

Ellon Academy Parent Council Meeting Minutes

10th November 2020

All participants again took part virtually due to current Government guidance on social distancing. Attendance was open to all parents or guardians who have children at the school. Parents were asked to contact in advance to note interest so that invitations could be sent through emails.

Attendees: N Topping (Chair), D McCulloch (Vice Chair), K Gray (Previous Chair), H Wilson (Acting Secretary), A Blanchard (Treasurer), P Buchan (Rector), T Booth (DHT), L Lawrence, L Gill, F Davidson, F Callen, Alan Souter, J Lorimer,

1. Minutes of the previous meeting

These were posted on the Parent Council Facebook Page, School website and emailed to parents and no concerns have been raised regarding the accuracy of these minutes from the Parent Forum. H Wilson noted that the Priestly Report had been referred to as the Presley Report in the previous minutes and wished to correct this. All others in attendance at this meeting confirmed they were happy with the accuracy of the minutes.

2. Treasurer's Report

Balance is £3,000.

Complaint regarding lack of access and problems with changing over signatories has been escalated to a bank representative in Yorkshire. Compensation is being discussed (alongside a promise that the signatories changeover will be actioned).

3. Rector's Update

Recruitment / Staffing update

PT of Digital Learning (using the John Swinney announced Government funding) to support online learning across the school. This will cover Google Classroom, Google Meet, Google Guardian, Google Profile etc. Mrs L Moir has been appointed to this post. She will continue to teach 3 days a week in the Technical Faculty until her position can be backfilled. She will work 1 day per week from home in this role.

All staff have made huge progress with their professional learning relating to digital support of pupils and this will allow the pooling of digital strategies.

Two current teachers have been successful in their applications to become Additional Support for Learning teachers:

Mrs Jackson (Maths)

Mr Sellen (English)

Both of these individual posts will now need to be back filled.

Mr Wylie will be going on Paternity Leave from 13th November

The school does not have as many teaching students this year due to the current Covid19 situation.

School Finances

The school is still waiting to hear from Aberdeenshire Council Accountants how much the school can “Carry Forward” from last year’s budget. This is usually finalised before now but many of these activities have been delayed due to COVID19.

Plans are being made for half of the usual carry forward amount as the school cannot wait any longer to make their plans.

The school hopes to purchase some laptops which will allow self isolating teachers to access all the school IT systems remotely and therefore continue working and supporting pupils.

Risk Assessments

The latest edition of the School Risk Assessment (version 006) has been uploaded to the school website. It now includes information related to the recent outbreak and updates related to PPE for staff.

4. Coronavirus Update

- It has been a hugely challenging two week period in school.
- During that time, three positive cases have been identified in the school community. The Health Protection Team have no evidence that any of these cases were linked.
- It has been frustrating for planning in the school because individuals who need to be self-isolating are being identified in dribs and drabs – over time. These individuals are contacted as soon as the HPT notify the school, but leads to a period of uncertainty for the community as more and more are identified. This has led to difficulties in staff planning as staff are identified and pulled from classes with no notice.
- It is the same with pupils – thus the reason why not all contacts are identified immediately.
- **The HPT / Test and Protect believe that they now have all close contacts identified within our community.**
- The school have really struggled this week with staffing as we have so many staff self-isolating and the usual absences on top of that.
- PB wishes to thank and praise the staff for their support. Many of the Senior Leadership Team and Guidance PTs have been covering classes / teaching all week, part time staff have volunteered to come in on days they do not usually work and others have given up non-contact time to help out. The school has also made full use of supply teachers.
- There have been issues due to the teacher Working Time Agreement. Teachers have protected time to allow them to plan, mark and organise their work which means that the school has limited options to cover classes (supervision wise).
- We expect all eight PE staff to return to work by Monday- one is due back on Thursday and one on Friday.
- The SLT identified specific staffing issues for the rest of this week and discussed their options. It was obvious that cover for all classes could not be provided (even using all the options available). It was decided that the older pupils would be more likely to engage with Google Classrooms work and their absence from school would also have less impact on parents than younger pupils where there may be more childcare / supervision implications. The decision was therefore taken to ask different groups of pupils to work from home for one day this week.

