



Education, Communities & Organisational Development

Moray Council
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24 March 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

It has been great to be able to welcome more children and young people back into school buildings over the last two weeks, particularly as we marked the anniversary of the first period of school closure on 23 March 2020. Children, young people and staff are delighted to be physically back together again and have responded admirably to expectations of them. After a challenging year it is lovely to see how the positive impact of the vaccination programme is helping our children return to the routines of school which we all know are so important.

We are now focused on next term and what we hope will be another step forward for young people. We hope that the Scottish Government will announce that all young people in secondary schools can return full time after the Easter holiday period without the restriction of 2 m distancing. This would make a huge difference to our young people and remove so many of the concerns they are feeling about certification and their loss of connection with friends. We all look forward to seeing the lives of our children return to some sense of normality.

The decision to allow a full return to school is subject to careful assessment of levels of community transmission. In that respect, what happens over the next few weeks is of critical importance and will directly inform Scottish Government decision making. Our collective compliance with national guidance will help mitigate against community transmission which in turn will provide a strong evidence base for a full time return to school buildings.

Public Health guidance remains the same, use face coverings in enclosed spaces, avoid all crowded places and keep cleaning hands and surfaces regularly. Of particular importance is the need to self-isolate and book a test if you have any symptoms of COVID-19 or if advised to do so by Contact Tracers. It is also crucial to remember that when somebody in the household has possible COVID-19 symptoms, the whole household should isolate until the person with symptoms receives a negative test result or until 10 days have passed since the start of the symptoms.

We know that children and young people are keen to enjoy the holiday period and know that some parents have been asking for some clarification on what the national guidance means for the holiday period. Current guidance would not permit children to have friends around to the house at this point in time but the children could meet with a friend from another household in an outdoor space. We know that children will be upset at the loss of sleep overs and day trips involving car sharing between two households, but both of these are seen to be high risk at the moment, could aid levels of community transmission and should continue to be avoided for the time being.

At the moment we are all asked to stay as close to home as possible for leisure and recreational purposes, but at the end of the first week of the holidays (2 April) we are asked to stay local. In real terms this means that you can travel more fully within the Local

Authority boundary for leisure and recreation if not experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 and able to follow all other public health guidance. This still relies of families not engaging in car sharing etc. so comes with a number of limitations.

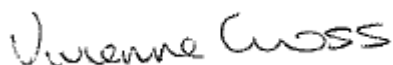
We are fortunate to have a range of options available to us with wonderful green spaces available across our Moray towns, woodland walks, beaches and a range of cycle paths and trails. Easter provides a further opportunity to explore Moray whether that is Lossiemouth West Beach, Findhorn Bay, Pluscarden Abbey, Culbin Forest, Duffus Castle, Elgin Cathedral, Bow Fiddle Rock, Linn Falls, the Speyside Way, Fishwives Walk, Land Girls landmark, Millbuies, Sunnyside Beach etc. So why not visit one of our beautiful landmarks or areas and maybe spot the Moray Dolphins or the seals off Portgordon and Strathlene? There are so many outdoor venues and opportunities for family experiences, picnics etc.

Older children and young people may wish to visit areas safely on their bicycles or walking in the local area.

Moray Council offers a range of support for those affected by the pandemic response from welfare advice, emotional support or help with food or prescription collection for example. If you feel we can support you in any way please contact us from **09:00 – 17:00 Monday to Friday** on **0800 196 3384** or online at Grampian Coronavirus (Covid-19) Assistance Hub. If your child is entitled to a Free School Meal you will receive a direct payment for meals during the period of self-isolation. It is hoped that this will be processed and in your bank account within 5 days of the start of the period of self-isolation. Someone from Education will contact you directly to inform you when this payment will be made.

We appreciate how challenging the situation is at the moment and know that the holiday period will bring additional challenges. If we manage to follow the rules and keep levels of transmission low our children and young people will be able to return full time next term, something we are all hoping and planning for. We cannot thank you enough for your continued and on-going support during lockdown and the different phases of recovery to date and look forward to working with you again next term.

Yours sincerely



Vivienne Cross
Head of Education (Chief Education Officer)