



ELLON ACADEMY WEEKLY INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/CARERS

To: All Parents and Carers
From: Pauline Buchan, Rector
Subject: Weekly Information Up-date
Date: Friday 10th December 2021

Dear parents and carers

As you will be aware, we have had several new positive cases of Covid-19 amongst our pupils, ranging from S1 – S4. We hope that all families affected will be back to normal very soon.

Here are the updates for this week:

The Quote of the Week beginning 10.12.21:



School Uniform:

Thinking ahead to January 2022, we have noticed that some pupils' standards of school dress have slipped somewhat, in particular, white trainers are creeping in and some pupils are wearing tracksuit bottoms or joggers. We would appreciate your support in ensuring that pupils return to school in January dressed as specified below:

- All pupils must arrive at school in uniform, regardless if they have PE first thing
- All pupils must change back into their school uniform after PE classes

Expectations:

- White shirt and school tie
- Plain black jumper, cardigan, or sweatshirt
- Black trousers, jeans, leggings, or skirts (no tracksuit or jogging bottoms)
- **Black** shoes/trainers (white trainers are not part of the school dress code)
- School bag and warm outer clothing for adverse weather

We appreciate the support of parents and carers on ensuring our learners are compliant with our school uniform and appropriately dressed for school/bad weather.

COVID-19 Lateral Flow Device Testing at Home

(Up-dated information has been sent home today with clarification about home LFT testing and pupils can continue to pick up test kits from the school)

This information has also been up-loaded to the school website. Click on the link below to view:

<https://ellonacademy.aberdeenshire.sch.uk/covid-19-information/>

Thank you for all you do to help keep our school safe for everyone. A vitally important part of this is regular testing at home using Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests. For that reason, I am asking you to encourage or support your child this winter to:

- **Test regularly (twice a week) at home (not in school); and**
- **Report all results, whether positive negative or void, at www.covidtest.scot or by calling 119.**

Why does testing and reporting results matter?

- Regular, twice-weekly testing at home can identify people at an early stage who have Covid with no symptoms. By asking them to self-isolate, we can reduce the risk of the virus being passed on and avoid more of our young people and staff missing school over the winter period.
- Reporting positives means your family will receive the advice and support you need. Reporting negative and void results helps public health experts to understand the full picture of COVID in our area, and to plan to protect communities and keep schools safe and open.

What else do I need to know?

- The online portal for reporting results has been improved following feedback – you can now register family accounts that save key information for all your family members, so it only takes a few minutes to report results using your phone.
- All our school pupils can access LFD test kits free of charge from our school. If you wish to access LFD tests from Ellon Academy and have not given consent already, please complete the attached Consent Form & return it to ellon.aca@aberdeenshire.gov.uk. A Privacy Notice is also attached for your records.
- LFD tests are very good at identifying people who don't have symptoms but who have a "high viral load". Those are the people who are most infectious and likely to pass the virus onto others. All LFDs supplied by schools have passed rigorous safety tests.

NB: If your child receives a positive result from their LFD at home or has symptoms, they must report any LFD result online (or by calling 119), self-isolate and book a PCR test via NHS Inform at www.nhsinform.scot. Everyone in the household should also self-isolate and follow the advice about next steps on NHS Inform.

There are no plans to instigate testing in school, only at home.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and for contributing to the shared effort to test, report and keep our school community safe during the winter period.

Further information for parents is at: www.parentclub.scot/articles/covid-19-testing-staff-and-pupils, and more general information on LFD testing can be found at www.nhsinform.scot. Frequently Asked Questions for young people, designed in partnership with Young Scot, can be found here: <https://young.scot/get-informed/national/coronavirus-covid-19-testing-for-young-people-at-school>

This is the Consent Form for pupils to pick up testing kits from school for the purposes of home testing Christmas 2021 Activities at Ellon Academy. It can also be accessed on the school website by following the link below:

<https://ellonacademy.aberdeenshire.sch.uk/covid-19-information/>

NHS TEST AND PROTECT CONSENT FORM for COVID 19 Testing

For pupils younger than 16 years, this form must be completed by the parent or legal guardian.
Remember to complete **one consent form for each child** you wish to enrol.