- The school risk assessment was due for an update and this has now been posted on the school website- with alterations highlighted in yellow.
- PB provided some clarification of the term “Deep Clean”. The school is not allowed to use this term unless the school has actually been closed (on advice of the Public Health Team). The school uses the terms “Enhanced” or “Additional cleaning” to indicate that extra cleaning has taken place when confirmed positive cases are identified. The areas where these individuals have been are provided with this additional cleaning and PB explained that we are very lucky to have the cleaning team we do.
- Standard cleaning at the moment is happening four times a day – before school, after break, after lunch and after school. In addition, the Canteen staff are using specialist chemicals to ensure areas used by pupils for eating are appropriately cleaned.
- Soap dispensers – parents have raised concerns that pupils have reported soap dispensers running out of soap. PB confirmed that the Birdie Bath linked soap dispensers have not been working for a long time and that this issue has been repeatedly chased through Aberdeenshire Council linked to the snagging list for the school. Parts have to be shipped from America and it has now been confirmed that the company which did supply these parts is no longer making them. Out of 15 birdie baths, 7 have non-operating soap dispensers.

The school have installed wall mounted soap dispensers near these basins for the pupils to use so that there is always soap available close by every sink. Communication will be repeated to pupils so that they are aware that soap is available and where these units are. Wall mounted hand sanitisers are being considered and it was suggested that the 5 litre mobile hand sanitiser units could be made available, however concerns were raised in relation to an increased risk of slipping on the gel if it was spilt on the floor.

A complaint has been submitted by the SLT to the Director of Education regarding the lack of parts or other resolutions to the issue.

Questions from parents on the night:

A concern was raised in relation to possible Disability Discrimination relating to challenging pupils who are not wearing facemasks due to exemptions. It was further explained that some of these pupils will have communication difficulties.

- Mrs Buchan explained that the school have received letters from a small number of parents confirming that their children have exemptions – these pupils have been issued with small cards which they are able to show. Furthermore, many staff members are aware of the pupils who have communications difficulties and will ask the question in an appropriate way.

When do HPTs advise schools to close?

- If there are three cases in a school within 14 days which are linked, an HPT may advise the school to close. The three cases in Ellon Academy were not identified as being linked thus we were not advised to close on this occasion.

Does the school have its own definition of close contact?

- Year group, classroom pupils sitting in close proximity or friendship groups?

- The school liaises with the HPT to identify close contacts. The HPT does in depth interviews with staff and the positive “case” to ensure all close contacts are identified. This process has been described as very thorough by staff who have been involved.

Are chairs still being wiped down?

- Yes – the risk assessment states that this should be done between each class and teachers are ensuring this is done in every class.

What are the guidelines regarding pupil to pupil distancing in PE?

- There is no requirement for pupils to distance.

Is inside PE teaching going ahead next week?

- The school have plans for next week but it is certainly challenging with all the PE teachers off school at the moment. We are lucky to have two DHTs who specialised in PE teaching as they have both been doing a lot of covering of classes.
- The plans will be communicated to parents when these are finalised.

Update: Pupils will be expected to continue arriving at school in PE kits for the foreseeable future due to a further change in advice to the school.

Also, there has been a decision made that swimming will not be offered at this time due to the practical challenges involved.

Concerns were raised by a parent in relation to reports of an incident where chemical burns on a child’s eyeballs were allegedly connected with “Covid Guard” being sprayed. This is reported to have happened in another Scottish school. What is the school doing about this?

- PB expressed concern about this and will raise awareness amongst Ellon Academy staff and will seek some clarification on this matter.
- PB confirmed that Ellon Academy does use this spray to clean desks and other items between classes.
- The school will check the contents of this spray and the potential consequences of spills on pupils or staff.
- PB advised that she thought teachers are usually the ones using the spray at the moment when it was required

How does Test and Protect work in the school?

