

Stewarton Academy

Head Teacher Mr Ryan Miller

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Dear Parent,

I hope this letter finds you and your family safe, well, and looking forward to a restful summer after an extraordinary period for all of us. The last few months have been unlike anything we have ever experienced in education and, despite the challenges and steep learning curve, have served to remind me just how powerful a force strong partnerships between school and home can be. I want to extend my thanks for everything you have done to support learning at home over the closure period and for the many messages of support and gratitude we have received regarding [our virtual transition programme](#).

I fully understand that this is an unsettling time for many of our families and, in particular, to some of our young people experiencing key transitions in their education, whether that be from the Broad General Education into the Senior Phase or, in the case of our Primary 7 cohort, from Primary to Secondary education. The closure of schools has forced us to adapt our transition programme, with Stewarton Academy staff working to produce video content to introduce themselves and their departments, deliver [a virtual tour of the school](#) and to share key information about the learning pupils will undertake during their first year with us. I hope these videos and information have found their way to our Primary 7 cohort and encourage you to share them with your child if they have not managed to see it yet.

Whilst I know many pupils and parents will be disappointed at the absence of opportunities to visit the school physically as part of the programme, I am encouraged by the fact that most of our Primary 7 pupils have visited us throughout the year for programmes including STEM, sport and the school band and that I had the opportunity to speak to the entire cohort prior to the closure during a transition event at Nether Robertland Primary School. It has not been possible to safely bring in our whole Primary 7 cohort for purposeful transition activities this side of summer and I have instead prioritised an extremely limited enhanced transition programme to meet the identified needs of our young people while protecting the health and wellbeing of all pupils, staff and families. This decision was taken using the same rationale that I have used from the outset of this pandemic, which is to prioritise the health and wellbeing of our pupils, families and staff above all else and to use this as a platform for delivering and supporting learning at home as effectively as possible.

Undoubtedly, some of the current anxieties for families and young people are related to not knowing what education provision will look like from August. I am currently working with my Senior Leadership Team, school staff and East Ayrshire Council colleagues to plan our model of return for August in line with the current national guidance around physical distancing, health and safety and blended learning. The planning for return is extremely complex and the rationale for making decisions remains the same – safeguarding, health and wellbeing will be the priority and the platform on which we build our approaches to delivering and supporting learning both in school and at home to maximise attainment and achievement.



A significant amount of cross-service planning work remains to establish our model for return and to ensure that we are in compliance with all relevant guidance but I am fully committed to sharing this information with you as soon as I possibly can. On a related note, I recommend that all Primary 7 parents access the Stewarton Academy school app, which is the same platform used by our associated Primary schools. You should be able to search for and add Stewarton Academy as a new establishment, which will give you access to all school communications. The school app and [school website](#) are our main platforms of communication with parents and we also use our [school Twitter page](#) to celebrate success and some of the day-to-day achievements across the school.

In her recent letter to parents and carers, Linda McAulay-Griffiths, East Ayrshire Council's Head of Education, intimated that "In respect of school uniform for August...we are so aware of the restrictions on both uniform purchase and its availability and we will simply be so happy to just see our young people in August, so there is no demand from schools that uniforms must be worn at this stage if that is your preference." As a school, we are proud of our uniform and the role it plays in creating a safe, purposeful learning environment for our young people. I also think that for Primary 7 pupils moving to Secondary school, it is a special moment and memory to have the traditional first-day photograph in the new school uniform...for parents at least! With this in mind, I have communicated with parents to encourage full school uniform on return in August as a means of setting the right tone and keeping standards and expectations high from the outset. You can find all the information you need about our school uniform [here](#). We understand that not every pupil will be able to return to us in full uniform and this will not present any issues as care and welfare come first. If we can be of any support on this front, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We have a very active and supportive Parent Council at Stewarton Academy and, as part of our traditional transition programme, they would normally attend an event to explain what they do and to invite parents to join. In the absence of this opportunity, they have provided [information for Primary 7 parents and an invitation to get involved](#).

Finally, we are missing our pupils hugely and we cannot wait to welcome them back to Stewarton Academy and to get to know our new S1 cohort. As part of our planning, we are building in contingencies to be dynamic in line with the guidance as it evolves to the point where we can have all of our pupils back on a full-time basis. Like you, I am keeping everything crossed that this will be sooner rather than later. In the meantime, I want to welcome you to our school community and re-iterate my thanks for the support, patience and resilience you and your children have shown to this point.

Take care and stay safe,

Ryan Miller
Head Teacher
Stewarton Academy