This COVID 19 testing programme is being led by the Department for Health and Social Care and the Scottish Government to provide asymptomatic testing kits in schools for staff and pupils.

Taking part in testing is voluntary. There is no expectation or obligation to participate in home testing. Nobody should be required to undergo testing or pick up test kits without consent, and nobody should be excluded from school if they do not wish to test at home.

- **Please read the following sections, complete the questions below and email your form from an email address registered with school ie either parental email address or pupil glow email address to ellon.aca@aberdeenshire.gov.uk as soon as possible:**

I have had the opportunity to consider the information provided to me by the school about this home testing programme in the letter dated Dec 2021. I know I can contact the school to ask any questions about the programme and, if I have, I have had these answered satisfactorily.

For parents/carers/guardians of under 16s: I have discussed the home testing with my child and my child is happy to participate and pick up test kits from school. If on the day of testing they do not wish to take part, then they will not be made to do so and consent can be withdrawn at any time.

Please tick the box/type initials in the following boxes as appropriate:

1. I consent to my child participating in this home testing programme
2. I consent to my child's data being held in accordance with the terms in the data privacy notice
3. I agree that if my child's test results are confirmed to be positive, I will inform the school to support contact tracing
4. I consent and agree to accurately recording all of my child's test results at www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result or by calling 0300 303 2713

YES	NO

Name of Pupil: (PRINT) _____

Registration Class: _____

Age of pupil: _____

Name of Parent/Guardian: (PRINT) _____

*Signature of Parent/Guardian _____

**if form is returned from an email address registered with the school, signature is not required*

Date: _____

Relationship to child: _____

Christmas Lunches 2021 (Vegetarian/Vegan/Gluten Free options will be available):

- Wednesday 15.12.21 – S5/6 out early for lunch at 12.05pm
- Christmas Jumpers as part of usual school uniform **for S6 only** from Wednesday 1st December until the holidays
- Christmas Dress Up Day for all pupils and S5/6 Parade – Friday 17th December – All pupils can come to school in fancy dress on Friday 17.12.21
- Sports Colours Awards – Tuesday 21.12.21
- End of Term – 3.30pm Tuesday 21.12.21

School Transport:

Due to the imminent Yellow Weather Warning for high winds and snow on Tuesday 7th December, we asked the Aberdeenshire Transport Unit (TU) to determine if it was possible for school transport providers to get buses and taxis to come to Ellon Academy early on Tuesday if we decided that a closure was necessary due to the forecast.

We had to wait over 3 hours for this confirmation, but by that time, we had decided that due to the weather remaining calm and the forecast predicting the worst of the weather to come at approx 6pm, that the school would remain open for the rest of the school day, closing as normal at 3.30pm. This was communicated to the TU.

However, by 2.10pm it was clear that this message had not been received when we saw that the transport was beginning to arrive. We asked if it was possible for the transport to wait until 3.30pm because we had decided against an early close. For whatever reason, this request was denied, and we were told that if the pupils wanted to get home via school transport, then they would have to be on the buses by 2.30pm.

We had to take a very speedy decision to let them go at that time because this was better than no transport whatsoever for hundreds of pupils. We then had to tannoy to let pupils and staff know and a message for parents/carers was very quickly drafted and sent home as soon as we possibly could. Due to the unexpected arrival of the buses, and their inability to wait, we had literally 10 mins to get the pupils to their transport and this must have seemed chaotic to the pupils. However, behind the scenes, staff were mobilised very quickly to try and support them. We have already raised our concerns with the TU, and they are looking at this as a matter of urgency considering our negative communication experiences over the past week. For your understanding, the bus contracts changed at the start of this session and new providers were given these contracts.

