Dear Parents/Carers

Welcome back to the final term of this Academic Year!

It has been great to hear news from pupils of outings and holidays taken during the Easter break.  A welcome change from recent holidays where travel was not possible. The tooth fairy has also clearly been active over the holidays!

**Active Schools**……Speaking of being active, Active Schools have a range of new cluster clubs starting this term.  Cluster clubs are open to pupils from any school and cater for pupils of all abilities, so they are a great way to try new sports and activities in the lead up to this Summer’s Commonwealth Games.  They also have a new P7 club aimed at helping pupils to make new friends and try new sports before they move into S1. This club will start in May and continue until the P7 Academy visit in June, with different sports being offered each week. Each session will be related to Academy PE lessons and will consist of team games and fun challenges. They will be running a series of 5 sessions (Tuesdays 4.00pm – 5.00pm) at Portlethen Academy that are open to P7 pupils from any school, with the final session taking place just before the P7 3 day visit in June. Pupils will be encouraged to mix with those they don’t know, as well take part in team games and challenges to help them get to know some new faces. These sessions will also resemble a S1 PE lesson, with sessions focussing on sports that pupils may have encountered before in their PE lessons (e.g. Badminton, Basketball, Rugby) and those that they will likely encounter in their Academy life (e.g. Hockey, Volleyball, Lacrosse).  Pupils will also be given a tour of the sports facilities, which will hopefully help settle any nerves they may have about coming to the ‘big school’!

Booking for all activities is essential ……spaces can be booked through the following link - <http://bit.ly/ASPortlethen>
If you have any questions or queries about the cluster clubs, please do not hesitate to get in touch with Graeme McCall, Active Schools Coordinator (Portlethen Network) via the details below.

Telephone: 01467 532 785 /Mobile: 07917 267 222 Graeme.mccall@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

**Nature Photography Competition-Community Event……**Please see the attached poster to find out about Lethen Park Care Home Photography Competition.  They are very excited to have the community involved in this fun activity for the residents and look forward to receiving all the entries.  The photographs will certainly bring many smiles to the residents’ faces.

**Non-statutory guidance to ensure a low risk and supportive environment for learning and teaching**……Please find attached the revised ECS Covid-19 Risk Assessment template for schools following the sharing of the latest [Routine Covid Protection Measures in Schools](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-reducing-the-risks-in-schools/) guidance.  A few noteworthy statements from the guidance……

While this guidance reduces the mitigations that schools are required to have in place, local authorities and schools are not recommended to return to pre-pandemic practices and are encouraged to retain good practice developed during the pandemic where appropriate.

Guidance is for school leaders to undertake practices that they are comfortable with when following the wider guidance. Practices pre and post Covid-19 all have to fit with the configurations of each setting.  Each setting is different and the guidance from Scottish Government is to continue to socially distance where we can so practices will be different from one school to the next depending on practicalities and space.  In implementing this guidance, it is imperative that schools and local authorities continue to take a balanced approach and take every appropriate step to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and staff in schools.

Any changes should be led by local authorities in a way that capitalises on the good practice developed over the pandemic period, and which takes full account of practical considerations relevant to lifting mitigations in a way that does not create operational difficulties or unnecessary additional workload for staff.  The Advisory sub-group has also recommended that Government devolve more autonomy and flexibility of decision-making to local authorities, schools and other settings in implementing the guidance.  Schools should operate in line with their own circumstances and risk assessments as they do in all areas of school life.

Children, young people and staff should follow the wider societal guidance on physical distancing in schools or on dedicated school transport. As in wider society it will remain important to be cautious and exercise personal responsibility, recognising that, where possible, it is safer to keep a distance from other people.

To achieve collective assurance that the education system has in place the arrangements needed in the event of future outbreaks, schools and local authorities should familiarise themselves with the [scenarios, expectations and actions](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-reducing-the-risks-in-schools/pages/key-scenarios/). They should work together to ensure that these actions are complete and that a state of readiness is maintained for as long as is required to deal with the pandemic.

Schools and local authorities should ensure readiness for the following key scenarios, in view of the uncertainty around the path of the virus in the future:

**Scenario 1 - reintroduction of mitigations  – schools remain open**

**Scenario 2 - partial attendance – school buildings remain open**

**Scenario 3 - full remote learning for all pupils – school buildings closed**

From 18 April 2022, there is no longer a requirement for schools to issue individual information (“warn and inform”) letters to low-risk contacts when positive cases are identified.  Communication with parents, care givers, staff and children remains important. Although letters do not need to be sent following every case given the transition away from universal asymptomatic testing, it remains good practice to keep people updated where it is expected that concerns may arise.

Parents, carers or wider family members entering school buildings: there are no restrictions on parents, carers or wider family members entering school buildings, although they will be expected to comply with the school’s routine measures. There are therefore no restrictions on “in person” parent/carer evenings, parent/carer related events and meetings in school buildings, e.g. subject choice events, career events, fundraising events, family learning activities, volunteering in school, Parent Council, Parent Teacher Association meetings and other similar events or meetings. Parents, carers and family members are able to attend indoor and outdoor sporting and cultural events.  All visitors will, however, be expected to comply with the school’s routine measures and arrangements for managing and minimising risk.

