

Parental Update 23.6.2020

Strange as it may seem, we are now in the last week of school before the official summer break. While many of us will have nowhere to go at this point, I am sure that you, like me, are ready for a break. It has been a strange but busy period as we prepare for the new session in August, while still maintaining the home-learning that we have been using.

The school will close officially on Friday (26th June) at 1.00 pm and reopen to pupils on Wednesday 12th August. At that point we expect to commence operating the specially devised 'recovery' timetable (see below) to see us through the initial period until full return is possible.

I wanted to take this opportunity to further update you on a number of issues as we approach the holiday period and look ahead to August. I also want to welcome the parents of the new S1 in August to the school community and I hope you will quickly feel part of that even in these unusual times.

Home Learning

I would like to pay tribute to the number of young people who have engaged so well with the home-learning over the past few months and to the parents who have supported them through this. It was nice to be able to send out a good number of emails recognising this on a number of occasions in the last couple of months.

However, I am aware that some pupils and parents did not find this easy and this has been a more challenging time. I hope that you have still had a sense of support from the staff working with your child.

While none of us would see home-learning as the ideal method for learning and teaching, I hope you, like me, have appreciated the effort put in by staff to make sure your young people have been provided with a variety of good learning experiences. I have seen many examples of staff, pupils and parents trying out new and very different strategies in these days – we have had some very interesting and exciting staff training sessions sharing new digital methods with each other. We have received a good number of emails recognising and appreciating the staff effort and support.

The 'blended' learning model is likely to continue for some time in August but I would hope the part-time in school will give the additional support that will make it easier to focus and engage with the learning going forward.

Provision for Children of Key Workers & Vulnerable Pupils

Over the summer period, this will be coordinated by ERC and relevant parents have already had the opportunity to apply for this. This provision is only offered when the parent/carer (both parents/carers if more than one) is at work in a key role as defined by the Scottish Government).

Note that in August the Hub will still operate as required for the children of key workers and some other individuals. However these pupils will attend in-school classes during their timetabled slots. ERC has already sought requests from eligible key workers for this.

Transition Visits of P7 Pupils

It was great to welcome the new S1 pupils into the school yesterday and today. They came excited about their new start and coped well with the health & safety requirements that we have in place. It is a shame that we could not offer the usual full transition experience at this time, but they have all been in the school a number of times and this visit will have helped prepare them for coming back in August.

August 'Recovery' Timetable

I gave some information in the Update last week but am able to share a bit more detail now.

The timetable we are hoping to run is designed to allow half the pupils to be back in the building at a time with all pupils attending school for half the normal time. To allow this to happen, we require physical distancing to be less than 2m by that time or we cannot have half-size classes. If this is not the case, the timetable would need to be amended and pupils would come in less than half the normal time. We will keep you informed about any developments around this as the Scottish Government are currently evaluating the physical distancing requirements.

Whatever the case we will be careful to meet the Scottish Government guidelines in force at that time. We would also still be following the other government and health recommendations in force to maintain good hygiene and health & safety practices (see below).

Issue of Timetables

We plan to send out a copy of the proposed timetable to all current pupils' GLOW email account and to the parental email of the new P7s this week.

The Structure of the Timetable

You will then see certain features common to all the timetables:

- the school day will consist of a 3-period block of 2.5 hours from 9.00am to 11.30am in the morning and the same in the afternoon from 12.30pm to 3.00pm every day
- all pupils will attend school for either a morning or an afternoon every day
- this could be always mornings, always afternoons or a mixture for any individual – in many cases it will be mostly or all one or the other
- the complexity of the timetable will make it very difficult to switch individuals but if you have a genuine problem in meeting the timetable issued, you can contact the school and we will look at this.
- the timetable runs over a 2-week period and then repeats every 2 weeks.
- pupils in S1-4 will have one 3-period session with each of their subjects every 2 weeks (half the normal teaching time)

- pupils in S5/6 will have one 3-period session with each of their subjects every week (half their normal teaching time)
- classes will be half-size with half the pupils being taught in the morning and the other half in the afternoon (unless the class is small enough not to require this)

The School Day

- pupils should aim to arrive at school 10 mins before the start of their session (the school will not be open for entry more than 15 minutes before the start time)
 - **Morning Session** **9.00am to 11.30am**
 - **Afternoon Session** **12.30pm to 3.00pm**
- pupils from each yeargroup will enter the school by a specified route and door (shown on their timetable) and proceed straight to their class
- in most cases they will remain in that room for the 3 periods, and then exit straight from the class out the building by the same route.
- there will be no intervals and no pupils will remain in school over lunchtime

Home Learning

- all pupils will only be in school for half their normal teaching time.
- the pupil's timetable will indicate 'Working from home' at other sessions and pupils will be expected to continue to working at home.
- this work will be coordinated through the in-school contact time and other distance learning activities.

