

Portlethen Academy

Learn and Improve. Get Involved. Think of the Consequences. Respect All.

Dear Parent/Carer,

We are now at the end of our third week of term and have had a great start with young people back into their learning quickly and a tremendously positive atmosphere. We are pleased with pupils results and many achieved great things. Where results have not been as hoped for we have been through the process of recoursing pupils to ensure they are in the correct courses as far as is possible. We have also been delighted by the change of emphasis in Scottish Education with the acknowledgement that not all pupils will be successful in exams and that other courses and experiences are crucial. Education Scotland, who oversee all education matters visited us in relation to this and interviewed some of our pupils about one of these alternative courses – Foundation Apprenticeships. We have 48 senior pupils doing these and the case for them is clearly articulated by our pupils at the following link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQcZDkILVN8>

Uniform

This year we are promoting the idea that little actions by lots of people make big differences and wearing of uniform is a fantastic example of this. Our pupils have looked fantastic since their return. We know they don't achieve this on their own and we want to thank you for your support in this. The school is busy with over 830 pupils and social space is at a premium so we reward the pupils who are in uniform with access to the social areas but as it stands it is only a handful of pupils who are not in full uniform.

Sponsored Walk Friday 20 September

Continuing the theme of little actions and big impacts we have our sponsored walk on Friday 20 September. You will have received all the information via separate email. The day is a great example of the school community pulling together. We would ask for your support both in ensuring your child participates and in any sponsorship you can provide. Charities benefiting this session will be RNLI Stonehaven, who work in our area, and CLAN, who provide support for cancer sufferers and their families. Charities rely on donations and the efforts of our pupils, baked up by yourselves, is hugely appreciated by them.

New Staff

As intimated previously we have a significant number of new staff who joined us after summer, and I have listed them below:

- Mrs Newman, Physics
- Mrs Collins, Physics
- Mrs Seifert, Principal Teacher Technical
- Mr Simpson, Principal Teacher Business and ICT
- Miss Grant, Maths,
- Mr Ballingall, English
- Mrs McKenna, English
- Miss Lyon, Art
- Miss Furneaux, Maths

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- Mr McCall, Technical
- Miss Simpson, Music

Before summer we were joined by:

- Mrs Johnston, Music
- Mrs Pert, Maths

It is tremendous to have so many new staff and we are thoroughly enjoying working with them. Other staffing changes are that Mrs Miller, Depute Head Teacher, is now on maternity leave so Mrs Campbell Robertson joins the senior leadership team as Acting Depute Head Teacher and Mrs Conway takes up the post of Acting Principal Teacher Expressive Arts (Art, Music and Drama).

Parent Council: Purpose and Dates

Our Parent Council meet regularly throughout the session. The purpose of the Parent Council is to provide a voice for all our parents and carers, working with the school and the local authority on issues that are important to parents/carers and their children. Parents and carers have a lot to offer the school in terms of interests, skills, and experience and it is this partnership that helps to support the education and welfare of children.

Being involved in the Parent Council can involve as much or as little time as you like. In terms of time commitment we meet 6 times a year for approximately 1.5 hours where we discuss any current issues and often arrange for people to come and talk to us about services or activities associated with the school. The Parent Council is a crucial consultative body and provides valuable advice on policy and practice. The Parent Council also supports school activities through funds they hold.

The Parent Council currently has 3 office bearers in place so new members can rest assured they will not suddenly find themselves in these roles.

Term 1 18 September

Term 2 31 October Annual General Meeting

Term 3 9 January 27 February

Term 4 23 April 4 June

All meetings run from 7.00-8.30pm and are held in the Academy Staffroom on the first floor.

Contacting the school

We always try to respond to parental contact as quickly as possible and have recently had a couple of times when parents have arrived at reception hoping to see staff about their child and we have been unable to manage this due to meetings or timetabled teaching commitments. We ask that you phone and make an appointment to avoid disappointment and so that we can respond to you when we do meet. This can be done through the school office (01224 782174) who will direct your calls to the relevant person. This will normally be your child's Guidance Teacher. If emailing the school please use the general email Portlethen.aca@aberdeenshire.gov.uk highlighting who it is for the attention of and this will be forwarded by the school office.

Homework and Pupil Self Study for National Courses

I had some interesting conversations last year with parents about the demands of National and Higher courses. Part of the discussion was about how much time pupils should spend at home studying, practising exam style questions and reading/revising for understanding. A look at the Scottish Qualifications website gives a good indication of the requirement. The SQA state *“For National Units at these levels (N5 and H), it is expected that learners require an additional half of the time required for programmed learning(classroom based) in order to prepare them to undertake a successful learning experience.”* Depending on the level of course we provide just under 4 or 5 hours a week of classroom input. On that basis our pupils should be committing nearly 2 to 2.5 hrs of home based learning per subject across the full academic year if they are to meet the SQA’s suggested amount. This is a significant time commitment and gives an indication of what is required for young people to attain their best. Anything you can do to support your young people towards this level of commitment will stand them in good stead at exam time. Mr Cowie will soon be writing to parents to highlight how this time can be used.

Holidays and In-Service Training/End of Term

As previously intimated, we have a local holiday on Monday 23 September. This year we had an additional occasional day and have taken it to coincide with the local holiday in Aberdeen City. Please also note that the term ends for pupils at 3.30pm on Thursday 10 October as the Friday is an additional In-Service Training day for teachers allocated by the Scottish Government.

In conclusion, thank you again for your support for the school. Our goal is to get the very best for all our pupils, and we look forward to working with you towards this.

Yours sincerely



Neil Morrison

Head Teacher

September 2019