- PB provided some helpful explanation relating to how practically the process works.
- The HPT ask the school to identify the staff who have taught a pupil who tests positive and all seating plans are provided to identify contacts.
- All of these staff are then phoned by Test and Protect (often 1hr to 1 ½ hrs in length) – this has been described as a very thorough conversation by staff who have been involved. Further contacts may be identified through these calls and this explains why there may be different timing for the identification of close contacts as the process takes some time.
- The school risk assessment is considered.
- Teachers are advised to stay in the teacher zones. If they are walking through the class to hand out resources etc, they should only be beside pupils for seconds to minimise risks.

- PSAs can now sit with pupils to assist them as they have been provided with fluid resistant face coverings.
- Risks relating to touch surface transmission is more difficult to identify and this is why we have increased cleaning within the school.
- The school have noticed increased compliance amongst pupils this week but it is still very challenging to encourage pupils to socially distance.

When will lunchtime clubs resume? (this may assist in providing positive focus for pupils)

- Unfortunately, due to the need for adults to socially distance, it is not yet possible to resume these activities.

Is there an update regarding Google Meet? Are self-isolating pupils able to access classes through this?

- The school is delighted with the response to recent appeals for parents to provide consent for pupils to take part in Google Meet classes.
- Direct contact has now been made with parents who had not yet responded.
- Teachers are now confident with using Google Meet as they have received extensive training through CPD since Lockdown and there will be more support provided by the PT Digital Learning.
- Progress has been delayed recently as the SLT have been busy covering classes.
- Google Meet is not yet available for pupils currently self-isolating
- Google Meet cannot be used until they have 100% consent by parents due to GDPR.
- PB was asked if it was possible for Google Meet to go ahead without 100% consent if the camera was simply covering the teacher and board. This is considered problematic as a pupil may accidentally come into view.
- A parent pointed out that there was only a need for pupils to be able to see the teacher and the board – not other pupils. The concern is that a pupil may accidentally come into view whose parents have not provided consent.
- Parents voiced concerns that self-isolating pupils can still not access education through Google Meet.

Is there any pre-recording of new subjects being provided for the self-isolating pupils?

- No

As a significant number of the senior pupils are self isolating - if they have to isolate on one or more occasions, it becomes a significant percentage of the academic year – is this taken into account when it comes to Highers and potential appeals?

- Yes

Has there been consideration given to holding back PE changes (use of Changing Rooms and moving PE inside)?

- Faculty PT is currently self isolating.
- There is a need to keep everything as safe as possible.
- It was due to be a transition week this week but the school is happy to keep the rules as they were ie no use of changing rooms
- Focus is on reducing risks to everyone.
- Health, Safety and wellbeing is most important

Is security of property in changing rooms being considered for when they are used again?

- Yes.

Lockers for S1s

- No progress with this - therefore these will not yet be offered to S1s

Prelims / Assessment Blocks

- These are at the schools's discretion
- The school is moving to Assessment Blocks instead of traditional prelims which means that these assessments will now take place in class time instead of the traditional prelims.
- The teachers will be ensuring exam-type conditions and these will take place over 13 days in January. And again in March. This should provide teachers with suitable evidence if this is required by the SQA and allows the pupils opportunities to revise for the tests.
- The school is looking to implement three Assessment Blocks next year – October, January and March

SQA Exams

- These may be invigilated by teachers as there appears to be issues with recruiting SQA Invigilators
- Wales have recently decided to cancel GCSE and A level exams – at this time, the Highers and Advanced Highers will be going ahead.
- Fifth Years have not yet had “in hall” exam experience and it is hoped that the school will be able to provide this before the SQA exams.
- TB mentioned that SQA information is currently being drip fed to schools from the SQA.
- The schools do not know when they will have all the information they need.
- This makes it difficult for the school to plan.
- The school cannot make robust plans until they receive key dates from the SQA
- The school does not yet know when they require estimates data for National 5 candidates and so cannot plan end of year assessments (which seems to be what the SQA are looking for). They have stated that the best predictive evidence would be from the end of the course when the whole course has been completed.
- From what has been released, the SQA will be looking for something akin to a final exam experience.

