

Our Ref LF/CR
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1 November 2021

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Dear Parent/Carer

Welcome back to the second term of school year 2021/22. I hope everyone enjoyed the October break and has returned refreshed and ready for the challenges of the new term as we head towards the end of 2021.

As we enter the winter months, we are likely to see an increase in cases of a range of different seasonal illnesses such as the flu in addition to continuing cases of Covid-19. This will undoubtedly affect our schools, both young people and staff alike. To that end, I would ask for your support in encouraging your child(ren) to follow all the mitigations which we continue to have in place to support the ongoing suppression of the Covid-19 virus. Good hygiene habits, regular testing (and please remember to log the results once the tests are taken) and all the other levers we have in place will continue to support us all to get through the pandemic.

We continue to follow the advice and guidance published by Scottish Government in all our schools and early learning and childcare settings. In order to keep schools open for learning, teaching and curriculum delivery, as many other activities as possible continue to be done virtually. This includes parents' meetings and this will continue to be the case for this school session. I know many of us are keen for concerts and other such events to be organised, but again the situation with Covid remains fragile and we are not yet fully 'back to normal'. There will continue to be restrictions on school life for some time to come. However, some changes were made to the schools' guidance just before the October break and these are outlined below;

- Where necessary, proportionate and viewed as beneficial, parents/carers may now attend school for **individual** visits on eg the progress, wellbeing and behaviour of children and young people (these will be for individual pre-arranged visits only and **not** for full-scale parents' meetings);
- In line with SportScotland advice, and where appropriate mitigations are in place, parents/carers may attend school premises to spectate at outdoor sports events;
- Where necessary and digital alternatives are not working well, Parent Councils and Parent Teacher Associations may meet on school premises; and
- Community-based interventions and community learning programmes may also make use of school premises if necessary, and particularly where there is a focus on supporting the wellbeing of children and young people.

The Scottish Government announced on 19th October 2021 that the Covid-19 mitigations in place last term will remain in place until such time when there is a more sustained decrease in case rates and lower levels of prevalence of the virus in children and young people. Scottish Government will be reviewing the situation on a weekly basis.

We have once again had a great response to our October holiday programme and my thanks to all colleagues who have been involved in organising such a wide range of activities. Planning is already underway for Easter and Summer 2022.

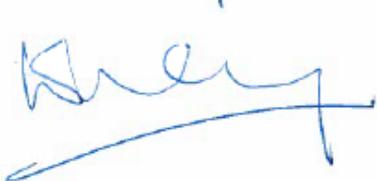
As always, our collective role in supporting child protection is vitally important. This means keeping eyes and ears open for signs that something isn't right and helping young people get support when they need it. Our friendly social work teams are here to help: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/local-social-work-office/> and young people themselves may find the Fearless website helpful in understanding as well as reporting crime: <https://www.fearless.org/>

Additionally, a range of mental health support services continue to be available to adults as well as children and young people. For more information, visit: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/community-care/living-independently/mental-health-wellbeing-services/> and remember that www.kooth.com continues to be open to young people aged 10-18 and www.togetherall.com for everyone aged 16+.

Finally, I'm keen to highlight a range of grants available to support individuals and groups with the cost of things like further education, school trips, music, arts and drama. You can find out more at: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/benefits-and-grants/educational-grants/>.

As ever, many thanks to parents and carers for your ongoing support of our schools and early learning settings and I wish you and your families the very best of health for this new term.

Yours sincerely



Laurence Findlay
Director of Education & Children's Services