



ELLON ACADEMY WEEKLY INFORMATION FOR PARENT/CARERS

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

This is the last newsletter of 2021 and we hope that all families affected by Covid-19 will be back to normal very soon and that there is minimal disruption to your family plans this Christmas.

As a reminder to all parents/carers, due to the increasing numbers of pupils now absent due to Covid, absent due to self-isolating and absent due to shielding, we do not have the capacity to populate Google Classroom as much as we'd like. Staff in school are still teaching full timetables, writing reports and currently covering classes for absent colleagues, so have limited time to up-date and check Google Classroom.

Here are the updates for this week:

The Quote of the Week beginning 20.12.21:



School Uniform:

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

- All pupils must arrive at school in uniform, regardless of 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) Black trainers with white stripe/markings are permitted
- School bag and warm outer clothing for adverse weather

Non-compliance with our school uniform will result in parental communication, asking for your support.

Covid Up-dates:

New guidance for Scottish Schools has been received and we are to continue with current mitigations already in place in school.

However, after the holidays, we will be more stringent in our pupil bubbles at social times so here is a reminder of where pupils should be at break or lunchtimes when in school:

- S1 - Canteen
- S2/3 - Sunken Social Area
- S4 - Canteen and The Street
- S5 - S5 Social Area
- S6 - S6 Social Area

COVID-19 Lateral Flow Device Testing at Home:

Up-dated information was sent home to parents/carers last week with clarification about home LFD 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.

- 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 LFD tests supplied by schools have passed rigorous safety tests.

NB: If your child receives a positive result from their LFD test at home or has symptoms, they must report any LFD test 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/carers 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>

S4/5/6 Mathematics Timetabling

As part of our Family Learning & Parental Involvement ethos at Ellon Academy, we feel that it is of utmost importance to communicate and keep in contact with parents and carers to ensure that we are partners in learning for all our young people.

As you may be aware, it has been very difficult to recruit Mathematics teachers across Aberdeenshire currently and we have continued to advertise our vacant post. We also have a new vacancy in the Maths Faculty due to the retirement of Mr Forsyth this Christmas. Mr Gatehouse and the Maths staff have been working hard to cover the internal vacancies to best support our learners, so we will be amalgamating some S4/5/6 classes when pupils return in January 2022 to ensure a better and more consistent learning and teaching experience. This change will also ensure that all pupils will be taught by a Mathematics teacher, as well as being able to receive support and feedback on their learning.

To further support pupils at this crucial time, the Mathematics Faculty will be employing a range of strategies, including:

- Continued use of Google Classroom, including the posting of faculty-created videos and lessons and links to useful sites/resources
- Utilising flipped learning strategies where appropriate
- Team-teaching where possible
- Offering an increased range of weekly faculty drop-in sessions

We would like to assure you that we are continuing to do our utmost to address the staffing situation as soon as possible. We have currently secured a Maths specialist supply teacher which is helping the situation in the short term, and we continue to advertise to fill our vacancy.

If you have any questions or would like further information, please do not hesitate to get in touch.



January Senior Phase Assessment Block:

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

Please find attached an amended copy of the January Assessment Block Timetable.

S4 Column A Assessments on Friday 21 January will take place during periods 5 & 6 – not periods 3 & 4. S5/6 Column E Maths (N5) will take place during periods 3 & 4 on Wednesday 26 January – not periods 6 & 7.

Apologies for any inconvenience.

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 last 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 none, 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)

A PDF file of all Supported Study sessions/classes that are being offered to senior phase pupils (S4-S6) at Ellon Academy can now be viewed on the school website (in both Parent and Pupil Zones – see links below).

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

<https://ellonacademy.aberdeenshire.sch.uk/pupils/>

Mental Health and Wellbeing - Your Mind Your Body Podcast - New Episode Live

The fifth episode of the second series is now live and available to listen to via the links below. In this episode Mitch is joined by Kerry (Kooth) & Roisin (Togetherall) to discuss these two digital wellbeing resources. Kooth is an online mental wellbeing community aimed at children and young adults, from 10 years of age up to 18 years old. Togetherall is aimed at anyone aged 16 years old and over and is an online community where people support each other anonymously to improve mental health and wellbeing. These services are available 24/7, 365 days a year.

Promotional videos for both services and links to both websites are available via the links below:

Kooth: [Promotional Video](#) [Home Page](#)

Togetherall: [Home Page](#) [Promotional Video](#)

Links for podcast: [Spotify](#), [Pocket Casts](#), [Breaker](#), [Radio Public](#), [GooglePodcast](#), [Anchor](#)

Holiday Chat is still available over the holidays for all young people:



Chat Availability Dates and Times		
Thursday 23/12/21 12pm - 10:00pm	Monday 27/12/21 4pm - 8:00pm	Friday 31/12/21 12pm - 6:00pm
Friday 24/12/21 12pm - 8:00pm	Tuesday 28/12/21 4pm - 8:00pm	Saturday 1/01/22 4pm - 8:00pm
Saturday 25/12/21 4pm - 8:00pm	Wednesday 29/12/21 12pm - 10:00pm	Sunday 2/01/22 6pm - 10:00pm
Sunday 26/12/21 6pm - 10:00pm	Thursday 30/12/21 12pm - 10:00pm	Monday 3/01/22 4pm - 8:00pm

Find support today by visiting [kooth.com](https://www.kooth.com)

Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) – Message from the Aberdeenshire EMA Team:

As we are approaching the end of another busy year, we just want to send a reminder that EMA Applications are still open [Education Maintenance Allowance \(EMA\) - Aberdeenshire Council](#)

The deadline for winter intake is 28th February and we cannot accept any applications after 31st March 2022.

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
 - Term 3 starts Thurs 6.1.22 – 8.25am
 - 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 not 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:

- End of Term 2 – Tuesday 21.12.21 (Last day of Term)
- Start of Term 3 – Thursday 6.1.22
- S1 Tracking Report (No.2) issued week beginning 17.1.22
- S2 Full Report issued week beginning 17.1.22
- S2 Virtual Parents Evening – Wed 26.1.22 (4.30pm – 7pm)

Thank you all for your continued support of our school.

We hope that all Ellon Academy families have a lovely, safe, and warm Christmas.

Pauline Buchan

Rector
21.12.21

