



Pupil and Parent Update – 25th May 2020

I hope you are all safe and well. Many of you will have watched the First Minister set out the route map for a gradual move out of lockdown last Thursday. Firstly, I would like to echo her comments about the resilience and positive attitude that our young people have shown in adhering to the lockdown guidance. I know that this has very largely been the case across our school community and I am very proud of the role our young people have played in behaving in a safe and responsible manner and which means the road out of lockdown can now be considered. At the same time many of us will have mixed feelings. We will be happy to see the first glimmers of a way out of lockdown and I'm sure there will be great delight at a potential future opening of the McDonalds and KFC Drive Thru! But we will all still have questions about our safety and ongoing risk as the rules regarding lockdown begin to change. These are feelings we will all be having and particularly so as the reopening of schools begins to be discussed. I hope the information below will help with this.

Scottish Government Announcement on Phased Reopening of Schools

Last week the First Minister made a statement in Parliament which detailed a route map for moving Scotland out of lockdown. This included information on the approach to reopening schools on a phased basis. The Scottish Government has produced a document providing more detail on the points made in the First Minister's statement and you can access it through the following link : <https://www.gov.scot/publications/excellent-equity-during-covid-19-pandemic-strategic-framework-reopening-schools-early-learning-childcare-provision-scotland/>

This document is only a framework and the Scottish Government states that Local Authorities (LAs) will be provided with detailed operational guidance in the coming weeks. As a result, at this stage, it is possible to provide you with only a broad summary of next steps:

- **Staff to return to school buildings in June 2020.**
Staff can only return when it is safe to do so and confirmed by The Scottish Government. Staff will continue to deliver learning through our Forfar Virtual Academy Approach and the class Teams they have set up.
- **Staff to plan and prepare for a new blended model of learning which will be implemented in August.**
The document states that this new model will ensure adherence to safeguarding protocols such as appropriate physical distancing and will include part-time in-school learning and part-time in-house learning for almost all children. As a school we will be planning what this will look like. As you can imagine this is a complex task and will be based on further guidance we will receive. We will continue to update you on emerging plans and ensure you have everything you need to know prior to a phased reopening from 11th August 2020 when the new session starts.
- **The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) states that preparations for the 2021 exam diet are underway.**
The SQA will provide further advice to schools on capturing ongoing learning outcomes. As a school, we started to deliver national qualification courses to S4- S6 pupils from 11 May. Senior pupils are already engaged in these courses and demonstrating their understanding

and progress through the work set by their teachers. Staff are assessing pupils on an ongoing basis and capturing assessment evidence through work that is submitted through Teams. It is important that pupils understand that work they are submitting now may be used to support teacher's future judgements regarding estimate grades. As soon as we receive further news about SQA arrangements for the 2021 exam diet we will let you know.

Extensive planning is required to implement the actions highlighted above. As a school, we are totally committed to doing our very best to maintain continuity of learning for our young people and ensure a safe learning environment for our entire school community. For now, we are doing this by working hard to further develop our approaches to digital learning. We have already made tremendous progress in a short period of time and this is testament to how we work as a school community and to your ongoing support. The further development of digital learning will be a core aspect of our phased return plan.

Forfar "Virtual" Academy

The timetable has now changed for all of our pupils, Teams have been set up for S3-S6 classes and S2 work continues to be posted, updated and accessed from the school website. We have been delighted with the uptake from most of our pupils and thank parents for all the support you have been providing to your children and our teachers. We have been working through any access issues, technical problems and forgotten passwords as well as providing hard copies of work where accessing remote learning is a challenge. Our Pupil Care & Support Team have also been checking in with families in their groups too and can be contacted by email should there be any issues with the work. We know that some of you may need access to jotters, paper and stationery so we are currently planning the best and safest way to make these available to those who need them. We'll keep you updated on this and where the pick up points will be. As stated above, this will be our approach to learning for the rest of the term.

Health & Wellbeing

Don't forget the Health and Wellbeing tab on the school website has a lot of great advice and ideas for looking after yourselves both physically and mentally as well as some really useful newsletters from our counselling partner New Solutions.

Prizegiving 2020

We are not going to let the virus get in the way of our annual prizegiving and celebration of success. Although of course there will be no physical prizegiving ceremony this year we are busy planning a virtual event. Nominations are coming in for all of our prizes and the various different categories. We want to have a really positive and uplifting end to the school session and to celebrate the many school success stories from before and during lockdown. Watch this space for more news about this exciting event.

Stay safe, stay strong and take care

Kas Mohamed

Head Teacher