk.org/)

[Mental Health Awareness Week 2021](#)

We're inviting you to immerse yourself in the '5 Ways to Wellbeing', while reconnecting with nature. The **'5 Ways to Wellbeing'** are a set of pillars which are key to improving our mental health. Modelled by the New Economics Foundation, they're geared around themes of social connectedness, physical activity, awareness, learning, and giving. Join us by building in some small yet effective activities into your daily lives to feel more positive and able to get the most out of life!

The Five Ways to Wellbeing are:

- [Connect](#)
- [Be Active](#)
- [Take Notice](#)
- [Keep Learning](#)
- [Give](#)

Here is an excellent website designed for parents/carers to support the mental health and wellbeing of their children:

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/>

YOUNGmINDS
fighting for young people's mental health

National Entitlement/Young Scot Cards:

Just a reminder for parents/carers to check if sons/daughters all have a National Entitlement/Young Scot card. Pupils accessing the canteen without a card can cause significant delays on the queues whilst they need to ask the servers to search the system for their name prior to paying for food and drinks. Also, when topping up pupils' cards with money, please be aware that it can take up to 24 hours for that top up to be credited, resulting in arrears which are automatically deducted when money is added.

Arrears:

Some senior pupils are in arrears currently, so if they are leaving school this term, please could parents/carers ensure that their payments are up to date. Thank you, Canteen Supervisor.

Improvement Planning Themes for Session 21/22

- Skills Development
- Digital Learning and Literacy
- Making Thinking Visible
- Promoting Positive Relationships – Whole School Strategy

Session 21/22 – School Uniform

As you will already be aware, in planning for next session, we are keen to re-establish our school uniform for pupils returning to school in August 2021.

We are working to produce a clear guide on our expectations prior to the summer, so that parents/carers and pupils know what to expect. We have been listening to pupils' views and this will be reflected in our publication which will be sent to you in due course.

Mr Cameron – Former Rector of Ellon Academy

This week I spoke at length with one of Ellon Academy's former Rector's Mr Cameron. It was a pleasure to hear his reflections on his time at the helm, and interesting to note that some of the issues he dealt with are still the same today. However, Mr Cameron is a custodian of Ellon Castle Gardens and he had some news of concern to share. Sadly, a small group of boys aged approx 13/14, have been vandalising taps, turning on taps, breaking lights and lighting fires in the garden grounds, and this has caused stress and upset for the staff there, who mostly are volunteers. I know that parents/carers will stress to their children how mindless this is, as we will do in school also. I am keen to support our local community in all endeavours, and I am disappointed that a minority of young people carry out these senseless acts. Mr Cameron is offering these boys a wonderful opportunity to build huts, to learn woodland and wood craft skills, so we are keen to identify them. Mr Cameron has given some descriptions of the boys and I have fed back to him that we are looking into this to try and identify those responsible and offer them this very generous opportunity to turn a negative into a positive.

Dates for your diary:

- S4/5/6 (National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher) Assessment Block starts on Mon 26.4.21 and runs for 5 weeks until Fri 28.5.21.
- Monday 31st May – official leaving date for Senior Pupils.
- **Please note there is no Monday holiday on 7th June for the Ellon Cluster Schools**
- Additional Inservice days: The Scottish Government have agreed 2 additional in-service days to support school in meeting the SQA requirements for school staff to work on pupil's assessment evidence, draft predicted grades and the quality assurance processes necessary to meet SQA deadlines. It has been agreed that these 2 additional in-service days will be on Thursday 3rd and Friday 4th June.
- Change of Timetable – Monday 7.6.21.
- S6 Leavers Event – date to be decided in June
- Occasional days for session 21/22
 - Wed 5.1.22 – occasional day added on the end of the Christmas break
 - Thurs 10.2.22, Friday 11.2.22 (Mon 14.2.22 is already a holiday and Tues 15.2.21/Wed 16.2.21 are in-service days)
 - It has been mooted that May Day and Jubilee Day are combined – National decision, so more info as it is received

Website up-dates:

Please follow the link below to the latest updates on our Ellon Academy school website:

<https://ellonacademy.aberdeenshire.sch.uk/parent-zone/>

Thank you once more for your continued support.
Have a lovely weekend.

Yours sincerely,

P Buchan

Pauline Buchan, Rector 21.5.21