We are aware that some parents did not receive this message in time to act and we agree that this is extremely unfortunate, but we know that all pupils did get home safely. We apologise for this, but the messages were sent immediately. It has been recorded on our system that the messages were sent as soon as we knew about the early arrival of the buses, so it may be that some parents didn't get the alerts at their end on time. Due to the 10-minute turn around, we had to get the pupils onto the buses and taxis, we had to dismiss pupils and send communications simultaneously, which is far from ideal.

The choice we had to make was to inform parents first and let the buses leave, which meant that hundreds of children would have been left stranded. The best option in those horrendous circumstances was to let them go to their buses and let parents know as soon as we possibly could.

We were concerned about the out of zone pupils who travel on a service bus but 2 members of staff ensured that all of the Balmedie pupils were on their bus and looked after whilst they waited.

The difficulty with Out of Zone pupils is that we have no jurisdiction or influence over the Stagecoach service buses.

We had expected the Arnage bus to come back in the afternoon, but as soon as we knew that it hadn't arrived, we contacted the parents/carers and staff stayed with some of those pupils who were waiting inside to be picked up.

Also, in terms of the Ellon town pupils who we wanted to remain in school until 3.30pm.

It was unfortunate that the timing of the tannoy messages got lost in between the end of period 6 bell. Again, the 10 min turnaround caused a significant problem. The tannoy message saying that all 'town'/non-transport pupils were to stay in class for Period 7 went out just as the Period 6 bell was ringing. Most pupils heard this and stayed for Period 7, some pupils didn't hear it and assumed that they were going home too, and others took advantage and went home anyway.

We hope that parents/carers understand that this situation developed at a pace out with our control and that we are reviewing all practice from the school's perspective, and also regarding more robust communications between the Transport Unit and the transport providers themselves.

Apologies once more for any inconvenience, stress and worry this may have caused.

Pupil Senate and Rights Respecting School:

As you will be aware, Ellon Academy is a Gold Level Rights Respecting School and to recognise and celebrate World Children's Day 2021, Mrs Leslie PT Humanities and the Exec Team hosted an excellent Pupil Senate Conference on Thursday 9.12.21. Senate reps were working in House groups looking at World Children's Day resources and identifying potential input for our new Rights Respecting School Charter. Here are some pictures from the day:



Limitless Learning and Responsible Citizens:

This week and over the next week in Humanities, our S2 pupils will be working on The Refugee Resettlement Programme and will be writing Christmas cards with welcome notes to the new refugee families at a national 'Welcome Lunch' in December for those who have arrived from Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq. Thanks to Miss Willins and Mrs Leslie for organising.



Christmas Cards!

The **Refugee Resettlement Programme** are hosting a '**Welcome Lunch**' in December for the Afghan, Syrian and Iraqi families who arrived during lockdown.

You are going write a Christmas card with a welcome note inside.

These will be passed onto the families at the event.

The coordinator has said she will take pictures of them with your cards for you to see! ☺

Celebrating Success:

We have been delighted that some parents/carers have been in touch to let us know of their child or children's recent successes and achievements out with the school. Young people can be quite shy about their success, but if they are will for us to celebrate these, please could you let us know if your child/children have had any external to school successes and achievements. We have seen quite a few out with school achievements since our return from the holidays and we are delighted to celebrate these achievements via our Facebook page, this newsletter and in school.



Pupil Achievements:

We continue to give those pupils with the most merits a Fast Pass to skip the canteen queue every week. This is proving to be very popular with pupils as you can imagine!



Pupil Achievements:

Congratulations to the S1 Boys team who dominated in their first ever game for the school. A hattrick from Owen C, 2 from Aaron M, 2 from Lewis N, 2 from our Captain Struan L, and another from Matthew Z means they move onto the next round of the Aberdeenshire Cup with a 10-1 win. Well done boys!