Exam Candidates with additional arrangements requirements

- Every year, some of our candidates require adjustments to arrangements for their SQA Assessments and these are also provided for the usual prelims.
- These arrangements will be in place for the Assessment Block assessments.
- PT Support for Learning is already planning for this to ensure pupils who need support will have access to computers, scribes, readers, separate accommodation, dictionaries etc.

Ongoing Assessments

- Parents requested that they are told when any essential tests and assessments are going to take place so that they can support their children and be partners in their education. Some children need more encouragement from home to ensure they are

prepared for assessments and it is helpful if parents have notice of the timetables for these. It is very difficult for parents to support revision at home if they do not know when tests are coming up.

- PB confirmed that parents would receive this information for all senior pupils before Christmas.
- Specifically, can the school let parents know if there are any important dates for each subject in the next 4/5 weeks leading up to Christmas if these are going to form part of the assessment of final grades?

Google Classroom

- Teachers have been reminded to provide completion dates for all work set through Google Classroom to assist pupils with planning.

Work Placements – will these go ahead this year?

- There are no plans yet to provide last year's third years with work experience as the Council guidelines do not allow this.
- There is no information yet regarding arranging work placements for Foundation Apprenticeships therefore these cannot be arranged either.

Use of Information Technology

- Principal Teachers are identifying SQA assessments which need to be taken online and senior pupils are being given priority for these resources.
- The school has not yet had reason to bump younger pupils from IT

Parents Evenings

- Ellon Academy will not be running any Parents Evenings this year.
- 15 out of 17 secondary schools in Aberdeenshire are not doing Zoom Parents Evenings this year
- Ellon Academy is offering additional third report for BGE pupils this year (the first reports have been issued) to replace the usual face to face parents evening.
- Parents should expect three reports for BGE pupils this year – two tracking reports and one full report with comments.
- **There was not enough time to provide full comment reports in September for senior pupils** so they will be provided with two reports. The teachers felt that there was not sufficient hard evidence to share these reports but they have been complete for internal discussion, **planning and next steps**
- The school acknowledges that it would be best for parents to be able to meet with teachers, but it is just too risky to do that at the moment.

Reports

- First and Second Year tracking reports have now been issued.
- When are the senior reports coming out? Parents have not yet received any information on progress.
- These reports are currently with Principal teachers for Quality Assurance. This is because all this evidence may be used towards grading if required.
- Senior reports should be with parents by the end of November / beginning of December.

- If any parent needs to, they can contact Guidance teachers to discuss any concerns they have regarding their child's progress.

Cycling Concerns raised by Parents

(a number of parents have highlighted their concerns relating to the actions and behaviours of school pupils on bicycles around the school)

- PB noted that there is a small core group of pupils who are causing issues.
- Their dangerous cycling behaviour has been highlighted repeatedly in school.
- There is a new police liaison person who has been approached for assistance.
- The topic is discussed in PSE classes.
- Parents of these cyclists have been contacted and asked to discuss the issues with their children.

Mental Health / Counsellors in Schools

- Ellon Academy has not been allocated a Counsellor **yet** under the scheme funded by the Scottish Government.
- Aberdeenshire Council have only managed to recruit 2 Counsellors to cover the 17 secondary school and associated 152 primary schools in Aberdeenshire (20,000 pupils).
- This is partly due to difficulties in attracting individuals to apply for 12 positions they were attempting to fill.
- Ellon Academy is using existing Pupil Support teams to help pupils.
- The Counsellors who are in position are constricted as they are only allowed to meet with 3 pupils a day due to current restrictions.
- The Director of Education and Head of Support Needs are expected to make decisions relating to the non-recruitment of these Counsellors.

Risk Assessment

- Details relating to the "Covid Guard" spray will be added to the school risk assessment when this is next updated.

5. Parent Questions

- These were submitted in advance to the school and the Parent Council is very grateful to the school for providing answers.
- Answers from the school in red.

