



5th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Latest Updates

A Happy New Year to you all and I hope you had a peaceful and relaxing Christmas break given the challenging circumstances we have all found ourselves in over the festive period. Following the announcement from the First Minister yesterday I am writing with some further updates regarding the new term.

As you will no doubt be aware the First Minister announced an extension to the period of remote learning at the start of this term. This is because of significant concern regarding the increase in numbers of positive cases and the increased rate of transmission caused by the new strain of the virus. As a result schools will be closed to all pupils except those that meet the keyworker children criteria or where there are special individual circumstances and learning will be delivered through remote online learning. At the moment the Government has said that this will be the case until 1st February 2021 at the earliest. I know this will be a disappointment to us all but I am sure we all understand the decision has been made to ensure the health and safety of our communities. Of course, there has been some good news regarding the roll out of the vaccination programme which we all hope will support a return to normality.

As communicated in my last update before the holidays the arrangements for the start of the new term are as follows:

- The holiday for pupils has been extended until the 10th January with online remote learning for all beginning on the 11th January
- The school will be open for children of keyworkers who have requested a place and children whose parents we have contacted due to special individual circumstances from the 6th January – 8th January (until 1:20pm).
- The school will be open for children of keyworkers who have requested a place and children whose parents we have contacted due to special individual circumstances from 11th January. Pupils will be supported in accessing the school online learning offer during this time

Keyworker children requests

Following my last update parents have been in touch to request these places and will have been notified or will shortly be notified if their child has a place. The three key worker categories are as follows :

- Category 1 – Health and Care workers directly supporting COVID-19 response, and associated staff; Health and Care workers supporting life threatening emergency work, as well as critical primary and community care provision; Energy suppliers (small numbers identified as top priority already); staff providing childcare/learning for other category 1 staff.
- Category 2 – All other Health and Care workers, and wider public sector workers providing emergency/critical welfare services (for example: fire, police, prisons, social workers), as well as those supporting our Critical National Infrastructure, without whom serious damage to the welfare of the people of Scotland could be caused.

- Category 3 – All workers (private, public or third sector) without whom there could be a significant impact on Scotland (but where the response to COVID-19, or the ability to perform essential tasks to keep the country running, would not be severely compromised).

Requests for places can be made where either both parents are keyworkers, or a lone parent is a keyworker and all other possible childcare options, if required, have been exhausted.

Children with special individual circumstances

If your child qualifies for a place based on their individual circumstances we will have contacted you before the holidays to offer a place should you wish to take it up.

Arrangements for Key Worker / special circumstance children from 6th January

The school day will run with the normal start and finish times. Pupils will be registered on arrival at school and should not arrive before 8:50am. All pupils, unless exempt, will be required to wear a face covering at all times, observe social distancing, and follow the school hygiene procedures regarding sanitising and wipe down of work areas. Pupils should bring a packed lunch or order a school lunch. Pupils will have a mid morning and lunch break but in line with lockdown regulations will not be allowed to leave the school campus at lunchtime. School transport will run as normal.

Remote Learning

Remote learning will be delivered by each pupil's class teacher through Microsoft Teams and teachers have already set up their classes in Teams. More detailed information and advice to pupils and parents is available on a [help sheet](#) which you will find on the school website. This was posted before the Christmas holidays. Please let us know if your child is experiencing any difficulty in accessing the work by contacting the school. We would ask that you do this via email if possible. The help sheet sets out when work will be set, how to access it, and what pupils and parents can expect from their teachers. Please remember there is no right way or wrong way to support your children with their remote learning. Remember to build in time to support your child's and your family wellbeing during the week -it is ok to take some time out of the school week to exercise, play a game, bake a cake, zoom grandparents etc. If you are needing any support or advice about this please do not hesitate to contact your child's Pupil Care & Support teacher via email and they will get back to you. All of our contact details are included in the [Remote Learning Guide](#).

All of our pupils from S3 – S6 have a school ipad so will have their own device from which to access their remote learning. At the end of last term we distributed additional devices to those pupils in S1-S2 where we knew they did not have a suitable device. We have had a few further requests and will contact those parents within the next few days. Please let us know if your child will not have a suitable device for accessing remote learning and we will get one to you before Monday.

SQA arrangements and Planned Assessment windows

We understand that the move to remote learning and further delay to our planned assessment window will mean more uncertainty and worry to our Senior Phase pupils due to complete SQA courses. Please do not worry too much about this. Every secondary school and every senior phase pupil in the country is in the same position. In some ways, as we have not had positive cases linked to the school and therefore little time lost to senior pupils requiring to self isolate, our pupils will have covered more of the courses than some pupils in other parts of the country. We will update you with the delayed dates for our assessment window which will now take place as soon as schools return and let you know about any updates from SQA. The best advice to give at the moment is to make sure pupils stay on top of your remote learning, make sure the work they are submitting is the best they are capable of and, if they are in any doubt, encourage them to speak to their teachers. Remember to support them to do all they can to factor in time to look after their own wellbeing too.

Course Choice for 2021/22

This is the term when most of the work is completed to support pupils make their subject choices for next session. The S2 into S3 process has already begun and we will be getting started with S3 into S4 and S4/S5 into S5/S6 process soon. It looks likely that we will have to move the support we provide pupils to make these choices to a remote process along with the submission of their choices. We will provide more information on this very soon.

Covid 19 Support Funding Reminder

The school was successful in receiving £5000 funding to support families who may be experiencing additional financial hardship due to Covid 19. This funding is open to any family who meets the criteria and we know that there could be additional hardship due to this new lockdown. It can be used for the following purposes :

- To provide food vouchers for families and pupils who are required to self-isolate or would have an added challenge of meeting food costs due to lockdown
- To cover school payments for subjects such as Home Economics and Design & Technology where a family is experiencing financial hardship
- To provide vouchers for outdoor or warm clothes for school to help during the colder weather and cooler classrooms due to the need for additional ventilation
- Other support as agreed by the school

Any request will be treated confidentially. Just contact your child's Pupil Care and Support teacher or the school office and they will help you access this funding. It is there to be used so please do not hesitate to contact us about this.

Pupil Care and Support Team Update and contact details

We are delighted to welcome Miss Lucy Imrie to Forfar Academy. Miss Imrie is our new Principal Teacher of Pupil Care & Support taking over from Mr Preston who retired last year. Miss Imrie taught at Forfar previously and brings a wealth of experience with her. She will be the main point of contact for pupils and parents for Cally (A) classes.

Pupil Care & Support Teachers can be contacted at the following email addresses:

CALLY HOUSE

Miss Imrie: l.imrie@angusschools.org.uk

Mrs Ritchie: n.ritchie@angusschools.org.uk

LETHNOT HOUSE

Mr Bennett: s.bennett@angusschools.org.uk

Mr Martin: b.martin@angusschools.org.uk

MOY HOUSE

Mrs Callander: a.callander@angusschools.org.uk

Miss Seivwright: m.seivwright@angusschools.org.uk

Finally

As a school community we have already shown how we can work together in challenging circumstances to do the very best by our young people. The support and encouragement you provided your children and the school during the last lockdown and throughout this session was incredible. We know we can do it and can rise to the challenge of having to do it again. Please know we are there to help and support – you just need to pick up the phone or drop us an email. In terms of supporting your children do what you can, be there for them, listen to them but don't be too hard on yourselves when you encounter the inevitable frustrations.

Stay safe, stay strong and take care

Kas Mohamed

Head Teacher