Pupil Achievements:

Promoting Literacy at Ellon Academy:

Some of the girls from the Library Committee have put up a special book Christmas Tree in the library. They chose the Richard Osman book as the tree top!

The younger pupil volunteers helped them with a wee convoy of books. Well done and thank you all! 🌲 📖



Columba 1400

During the past 2 weeks, our S2 pupils have been engaging in a Virtual Columba 1400 Introductory Session during their PSE classes. I have had a 17-year long association with Columba 1400, which is a Leadership Academy for pupils and school staff based on the Isle of Skye. S2 pupils at Ellon Academy are in the fortunate position of getting an opportunity to find out what this experience would be like, and what it would mean for them. I have taken 3 previous groups of pupils to this experience in my previous school, and it has been an immensely impactful and positive opportunity for those involved in the past. During the October break, I attended the Head Teachers' Leadership Academy on Skye for a week, alongside 12 other Head Teachers from all over Scotland. It was an exceptional experience, and we are excited for some of our pupils to benefit from this too.

In May 2022, (Covid restrictions allowing) we plan to take 13 S2 pupils and 2/3 staff to the Columba 1400 Leadership Academy on Skye for a week-long leadership training experience, using the amazing outdoor Environment on Skye and indoors at the Columba 1400 Centre in Staffin, Skye.

Today, Friday 10th December, we have hosted a Columba 1400 Values Day for over 60 interested S2 pupils and our next task is to identify pupils who are interested in the residential part of the course on Skye, to put their names forward. If there are more than 13 young people interested, then Mr Corser and I will interview the pupils to choose our final 13.

This experience is all expenses paid for pupils and staff, thanks to Columba 1400 and this includes travel, accommodation, all meals, snacks, drinks etc and the environment at the Centre is very comfortable and homely.

January Senior Phase Assessment Block:

Ms Booth, DHT has sent a letter to all senior phase parents this week, detailing the arrangements for our January Assessment Block along with a timetable of assessments for pupils.

All assessments will also be posted on pupils Google Classrooms and will appear on their 'To Do' lists which parents can also access via Google Guardian.

This is the letter sent by Ms Booth this week:

Dear Parents/Carers

SQA Examinations & January Assessment Block 2022

Currently the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is planning for a full examination diet, which will run from Tuesday 26 April – Wednesday 1 June 2022. This means a pupil's final grade will be determined by how well they perform in the final exam plus any SQA course assessment that contributes towards their final grade (e.g., assignments, projects, performance, etc.) Course assessment is usually marked by the SQA.

This means the grades teachers would expect their pupils to get (provisional results) will not determine their results this session. Due to the Covid-19 global pandemic and schools shutting during Lockdown, a new system of awarding grades to pupils had to be introduced for sessions 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 as exams could not take place. This was called the Alternative Certification Model (ACM). This model was based on teacher judgements and predictions.

*However, as session 2021-2020 is being treated as a 'normal' year by the SQA, teachers will submit estimates to the SQA as in previous years, pre-pandemic. The estimates submitted by teachers to the SQA will be used to: help to prioritise learners' scripts for re-consideration during the finalisation stage of awarding procedures; check that awarding outcomes are as fair as possible to learners; support the interpretation of evidence for Exceptional Circumstances Consideration requests. They will **not** be used as provisional results by the SQA unless exams are cancelled.*

According to the SQA an estimate is:

"... a judgement of a final grade and band for a graded National Course across all assessment components. It is based on a holistic review of a learner's performance as indicated by assessment evidence that is generated at the centre. It is important that each estimate is a realistic, evidence-based prediction of a learner's final attainment in the course assessment."

'Assessment evidence' is made up of assessments that learners have done throughout the year that best shows their skills, knowledge and understanding of the course.

SQA Mitigations and Contingencies

The SQA has made changes to course assessments because of the disruption caused by the pandemic. For example, in some subjects, elements of coursework have been removed or the exam has been reduced. In other subjects the SQA has removed some parts of the course. This means that learners should do less assessment than in previous years prior to the pandemic, so that there is more time for learning and teaching.

