

## **UPDATE Week beginning 4<sup>th</sup> May**

We are now entering week 5 of the school closures. I hope you are managing to stay healthy and well, not only physically in relation to COVID, but also mentally and emotionally as we all work hard to deal with the challenges of this situation and the times we find ourselves in. I realise that school is only one part of the bigger picture but hopefully by now our young people are starting to become more used to the new way of working. However I know that for all of us to some extent, and for some in particular, that does not necessarily make it any easier.

### **Online Learning and Teaching**

For many young people, the online work has been progressing well. However we are aware that this is not the case for all. In some cases there may be a lack of motivation and engagement but in others there can be good reasons for this.

Last week we sent out a text or email to alert parents where a young person appeared to be having difficulties engaging (the criteria was 'no engagement in over half of their subjects'). In some cases this gave parents a helpful warning that their child may not have been completing all the assigned work. However in other cases this clearly added to the anxiety in what was already a stressful situation. Our apologies for this – that was not our intention. We do realise that everyone's situation is different and there will be times and circumstances which prevent some young people engaging fully. Please do keep in contact with us where this is the case and we will look to support you.

The main vehicle being used by teachers for the online work is **Google Classroom** and this is proving to be the best. Teachers are uploading work on to Google Classroom as assignments, and pupils need to look on each classroom for their work and instructions each day. (It appears that some pupils have not realised they need to check Google Classrooms). They have been using these Google Classrooms all year, and are familiar with how to use them. Mr Herd has also created a help sheet (there is a link on the school website) to remind pupils how to submit an assignment if it is done on computer, or how to upload a picture of jotter or paper work. We would also encourage pupils to check in to their whole yeargroup classroom every day or two, as their Year Head is in contact on there and email addresses are available if there are any worries.

I am aware also that there have been issues with the IT affecting both pupils and teachers. Our IT system is probably now acting to a capacity that no one ever envisaged and sometimes can be slow – please be patient!

Parents may well be more familiar with **Show My Homework** (parents cannot access Google Classroom directly). We have asked teachers to indicate on SMHW from now on when a deadline has been set for an assignment so parents can see this directly. However the main pupil work will still be on Google Classroom.

Note that Show My Homework is due to change its name (and logo) to **satchel one** this week. – just to avoid confusion!

Our **Duke of Edinburgh** programme for S3 and S4 pupils is continuing at this time. Please see the posts on the school website (30<sup>th</sup> April) for more information.

## **SQA Issues**

The SQA have now provided further information about how schools should provide **estimated grades** in the absence of coursework and exams. Some further details have still to follow. It is becoming clear that schools will not release information about estimated grades before the exam results are published by the SQA in August and I will give you further information on that shortly. However I can assure you that school staff are working hard to ensure that no pupils will be unnecessarily disadvantaged in these unusual circumstances.

## **The Hub in Carlibar**

We have continued to make in-school educational provision for pupils whose parents meet the criteria for Key Workers to allow them to be at work. Similarly we have made provision for certain individuals who require that additional contact at this time. All children from the Barrhead area who meet these criteria attend Carlibar on the necessary days.

Our pupils have a classroom assigned to them and they use Chrome Books to go through the work on their Google Classroom, just like their friends are doing while working at home. We have a member of BHS staff present on any occasion any of our pupils are present but we keep this to a minimum to limit the number of people being at work and to enable appropriate social distancing.

## **School Trips**

I posted an update on the school website on 29<sup>th</sup> April regarding school trips. In summary, most of the companies are still not cancelling the trips and insisting that we will face cancellation charges if we do so at this point. We are continuing to work with the companies, ERC and the insurers to ensure that we can receive full refunds and be able to return all monies to parents. Please be patient!

## **Parent Council**

The Parent Council are planning to hold their scheduled meeting on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May as planned – but using a Zoom online meeting. It will start at 7pm. Check out the Parent Council Facebook page and I will add something to the school Twitter nearer the time. Don't miss this historic meeting!!

## **Inservice Day / Holiday**

You will be aware from the school calendar that this Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May was due to be an Inservice Day and Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May is the May Holiday. Across ERC, we are keeping these as holidays for pupils and therefore teachers and pupils will not be online on either Thursday or Friday. Staff will be working on the Thursday Inservice Day on a variety of activities, but staff will all be on holiday on the Friday.

The only exception to that is that the Hub in Carlibar will remain open for the children of Key Workers and certain other pupils where we have made specific arrangements.

## **Communication**

Mrs Morrison is continuing to produce our Pupil Newsletter and the first 'closure' edition will come out this week and update pupils (and parents) on many issues and achievements. She is also continuing to coordinate our Pupil of the Month for different subjects – so watch this space!

I would also encourage all parents to access the school website, Twitter and the Parent Council Facebook page on a regular basis as these are all a valuable source of quick information. I know some parents, like myself, do not like using social media but sometimes difficult times require difficult decisions!

We are sending this letter and other communications like it out to parents' personal email addresses where we have them, as well as posting on social media. If you do not receive an email, it may well be because we do not have an up-to-date email address for you. If this is the case, please contact the school office and we will add this to your record.

Although there is no one in the school building on a daily basis, our office staff continue to monitor school email. If you require to contact myself, a Year Head, Pupil Support or even a teacher, please email to school mail and your message will be passed on as appropriate.

[schoolmail@barrhead.e-renfrew.sch.uk](mailto:schoolmail@barrhead.e-renfrew.sch.uk)

I was quite challenged and moved by the words of the song that accompanied our S6 video, which was posted on the school website and Twitter this week. I wrote for them

***This year's S6 have finished their school days in some of the most difficult times that we have known but it's times like these we learn to live, give and love, maybe more than any other.***

***Take all the memories and these lessons with you into the new day rising before you.***

I think these words apply equally to all of us.

Can I thank you all for your support at this time.

Mr Sinclair