



**Week beginning 11 May 2020**

Dear parent/carer,

### **Headteacher Update**

I am writing to you further to the ongoing COVID 19 restrictions and the path we all continue to navigate as we enter another week of lockdown. There is a lot of discussion and speculation about the current exit strategy and when further clarity on a date for return to school is provided from Aberdeenshire Council and Scottish Government, I will share that with you.

As a school we have adopted a staged response to our online learning offer. This has meant that we have focussed work on certain year groups and stages over the last 5 weeks of the lockdown. As you would expect the school continues to work through the School Calendar we had set out for the summer term. This means that we are adjusting and adapting what we would be doing in “normal” times. Work is currently underway to support P7 Transition to the Academy.

### **Learning at Home**

The Scottish Government are currently directing us in terms of our priorities and have stated:

*“We also know that this is a new and evolving situation and that we must be both ambitious for our learners, yet realistic too. In addition to supporting wellbeing, a key goal during this period will be to maintain engagement in learning, with approaches that are appropriate to children and young people in different age groups; in different home circumstances; and with different levels of digital connectivity.” Supporting Pupils, Parents and Teachers – Learning during Term 4 (Scottish Government, April 2020)*

As we continue to develop our online learning provision we continue to adapt and refine the work we do. This includes managing the workload for all pupils. One of the significant challenges we are facing is our usual method of responsive planning. As we engage with learners in our online classrooms, we will continue to use our professional skills to gauge their understanding, engagement and use our knowledge to assess their progress. Working remotely makes this more difficult. It is particularly challenging to measure the appropriate pace of work and we are aware that some pupils are finding this difficult. We know that the pace of work is also being affected by the capacity of TEAMS and that this is frustrating for staff, pupils and parents alike. We have embraced and encouraged a flexible approach so that staff and pupils can organise their own time around their own set of circumstances.

We aim for continuous improvement and continue to do so in our current situation. We undertook a pupil survey to find out what their views were and we continue to review what work we are setting to allow learners to adapt and manage class tasks. We only expect learners to do what is possible with the time, space and resources that they have. If you have a particular concern you wish to bring to our attention, please contact your child's Guidance Teacher. Please note that communication through TEAMs is for pupils and their teachers only.

All our staff recognise that home situations are different and we are mindful that family circumstances may be in a state of change. Many parents/carers are working from home and we acknowledge the challenges this can bring. It may be that families are sharing digital devices or that personal space for everyone to work might be in demand. School staff are also experiencing many of these challenging issues. As a school we appreciate that this is a difficult time for everyone. Our Pupil Support Team (Guidance / PT SFL/ Pupil Support Workers) continue to be in regular contact with pupils and parents during this challenging and uncertain time.

I would like to thank parents/carers who have contacted us to say how much you appreciate our hard work in recent weeks to deliver an online curriculum and support pupils. It is reassuring for school staff to receive acknowledgement of the work that they do.

## S1/2 Pupils

Currently, the focus for the S1/2 curriculum remains on maintaining the delivery of the core subjects and no timetable changes will be made at this stage. Further details of the procedure to move S1/2 pupils forward in the timetable will be shared with parents and learners as we progress this.

All pupils in S1/2 have now been added into a year group TEAM. The purpose for this is to allow us to address the year group as a whole. Each week we will pose a question to the cohort and ask all pupils to provide a brief response via their Assignment tab. We will start this process this week and pupils should look for their first question on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May.

## NQ Courses

Last week the school moved all senior pupils into their "new choices" based on course options made earlier in the term. All senior pupils were added to new class TEAMs to allow them to begin engaging with NQ course work. We will continue to monitor the progress that we make with this over the next few weeks. The feedback from teachers to date is very positive. All Faculties have been asked to provide an overview of the type of task to be undertaken and the time required to complete them. This information will be used to allow us to further support Senior Phase learners with workload as we manage our online lesson delivery.

I am delighted to note that our teaching staff continue to innovate and develop their learning in response to the current conditions. TEAMs training meetings have been held with school staff to promote greater use of the tools within the programme. All staff have been reminded to do the following actions:

*"When sending messages to pupils use @Team or @Pupil Name so that whole teams or individual pupils are notified of your message."*

*"All tasks, whether optional or compulsory, should be set using Assignments so that pupils can keep track of deadlines and manage tasks as best as possible."*

## **School Calendar**

### Trips/Excursions

Disappointingly we have had to cancel or postpone trips that would have been planned for this term. Parents involved with these events have been contacted and we will continue to keep all interested parties apprised of the travel updates. To support our parents the school will endeavour to work to recover all monies dedicated to these excursions.

### Prom

We were also disappointed that we had to take the decision to cancel the annual S6 Prom which had previously been postponed until June. All parents of S6 pupils will have received an email regarding this last week and we will look to reimburse ticket sales once we are able to return to the school building.

### Awards Ceremony

Our annual Awards Ceremony is a real highlight in our annual school calendar as we take the opportunity to publicly recognise and celebrate the hard work and achievements of our pupils. It is therefore with great disappointment that we have had to cancel this year's event. We will, however, continue to work with colleagues across the school to gather information over the course of this term to allow us to formally recognise achievement in an alternative manner. More information in relation to this will follow in future weeks.

### Reporting

This term we would also have been due to issue a Comment Report to the parents/carers of S1 pupils and an updated Interim Report to those in S2 and S3. During these challenging times we will not be able to produce these reports in the manner that we would normally do. The management information system we use cannot be accessed adequately from a remote environment. The school will provide you with further information for the respective year groups in due course.

Finally, I would like to thank all parents/carers again for the continued support of the work that we are doing in the school during this unprecedented period.

For further updates follow the school on Facebook - Kemnay Academy or Twitter @KemnayAcademy

L Paul

Head teacher.