

Our Ref LF/CR
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Dear Parent/Carer

Since I last wrote to you all on 19 March 2020, our daily lives have altered significantly as a result of the national response to the Covid-19 pandemic. I am aware that your Head Teacher will have been continuing to communicate with parents/carers as best they can in difficult circumstances to ensure continuity of learning and I have been very impressed by the range of imaginative home learning taking place across Aberdeenshire, some of it being shared on social media by schools and by parents themselves. We do not expect parents/carers to be teachers or to deliver the curriculum, but it is really encouraging to see so many of you actively supporting your child's learning and engaging in the work the school has provided. Furthermore, many parents/carers have been engaging in other educational and recreational activities such as daily exercise, baking and gardening. These are all hugely beneficial to your child's development and will greatly support their holistic educational experience.

As well as providing home learning experiences for young people, many of our staff have also been involved in staffing the childcare hubs which have been set up, seven days per week, to support the children of keyworkers, required to work at the front line in response to the pandemic. This remains an anxious time for everyone as lockdown continues and this is particularly the case for students who were due to sit SQA exams this year. These are not taking place and a separate letter is being sent to the parents of S4 – 6 students with details of this year's arrangements for certification.

Another area of concern relates to school trips and excursions, given recent advice issued by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with regards overseas travel. This was supplemented by additional guidance from the Scottish Government regarding domestic trips. This is a complex area and we are working with others both locally and nationally to consider how best to respond. Some providers have already provided schools with refunds so parents/carers can be reimbursed, or they have offered alternative dates for the trips. However, this is not the case for all planned trips and I am aware that this is causing uncertainty among many. Given the legal and insurance complexities involved, this is not a straightforward matter and your schools will keep you updated as necessary.

This is a challenging time for everyone and support and advice for education matters continues to be available through schools, albeit virtually for those who need it. For parents/carers who would like to talk through any specific education or wellbeing concerns about a child or young person, our Educational Psychology Service helpline is available on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9am

until 3pm on 01779 403721 or by contacting eps@aberdeenshire.gov.uk and leaving your name and number.

The anxiety everyone is feeling at present can often be exacerbated by what appears in the media, particularly online via social media channels. Some of the reporting is not accurate and we will continue to provide the latest and most up to date information on the situation with regards schools via our weekly Skype calls with Head Teachers so they can then provide you as parents and carers with the reality of the current situation and what this means locally for you and your child(ren).

Stay safe!

Yours sincerely



Laurence Findlay
Director of Education & Children's Services