2020 Results

1 - How did Ellon Academy pupils perform in the 2020 results? **We were very pleased with the National 5 results. We have been able to maintain our 4 year run of increasing our targets based again on our annual prelim analysis.**

64% of S4 pupils have achieved 5 or more National 5 passes. Our target was 60%

Higher results this year have also exceeded our attainment in 2019 – our target was 48% of S5 pupils achieving 3 or more Higher awards this year and we achieved 51%. Our targets were tentative in light of covid times, but these statistics were as hoped and predicted.

2 - Are there any subjects where pupils are not attaining as well as in other subjects?

We have concerns regarding Music Technology and Art and Design where attainment for some pupils is less than expected. (Helen, I think the response to this question should go to the parent who asked it and not on list minute please.)

3 - What actions are being undertaken to resolve any areas demonstrating underperformance?

Next steps:

- SQA support with moderation of standards
- Meetings with schools who have higher than average performance in these subjects
- Re-focus on on-going moderation and assessment techniques
- Shift in emphasis on skills and knowledge taught
- New GOALS programme for identified senior pupils

2020/21 courses

4 - How are Ellon Academy pupils performing in their courses this year in comparison with previous years?

The overall picture is positive and our staff are reporting that progress has been encouraging despite lockdown. However, in Higher Maths there has been an impact and we are taking steps to address this by using study time on Wed/Fri afternoons for master classes for identified pupils.

5 - Have teachers noticed a difference in pupils in S5 who were not able to sit their Nat5s relating to how they are coping with Higher courses?

Only in Higher Maths – as above

6 - Has the home learning had a positive or negative effect on attainment so far in comparison with previous years?

In comparison with previous years, our pupils have attained well and as expected, so no negative affects. The positives are that many pupils are now more confident in self-study and are more motivated to succeed in light of last years' experience.

7 - Has this been obvious in any particular subjects?

In Humanities, English and Modern Languages subjects in particular, lockdown learning was very successful due to the nature of these subjects and their course materials. It is much harder in practical subjects and in Maths and Sciences however because of the significance of more teacher led instructions and demonstrations. This would be the case in every secondary school.

Reports

8 - Could we have some clarification regarding the reporting programme for 2020/21? (Posted 18th September)

- Parents have been in touch to say that they don't understand the information posted in the Friday update- specifically are there certain dates to expect reports? What are the differences between the tracking reports and full reports?

Parents are particularly struggling with some of the terminology.

Tracking reports are an interim check in where we look at target grades and working at grades, effort, behaviour and homework. Following these, learner conversations are held with pupils informally in class regarding feedback on progress and next steps.

Full reports include all of the above and teacher comments too.

We made a whole school decision regarding the sharing of dates. We have our internal deadlines, but if anomalies come up as part of our robust Quality Assurance procedures, we need to build in time for amendments, corrections and changes, to ensure that this document, which is the flagship communication document with parents, is as accurate as can be. Setting a hard and fast date for release is therefore not preferred, so we can ensure that the reports are a full and accurate as possible.

Parents Nights

9 - Any plans to hold these, even if there is scope to have something done via a virtual platform.

There are no plans to hold parents' evenings this session. Some schools have tried virtual parents evenings and in secondaries, this has not been entirely successful or equitable to all pupils/parents. Please take this bit out Helen.

Ellon Academy has added additional tracking/full reports as an alternative this session to marry up with the teachers' working time agreement.

National 5 Courses and Assessments

10 - When will pupils and parents be told how these courses will be assessed? When SQA guidance is clear to schools. SQA have published broad guidance from school but we are still awaiting specific subject advice. As soon as this is received, reviewed and processed by SLT, PTs and Faculties, we will be in a position to set a whole school assessment and moderation of standards calendars.

11 - How will pupils be supported through the assessment process? Pupils are always well supported through this process by class teachers and guidance staff. A strategic approach to the assessment blocks will be in place. See info below.

12 - Will one poor result impact badly on a pupil's final mark? No. There are a number of assessments over a session. We want to ensure that all pupils are given opportunities to showcase their best pieces of work so we can capture and demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

13 - Will Assessments closer to the end of year have more weight? Assessments are on-going through out the school year. However as the year progresses, the predictive nature of assessment is more valuable. For example, the best evidential assessments include unseen materials, assessment in controlled exam conditions and covering a broad range of course materials and skills.

