Dear Parents/Carers

I trust this finds you all well and that the mid-term break gave you some relief from Remote Learning!

You will of course be aware that the First Minister has now confirmed a phased return to school from Monday 22nd February 2021 for those young people accessing early learning and childcare provision and P1 – 3 pupils.  In addition, provision will also continue to be available in our schools for the children of category 1 and 2 keyworkers in Primaries 4 to 7.

**Plea for continued compliance with restrictions…**The First Minister made a plea for everybody to continue following the lockdown restriction to reduce any risk of coronavirus cases increasing.  In particular, she asked parents of pupils returning to school not to use it as an opportunity to meet up with other parents or friends.  The First Minister emphasised the point that we are to treat Monday’s important milestone as a return to education for children only, and not as a return to greater normality for the rest of us.

**The strong message** from the NHS is in relation to symptoms of the new variant not being the classic symptoms.  Symptoms can include extreme tiredness, sore throat, headache, bit of a cough, even diarrhoea. The message is if there are symptoms of any sort, however mild, anything at all making your child feel ‘under the weather’ then **do not send them to school!** The scots words used were if your child presents as being ‘peely wally’ i.e. off colour, then do not send them to school.  Schools have been advised to have a ‘low threshold’ and are required to send pupils home immediately for anything that indicates they are feeling unwell. Such is the concern about the new variant and the rate at which it is continuing to spread.

**What should I do if my child is unwell?** If your child is unwell, please do not send them to school.  If your child is unwell but they are not displaying symptoms of coronavirus, please keep them at home until they are back in good health. For vomiting and/or diarrhoea, as per normal circumstances, they should remain at home for at least 48 hours after symptoms have passed. This now also relates to a fever or high temperature (alongside a negative coronavirus result) and they should not return to school for at least 48 hours after symptoms have passed.

**Returning Pupils in Primary 1 to Primary 3…..**The routines, systems and infection control measures we had in place pre-Christmas still remain in place so please reassure your P1-P3 child/children that it will be as before.   It is however **important** that Parents, Carers and Pupils are reminded of the following:

* Pupils are to **wash their hands before leaving home**. Important pupils arrive at school on time as late arrivals cause issues with infection control measure inside the building as we carefully arrange access to cloakroom areas and sinks in specific groupings.  If on arriving late at school, your child’s class have already been in the sink area and had their cloakroom visit then your child has to wait until the other classes in the zone have done their handwashing and cloakroom area visit. There is a lot to manage in the mornings and late arrivals have a significant impact on your child, their class and staff availability to see to an individual pupil. Thank you for your support here.
* The non-welcoming **‘Keep Out of the Playground’** messages remain in place for parents for infection control purposes.  Parents are to remain outside the school perimeter fence with **Face Masks** on please.
* Parents to ensure 2m distancing outside the perimeter fence of the school at all times and this will continue to be a requirement within the school building between staff at school and between staff and pupils.  Pupils are not required to observe social distancing in their own class with peers.  We will however continue to discourage hugs and sharing snacks, drinks bottles etc and reminders from home about this would be appreciated.
* Children should wherever possible be encouraged to not bring toys from home or to share their personal belongings. However, if a child brings their own items from home only they use this so as to not increase the risk of indirect spread of the virus.  To reduce the potential transfer of infection Parents/Carers should avoid where possible dropping off items for pupils at reception.
* **Only 1 adult** should drop children off in the morning at school and leave immediately.  Please allow your children to go straight into the playground to line up and then leave. ‘**Go home, protect the NHS and save lives!’**
* **Do not** gather around or near entrances to the playground, on the public path or by the school fence as you are preventing safe entry/access to the playground and are impacting on those walking along the path.  Please spread right out across the grass area away from the school and away from the public path.
* **Helpful** if you could arrange with your child an area on the grass that they can meet you so parents aren’t all crowding together by the fence at the end of the school day.  As always, if your child can’t find you then they should come back into the playground.
* Children rolling together down the grass embankment by Bourtree before and after school is not supportive of the infection control measures we have in place during the school day.  Grateful if you could support all our efforts to avoid mixing. After school, please ‘**Go home, protect the NHS and save lives!’**
* PE will be outdoors.  Please ensure lots of cosy layers.
* Updated copies of our Risk Assessments are available on our website.
* Provision will continue to be made for P4-P7 children of key workers as per current arrangements.
* Parents/Carers of the Primary 4 children in Mrs Stewart and Miss Mellis’ composite P3/4 class have received an additional communication explaining the arrangements for their children given their teachers will back in school for face-to-face teaching with Primary 3 pupils.

All schools in Aberdeenshire have been issued with asymptomatic testing kits for all school staff. These lateral flow testing kits allow staff to undertake twice weekly asymptomatic testing with those taking part able to get results very swiftly. This is another very important feature of the battle against Coronavirus alongside all the other measures in place which are more familiar to us now.  Staffing arrangements will continue to be closely monitored as the phased return to schools begins.  As our Director advised parents and carers earlier this week, there may continue to be occasions when we are unable to open schools either because staff have tested positive for the virus and are unable to attend work and/or because of the advice of Public Health colleagues. Parents/Carers would be advised of any closures via normal routes, but given the nature of the current situation this may be at relatively short notice and we would ask for your ongoing understanding of this situation.

We look forward to welcoming back our younger pupils next week and long for the day we can all be back together again!

Thank you for your continued support.

As always, take care and stay safe!

Kindest regards

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Head Teacher

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