Dear Parents/Carers

We are looking forward to hopefully welcoming back on Monday our Primary 4/5 class who are currently self-isolating, and two of our staff.  Thank you for your continued support and understanding and for your compassion and concern for those directly affected.

The statistics shared in this week’s Head Teacher/NHS meeting indicate that Portlethen and Aboyne are currently hotspots in Aberdeenshire.  Figures of confirmed positive cases have risen in Aberdeenshire from 9.6 per 100 000 last week to 22.6 per 100 000 this week.  Aberdeen City figures were 16.2 per 100 000 last week and have risen to 41.5 per 100 000.  This will partly be a consequence of restrictions easing.  It is always the case that as people start interacting more, the virus does have more opportunities to spread.  The recent rise is also being driven by the more transmissible Delta variant, which now accounts for the majority of all new cases being reported.  There are also concerns nationally that there is a decline in the number of people undertaking Lateral Flow Tests at home.  Many individuals are indicating that they do not wish to know if they have COVID as it means they will miss out on things planned and be required to self-isolate.

We remain grateful to parents who continue to err on the side of caution and are not sending their children to school if they are in the least bit unwell.  We are also grateful to parents who are having their children tested to be sure that sore throats and coughs are not COVID related.  In this regard, please be aware that the asymptomatic testing programme does not replace the current testing policy for those with symptoms. **School/setting staff and pupils who experience symptoms of coronavirus must self-isolate immediately and arrange a PCR test at** [**www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test**](http://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test)**. People with symptoms must not rely on a negative LFD result as a reason to continue to attend school or their setting.**

Our First Minister reiterated three key requests of all of us this week:

1. Get tested regularly. Free lateral flow tests are available through the NHS inform website so that we can take a test twice a week. She strongly encourages everyone to do this.  Taking a test tells us if we might have the virus, even if we don’t have symptoms.  If we test positive, we are to self-isolate, and get the result confirmed through a PCR test.  The more we all do tests, the more cases we find, and the more we can break chains of transmission.
2. Make sure that we get vaccinated when we are invited to do so.  Getting vaccinated is in our own best interests – whatever age we are, it makes it much less likely that we will become badly ill from Covid.  It also helps us protect each other. Getting vaccinated is likely to be the single most important thing most of us will do this year to protect our family, friends and neighbours.
3. Continue to stick to the rules where we live and follow all the public health advice.  As we try to get back to normal, any apparent anomalies in the rules and advice can be frustrating.  However, there are some principles that we can and should all follow:
* Meet outdoors as much as possible. No environment is ever entirely risk free in any sense - but in relation to Covid, meeting people outdoors poses less risk than meeting indoors.
* If we are meeting others indoors, we should stick to the limits and make sure the room is as well ventilated as possible.
* Continue to follow advice on physical distancing, handwashing and face coverings. Basic measures to prevent transmission are really important.

Please continue to take care and stay safe.

Kindest regards

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Aberdeenshire Council Education and Children’s Services



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