Although the Scottish Government guidance allows for activity and events listed above to take place, schools are still advised to be cautious and measured. Headteachers are advised that if risk assessments and/or Covid outbreaks require restrictions to the above to be applied locally to manage a situation this is appropriate. It would also be good practice to consider what has worked well online and not to feel that it is a requirement to move back to face to face.  Fishermoss Parent/Teacher consultations for this term will remain as planned in line with teachers’ working time agreement for this academic year.  For next session we will explore considering a hybrid model in consultation with parents and staff.

The **Distance Aware scheme**, promoted by the Scottish Government, enables people to wear a symbol to indicate they would like more space and care around them for any reason. Anyone who wants to wear a badge or lanyard with the Distance Aware symbol can get one in a range of places including all community and mobile libraries, most ASDA stores, or online through participating charities.

To support visitors to the school with social distancing in our reception area, we will continue with visitors knocking at the main school door rather than immediately entering the area.  Our reception area also serves as our ‘sick bay’ where pupils who are displaying symptoms of COVID wait until parents come to collect them.

In all areas of life, these past two years, we have had to adapt to different ways of doing things.  Amongst the many challenges, there have been many opportunities and the realisation sometimes that different ways of doing things can have its benefits.  Many of you will experience this in terms of hybrid working opportunities as homeworking remains one of the most effective protections against COVID-19 and for maintaining business resilience. For many increased opportunities to work from home provides great flexibility….and perhaps even the opportunity to walk your child to and from school!

The past two years have seen schools make greater use of the outdoors for Learning & Teaching and this is something we at Fishermoss will continue to build on as Learning & Teaching is our core business. Our school grounds are viewed now, more than ever, as additional classroom spaces and an extension to the school building. The removal of our old nursery and temporary classrooms, and the welcome addition of the playground markings, has all helped to greatly enhance our outdoor classroom spaces.  We have much more we hope to do to further improve our playground and our pupils have lots of brilliant, exciting ideas to further enhance our school grounds as this is one of our Eco Schools topics!  Hopefully, you all read in our April Newsletter about our Eco Schools adventure!

Please be aware that **‘After School Club’** will be utilising our playground when they meet with pupils at the end of the school day.  In addition to this with the extended Nursery hours, our **nursery children** and early years staff will continue to make great use of our playground space after their ‘High Tea’ and will enjoy time on our balance bikes, making use of our agility trail and playground markings amongst other things. This will support them with transition to ‘the big school’.  **Please do make the most of our great playground space during evenings from 6pm and on weekends.**  As previously shared, our playground is super for practising on those roller blades and balance bikes or re-live your youth with a game of hopscotch or a flat race, not to mention our amazing agility trail……and do bring a picnic!  All were installed with the intention that our Fishermoss Family and the wider community could share in the enjoyment beyond the school day!  Our solar powered stop clock is now installed so you can see how fast you get round the daily mile route!

We will continue with our current arrangements supporting pupils in the playground in the morning and class teachers will dismiss pupils in the same manner at the end of the day. Many working parents welcome the fact that they can drop their children off from 08:45am and then head off to work. This practise has seen our younger children especially as presenting much more confident and independent than ever before.  It has also meant that it is very easy for us to identify if there is an adult on school grounds who should not be there in addition to there having been no incidents in the playground where pupils have been approached by other parents. It also means that we can more easily manage outdoor learning as teaching staff do not need to move people on.  As has always been the case, pupils do not need to leave parents to join their line until the first bell rings at 8:58am. Thank you for continuing to use Bourtree Park at drop off and pick up times.  This arrangement will remain in place.

In terms of **mask wearing**, schools will be continuing to closely follow updated national guidance.  Aberdeenshire’s approach will be one of **encouragement** to be considerate of our fellow human beings and not enforcement. We will continue to support all our children and young people to adapt to new arrangements and are mindful of those whose personal circumstances mean they are more cautious than others.

In terms of what to do if your child is ill, the option to book a PCR test for Covid-19 symptoms remains. **More broadly, common sense is as important as ever and if your child is unwell in themselves then they should remain at home.** The [www.nhsinform.scot](http://www.nhsinform.scot) is a reliable source of advice of a wide range of symptoms and in signposting to support available.

Please also refer to the letter issued yesterday by Head of Education Vincent Docherty to all Parents/Carers.

Finally, a reminder that we have a **Fishermoss Parent Staff Council** meeting on **Tuesday 26th April @7pm**. This will be a TEAMS meeting and a link will be emailed at the beginning of next week.

Wishing you all a lovely weekend and may the sunshine continue!

Kindest regards

**Margaret M. Ferguson**

**Head Teacher**

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Aberdeenshire Council Education and Children’s Services



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