The SQA is also looking at what it can do in case the levels of disruption increase even more than what we already have. If this were to happen, the SQA may be able to provide additional support to help learners' revision and help to reduce stress in the run up the exams.

The Scottish Government will continue to monitor public health risks and if the COVID-19 pandemic gets worse to the point where large physical gatherings are restricted at the time of the exams in April and May, the SQA exam diet will be cancelled. If this happens, the focus for schools will continue to be learning and teaching, with assessment to support that process.

If this does happen, for session 2021–22, teachers will use learners' assessment evidence to decide provisional results. This means that teachers will base learners' predicted grades on assessments that have taken place during the session, such as prelims, practical activities, performances and class tests.

January Assessment Block

With learning and teaching of courses well in progress, with assessment supporting this process, learners will be demonstrating evidence of how well they can apply their skills, knowledge and understanding of their courses so far. Usually, prelims in January provide a key checkpoint to assess progress under exam-style conditions. Due to continued public health restrictions due to Covid-19, we are still unable to run a traditional style prelim diet. Instead, we have planned a timetable of classroom-based assessments, which accompany this letter.

The timetable, which runs from **Monday 10 January – Thursday 27 January**, aims to manage pupil workload by timetabling one assessment per day, and on occasion, two at most. Assessments have been timetabled in a double period for each subject (although the full 100 minutes may not be required) and will take place in your child's normal classrooms unless informed otherwise.

Depending on each subject's requirements, there may be no, one or two double periods timetabled during the January Assessment Block. Your child's teacher will go over the arrangements for each assessment, so pupils are clear on what to expect and when. This information will also be shared on Google Classroom.

Your child will attend their normal classes throughout the assessment block. Teachers may deliver revision in the classes running up to an assessment, if appropriate, or they may continue to teach the curriculum.

If your child requires Additional Assessment (AA) arrangements for an identified learning need, they may sit their assessment in a different classroom, for example, to access IT, or have different finishing times if they qualify for Extra Time. AA arrangements will be communicated separately to individuals.

Ellon Academy recognises the importance of parents as partners in supporting their child to achieve their potential. Please discuss the contents of this letter with your child and encourage them to speak to their teachers should they require further advice or support regarding their forthcoming assessments.

King regards



Ms T Booth
Depute Rector (SQA)

Parent Council:

Next Parent Council Meeting: The next virtual Parent Council Meeting is on Wednesday 23rd February 2022 at 7pm via Zoom. Please contact them via this email address: ellonacademyparentcouncil@gmail.com

Dates For Your Diary – Important Up-date below:

- 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 15.2.22/Wed 16.2.22 are in-service days)
 - Aberdeenshire Council sent information to schools this week regarding the May Day holiday and the additional day to celebrate HM The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee.
 - The May Day holiday on 2nd May will now be removed and moved to Thurs 2nd June 2022
 - Friday 3rd June will be a designated public holiday to mark the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee
- This change will affect our planned timetable change and our Senior Induction, so we will communicate those changes in due course.

Term 2:

- Christmas lunches every Wednesday from 24.11.21 – 15.12.21
 - This Wednesday (15th Dec) S5/6 will be release 10 mins early for lunch
- S6 Christmas Jumpers as part of usual uniform from Wed 1.12.21 until the end of term
- Whole School Dress Up Day and S5/6 Parade – Fri 17.12.21
- Sports Colours Awards – Tues 21.12.21
- End of Term 2 – Tuesday 21.12.21 (Last day of Term)
- Start of Term 3 – Thursday 6.1.22

Ellon Academy School Calendar 21/22:

Our school calendar for session 21/22 can be viewed on our website.

[Ellon Academy Calendar 2021.22 Final.xlsx](#)

Thank you once more for your continued support.

Pauline Buchan

Rector
10.12.21