14 - Have teachers been provided with any guidance on what tests to perform, what evidence to consider and how the quality assurance process will work this year? When SQA guidance is clear to schools. SQA have published broad guidance from school but we are still awaiting specific subject advice. As soon as this is received, reviewed and processed by SLT, PTs and Faculties, we will be in a position to set a whole school assessment and moderation of standards calendar. Last year, Ellon Academy had a robust and rigorous quality assurance programme in place regarding the submission of estimates of pupil awards. SQA will also verify standards this year. Furthermore, moderation will also take place outwith schools via Subject Professional Support Groups. We will also be working with our Trio schools (Ellon, Meldrum and Turriff) to for cross moderation and comparison of standards.

Higher Courses and Assessments

15 - Some of the Higher classes have spent a substantial amount of time in term 1 on elements of the courses which have now been taken out of the exam assessments. Does this put these pupils at a disadvantage? Pupils are worried they have expended a lot of time and effort on work which will no longer be assessed and may not have time to complete the work which will be assessed. Our view is that no learning is wasted and skills learned are transferable. However, we understand and share these concerns. However, through the SQA review, they have increased the set question options so that pupils are not disadvantaged if they have previously covered materials not to be assessed. We are told that these will be assessed in different ways.

16 - What additional assessments are taking place this year to ensure that teachers have sufficient evidence in case the exams are cancelled again? **The staff are acutely aware of this and plans are in place to collect and review evidence continuously. Some faculties are using Google Classroom as a default so that all pupils work is held electronically.**

17 - Will pupils and parents receive advance notice of these so they can understand when the most important assessments take place? **All assessment is important and the main purpose of assessments is to check progress. The most important part of the assessment process is to use these as diagnostic tools and provide feedback to pupils on next steps. Assessment takes many forms, not just written responses to tests. We are planning an 'Assessment block' in January in place of traditional prelims and another in March. Parents/pupils will be provided with details on what this will look like in due course.**

18 - What measures are being undertaken to make sure that pupils are not being overburdened with assessment and assessments are being spread out to allow pupils adequate study time? **As above. This year we are trialling assessment blocks in place of traditional prelims in January and in March. The assessments will take place in class time and will be spaced over 2 weeks and 3 days. Pupils and parents will be provided with an assessment block plan to they can see when these assessments are. After review and evaluation, if this is successful, we will adopt this method of continuous assessment for next session too and there will be 3 assessment blocks per year (Sept, Jan and April)**

There is also scope for further assessment out with the assessment blocks based on the teachers' professional judgement and these additional assessment will be used and required to support and bolster pupil progress. Many other schools have moved to this model in light of Covid-19 experience.

We also intend to provide a full exam room experience for our S5 pupils after the Easter break 2021 so they can experience an 'real' exam hall scenario.

Advanced Higher Courses and Assessments

19 - Have the final dates for submission of assignments been confirmed? **No. Still awaiting key dates from SQA. When these are received we will then firm up our moderation and assessment calendars which will be shared with parents/carers.**

Prelims

20 - What will happen if pupils are self isolating or ill during Prelims (*Assessment Blocks*)? **Pupils will still get an opportunity to take the assessments missed when they return to school during class time.**

21 - When will the timetable for prelims (*assessment blocks*) be shared? **When it has been ratified by principal teachers and school staff.**

22 - Will pupils be given any extra study time? **No need. These are in class assessments not traditional prelims.**

23 - Has consideration been given to the effect of removing study leave on the ability of pupils to adequately prepare for the prelims? **Yes, the balance of more time in the classroom will help to support learners who missed out on direct teaching in Terms 3 and 4 last session. Teachers will use their expertise and judgement to ensure that work taught in the run up to the assessment blocks is fully relevant to the up and coming assessments which is extremely helpful and supportive for pupils.**

24 - Will all subjects be allowing adequate time to study rather than using the additional two weeks to cram in more learning?

Teachers will not be giving study time in class (for other subjects). They will use their professional expertise and judgement regarding what will be taught to ensure that pupils are fully prepared for all assessments. If teachers have robust evidence that pupils are fully prepared, they will work with revision materials or new materials.