Health & Safety

- we will continue to follow the appropriate guidelines on health & safety and would ask for your help in reinforcing that with the young people
- there is a hand sanitiser machine at each of the entrance/exit doors which pupils and staff will make use of.
- every classroom will be equipped with sanitising materials and all staff and pupils will share responsibility for cleaning their work station / area at the start/end of their session
- there is limited internal movement in the school during the sessions which should minimise any risk.
- Pupils will be encouraged to wash their hands regularly for 20 seconds and to follow safe hygiene practices around coughing, sneezing and use of tissues..
- Additional cleaning will take place throughout the school day
- Each room will receive a thorough clean at the end of each day

Risk Assessment

- The building has been fully risk assessed and measures have been put into place to ensure the health & safety of all pupils and staff.
- Since our timetable structure means pupils will enter the building at the start of each session and leave at the end, we will not operate a one-way system or up and down stairs. This would only inhibit the flow of traffic.
- We will operate 3 doors for entry and exit and 2 yeargroups will be allocated to each

- **Main Front Door** – S1, S6 and staff
- **Door 2** - Rear door at foot of English Stairs – S2 and S4
- **Door 3** – Rear door at the foot of the Modern Language / RME stairs – S3 and S5
- Additional cleaning will take place throughout the school day

Uniform, Equipment and PPE

Like all the other secondary schools in ERC we are looking for our young people to return to school in full **uniform**. This will encourage a sense of normality and I believe will help young people to get back into good habits and positive mindframes quicker.

We have sought advice on any health & safety issues around this. We are aware that Scottish Government guidance has been provided for some high risk environments such as Health and Care settings which indicates a need to change and launder clothing on a daily basis; however at this time this advice has not been extended to schools. In fact, it is recognised that soft fabrics like shirts and blazers carry less risk than some garments that hold water on the surface; some other outdoor jackets would be worse than blazers. While doctors have for some time prior to COVID avoided ties, this is related to infection control measures in the clinical setting. Ties and long sleeves are a risk for transmitting infections between patients but this principle is not relevant for schools.

We are however mindful of current times and the choice of items being limited, so we want to reassure parents that we will operate a level of flexibility and discretion to ensure no child will be made to feel different because of their dress when they return to school in August.

We will not be using our changing rooms, initially at least, so if your young person has PE, they should come into school in their **PE kit** for that day. We would ask that all young people have the purple school polo shirt or tee-shirt with the black shorts, leggings or tracksuit trousers where possible.

Some queries have been raised as to bringing **stationary equipment, pencil case** and **bags** to school. Again within the context of our timetable arrangements, with pupils entering and exiting straight to a single working area, it would be more hygienic for pupils to bring their own rather than use shared materials.

All **lockers** will be out of use for the duration of the restrictions. If a pupil has left items in their locker, a janitor or Year Head would be able to give them access to remove these.

The current guidance is that there is no need for any **PPE** for pupils or staff except in a few special situations linked to first aid. This will also help us provide as much normality as possible, but if the guidance were to change by August, we will let you know.

Food & Drink

Due to the current restrictions, there will be no access to the water coolers in school and there will be no snack bar or canteen facility. Pupils can bring in a drink for the

period they are in school each day but please note that glass bottles / fizzy drinks / cans of energy drinks are not permitted in the school in line with our Health and Wellbeing approach.

Young people entitled to **Free School Meals** will continue to receive food packs to their home address and should use these to make up their lunches if they are accessing the Hub and so are in school for the whole day.

Parents & Communication

At this point we do not know what the position will be for our usual communications through parents' meetings. We will give you more information nearer the time.

Parents and other visitors should not be coming into the school buildings or immediate grounds. If picking up or bringing a child by car, please consider dropping off your young person a short distance away to avoid the need to be inside the school grounds.

If you do require to meet with staff, this can only be arranged by appointment and only 1 parent/carer per pupil will be allowed inside the building. Please use telephone or email to make contact. Please also ensure the school has an up to date email address and the correct contact information.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Over the years, these have played a major part in the life and ethos of Barrhead High School. At this point we do not know the extent of what can and cannot take place but we will all be working very hard to get back to the usual situation or finding alternative ways of working.

SOME OTHER NEWS

School Trip Refunds

I am pleased to be able to say that we are seeing some progress now. We have been able to authorise full refunds for the London Trip and I am hoping that the same will follow for the others. Insurance claims have been submitted for the other 4 and once the insurance company has indicated their approval, ERC have authorised us to make the refund while the claim is still pending – good news for us all!

Awards Ceremonies

At this time of year, we would normally be inviting parents/carers in to join us in celebrating the achievements of the young people in (old) S1, S2 and S3. This has not been possible this year, but I would like to thanks our PT Development, Mrs Morrison, who has gone ahead and organised a 'virtual' celebration through Twitter.

In Conclusion

As you will be aware, due to the unprecedented situation that had hit the world and the lack of a Head Teacher to take over from me at that point, I was happy to put my retirement due in April on hold for a little longer (I had nowhere to go and no one to go with in any case!!)

While it was not how I envisaged spending my time over the past 3 months, I have to say it has given me a real sense of purpose and satisfaction being able to help lead the school community through some very difficult days. In the midst of much concern and confusion, I have also seen some outstanding acts of kindness and resilience, not least within our own school community, which will stay with me for a long time.

It has also meant that I have completed a nice round number of 10 years in post (that pleases the mathematician in me!) and I look back over this period with pride in having worked with such a great community of pupils, staff and parents. Barrhead High will always have a special place in my heart and memories.

I would at this time like to extend a welcome to Mrs Fiona Johnston, who will take over as Head Teacher of Barrhead High School, on my retirement from August. I will still be in post until Mon 10th August when she will officially commence duties, although she has already been very involved in the planning and preparation. I can still be contacted via schoolmail until then.

Thank you for your support over this time and my best wishes to you all going forward from here.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Andy Sinclair'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andy Sinclair,
Head Teacher

23rd June 2020