



ELLON ACADEMY WEEKLY INFORMATION FOR PARENT/CARERS

To: All Parents/Carers
From: Pauline Buchan, Rector
Subject: Weekly Information Up-date
Date: Friday 7th January 2022

Wishing all our parents and carers a very Happy New Year.

We hope that you've been able to have a peaceful and restful time over the school holidays and that Covid-19 has not disrupted your family plans too much.

We have returned to school this week with a number of pupils who have contracted Covid over the holidays and also a small number of staff too. We wish them all a speedy recovery and hope to see them very soon when their period of self-isolation is over.

Here are the updates for this week:

The Quote of the Week beginning 10.1.22:



School Uniform:

Thank you for your continued support of our school uniform. We certainly noticed that some white trainers had changed to black ones this week! We appreciate your support in ensuring that pupils continue to come to school 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

Covid Up-dates:

More new guidance for Scottish Schools was sent to schools yesterday, and we are to continue with current mitigations already in place in school.

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

Close contacts aged under 18 years and 4 months

Close contacts aged under 18 years and 4 months can take daily LFD tests instead of self-isolating. The daily LFD tests should be taken for 7 days in a row until the end of your self-isolation period.

If any of your LFD tests are positive, you should self-isolate for 7 days from the date of your positive test result. You do not need to book a follow-up PCR test to confirm your positive LFD result.

'Low risk' contacts aged under 18 years and 4 months

You may receive a letter from your child's school to tell you that you or your child is a 'low risk' contact. Letters are usually sent by schools or nurseries to children/young people who have shared a classroom with someone who has tested positive. Low risk contacts do not need to self-isolate, book a PCR test or take daily LFD tests. They should follow the advice in the notification to take extra precautions, including regular LFD testing.

More information on Self-Isolation (Frequently Asked Questions) has been posted on our school website. To access, please click on the link below:

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

COVID-19 Lateral Flow Device Testing at Home:

Up-dated information was sent home to parents/carers last term 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.

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.

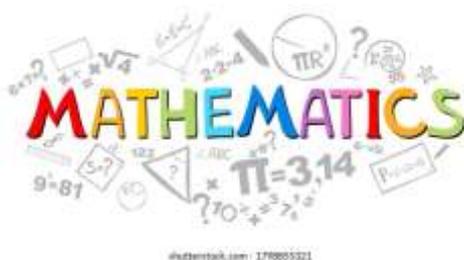
As you may be aware, it has been very difficult to recruit Mathematics teachers across Aberdeenshire currently and we have continued to advertise our vacant post. We also have a new vacancy in the Maths Faculty due to the retirement of Mr Forsyth this Christmas. Mr Gatehouse and the Maths staff have 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:

As you will be aware, our January Senior Phase Assessment Block starts on Monday 10th January 2022. Senior phase learners have been preparing for these assessments in class during last term and these assessments will support us in ascertaining learners' progress so far in their chosen courses. At Ellon Academy we view the Assessment Block as an opportunity to generate evidence of learners' progress to date and teaching staff will go over the assessments with their classes and provide marks and next steps for pupils via Learner Conversations. The SQA are still planning for a full exam diet and as in any 'normal' year, they ask schools to submit estimate grades in February, and the assessment block will support this process too.

Assessment Block Covid Contingency:

We are aware that some pupils may still be self-isolating or might be unwell during the assessment block so here is our contingency plan for any missed assessments:

- Plan A - Teachers will arrange for the assessment to be taken after the learner returns to school following their period of self-isolation
- Plan B – We can use specific times in the week e.g., Wednesday afternoons to 'mop up' larger numbers of learners who may have missed assessments due to absence/illness/self-isolation
- Plan C – We do not anticipate that this will be required, but if so, we can use the best pieces of learners' work for evidence to ascertain at predicted grade

This is the letter sent by Ms Booth last term:

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/>

Dates For Your Diary – Important Up-date below:

- Occasional days for session 21/22:
 - 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 now be a designated public holiday to mark the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee**
- This change will affect our planned timetable change, the S6 Leavers Event and our Senior Induction, so we will communicate those changes in due course.

Term 2:

- S1 Tracking Report (No.2) issued week beginning 17.1.22
- S2 Full Report issued week beginning 17.1.22
- S2 Course Choice Virtual Presentation to be published week beginning Mon 17.1.22
- S2 Course Choice Guidance Interviews week beginning Mon 24.1.22
- S2 Virtual Parents Evening – Wed 26.1.22 (4.30pm – 7pm)
- S3 Full Reports issued week beginning 7.2.22
- S3 Course Choice Virtual Presentation to be published week beginning Mon 7.2.22
- Occasional Day 2/Holiday – Thursday 10.2.22
- Occasional Day 3/Holiday – Fri 11.2.22
- Holiday – Mon 14.2.22
- Inservice (1) – Tues 15.2.22
- Inservice (2) – Wed 16.2.22
- Fri 18.2.22 – S2 Course Choice Option Form deadline

Thank you all for your continued support of our school.

Pauline Buchan

Rector
7.1.22