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Dear Parent/Carer

Incident at Portlethen Academy lunchtime 13/11/19

You may already be aware of an incident that occurred at the Academy yesterday lunchtime. I write to clarify the situation and our response. I wish also to clarify our security procedures to ensure the safety of all young people.

The incident occurred at lunchtime when a young person from another school accessed the building. They were able to enter the building as the access door locks are deactivated at this time so that pupils can come and go. As the person was not in uniform they were quickly identified by pupils and staff who were on duty. The intruder was asked to leave and became challenging towards staff. They left the building but not the school site where they continued to be challenging making threats to staff. The Police were called although the intruder had left the site by the time they arrived. Police have taken a number of statements and have charged the young person concerned. The school site was secured immediately after lunch and we made an announcement to pupils to clarify the situation and to reassure them as to their safety. Staff and Police were outside the school at 3.30pm and there were no issues though we were able to reassure a number of pupils.

Today the Police are continuing to take statements and support us around the incident. Staff are aware of the anxieties of pupils and are supporting them through our normal structures. Pupils are attending classes and any issues will be referred to Guidance staff and Year Heads. We are reinforcing our security procedures with all pupils and staff. We are also ensuring that support is available to staff affected by the incident.

There are rumours circulating that the intruder had a knife. There is no evidence at this stage to suggest this was ever the case and no member of staff witnessed any weapon.

A key feature in identifying the intruder was their lack of uniform. It has demonstrated, therefore, the vital importance of pupils wearing it. I would, thus, ask for your support in ensuring your child is always in full uniform. The overwhelming majority of young people wear full uniform but we want this to be 100% so that anyone without it stands out. Any young person in the building without full uniform will be challenged. Full uniform includes black shoes, school tie and black trousers rather than joggers or sportswear. We reluctantly permit leggings but these should be plain black.

Prioritising a safe environment is always central to our decision making. This incident has brought this into sharper focus than ever. Unfortunately, therefore, we have decided to cancel the dress down day scheduled for tomorrow as part of fundraising for Children in Need. We have not taken this decision lightly but nothing can take precedence over the safety of our young people and staff. We understand pupils will be disappointed and have explained to them why we have done this. We will review such days in future. Pupils can still bring in their donations which will be sent to Children in Need. Thank you for your support and understanding in this.

In terms of what you can do to reinforce our safety procedures, please see below:

- Ensure your young person wears complete school uniform
- Reinforce the need to report any concerns to staff immediately
- Use the doors safely – that is only using the labelled access and entry doors, not propping doors open and not allowing access during class time when all pupils should enter the building via the front door.

I wish to reassure you that we take any incident of this nature seriously. My staff responded with tremendous care and regard for the safety of young people and for each other. In our experience these types of incident are very rare in Portlethen Academy. However, it is important we are vigilant and continually review our procedures.

I hope this clarifies the situation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Neil Morrison', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Neil Morrison
Head Teacher