25 - Will there be a blanket policy of no homework in the two weeks prior to prelims? This will be considered with Principal Teachers at our next meeting.

Mental Health Support

26 - What is Ellon Academy doing to support the mental health of pupils and teachers this term? Pupils – as always, pupils have access to support from Principal Teachers of Guidance and Pupil Support Workers if required.

All S3 pupils are working on a Level 4/5 SQA Mental Health and Wellbeing course once per week.

Staff have access to support from line managers, occupational health and Aberdeenshire Council's Time for Talking service.

27 - What specific support is Aberdeenshire Council offering our school this term to help with supporting our children's mental health?

Trainee Counsellors are being interviewed currently and will be allocated to specific schools.

28 - Will there be any school photo's

No, not this year due to current restrictions. We have made a judgement call for our school.

General statement:

We hope that all parents and carers are aware that the staff at Ellon Academy are highly trained professionals and experts in educational pedagogy and practice. Our sole aim is to continue to work exceptionally hard to support all of our pupils to achieve their full potential. We are doing everything we can not to 'trip them up'. Quite the reverse, we want to give them every chance to showcase their skills and knowledge to allow us to capture that evidence, so they can achieve and perform well for their future aspirations.

6. CarPark

- The car park continues to mostly be operating well at this time.
- The majority of drivers are following the rules.
- Drivers are reminded of the 10mph speed limit in the car park.

7. Pitches

- There is still no update on the school pitches. Work was due to be started over the October holiday but this did not happen.
- The school is very frustrated by the lack of progress, despite Aberdeenshire Council winning their legal action against the builders of the school. (Please take this point out Helen)
- SM will chase the relevant department to obtain a new date for work starting.

8. Communication

- School email headers are being worked on by the school office team.
- Communication from the school subsequent to the notifications regarding the HPTs and positive COVID 19 cases has been better received by parents following the school working closely with the Parent Council.
- As a consequence of feedback from parents, the standard NHS issued letters which are received by parents to notify of positive cases in the school have been altered to allow individual child names to be added to avoid confusion. This has now been changed for all schools.
- PB was again thanked for the continuation of the Friday updates. It is really helpful for parents to know that there will be a weekly communication from the school (in addition to other time critical updates during the week).
- Parents are able to access daily bulletins and the weekly assembly through the Ellon Academy Facebook page.
- Parents are reminded that there are Facebook pages for the Maths, English and Modern languages faculties in the school. Also, the Ellon Academy Sports Association has a page.
- The School Calendar is almost ready to share with parents but is much reduced compared with previous years due to current restrictions.

9. Next Parent Council Meeting

- It was agreed that the next Parent Council meeting will be on **15th December at 7pm.**
- Parent Council Meetings will continue to be online at present due to COVID19 restrictions.
- We plan to use Business Skype again for the next meeting.
- All parents 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 14th December, 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 still 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 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.

10. AOCB

The Parent Council would like to once again thank the Senior Leadership Team and the many teachers and support staff who continue to work so hard to make sure that our children can receive face to face education in these challenging times. We appreciate that the last couple of weeks have been particularly difficult and that many teachers have been covering classes to ensure the school can stay open.

Uploading Funds to pupil accounts / Lunch App

This continues to cause parents a lot of stress and appears to be worse on a Monday morning. Some parents have been advised to try using laptops rather than phones to upload money to cards – reports vary regarding whether this works better.

Aberdeenshire Council has not yet responded –it is an ongoing and widespread issue and being able to process payments is an essential feature of this system.

PB assured parents that children will not go hungry as a result of these technology problems. Pupils are asked to make a member of staff aware if there have been problems with the uploading of funds. Parents can also phone the school to make them aware.

Clarification of Self Isolating Rules

It was confirmed by PB that siblings of self-isolating pupils do not need to self-isolate unless the pupil who is self-isolating themselves develops symptoms. At this point, the household would be expected to self-isolate and the person with symptoms should arrange a test through the NHS Protect website.