

Portlethen Academy

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

Dear Parent/Carer,

As I write we have just begun our 6th week back after the summer and lockdown. We have been hugely impressed by our young people and staff and the way they have responded as a school community to follow our guidelines and the huge range of new procedures. This has allowed us to ensure two areas of focus, the health and wellbeing of all and that crucial resumption of teaching and learning. Young people have been overwhelmingly responsible, and this has allowed us to offer as broad a range of experiences as possible, including a number of practical subjects. This has been a challenge for staff but they have risen to it so that safe practices are in place. Crucial to all the above has been your support, thank you.

As we head towards the remainder of this term I wanted to update you on an area we have been developing.

Face Coverings

Pupils have been tremendous in the way they have responded to wearing these. We have a small stock of reusable ones for anyone that forgets, and these are available at the school office, from the senior Leadership Team and Guidance. A great success has been where we have extended the wearing of these into practical activities such as Home Economics and Technical so that staff can circulate and support young people. We have seen this adopted elsewhere in school by staff and pupils so, this week, we have decided to roll this out across the wider school using a traffic lighting approach:

Green: The teacher and any support staff are in their 2m space and face coverings are not required. We expect this to be the case for much of the time and this would be the case when staff are leading whole class introductions and briefings.

Amber: This is to allow teachers and PSA's to work safely with individuals and small groups. Face coverings should be worn by pupils with 2m of the group or individual.

Red: This is when staff are moving freely around the room supporting young people and we ask that all wear face coverings. We would expect this to be less frequent as we are not encouraging staff to be outwith their 2m space unless essential.

The latter two categories also allow us to respond when a young person is unwell. We have had a number of pupils and staff with bad coughs and colds and these can spread anxiety. In fact, pupils have requested that pupils and staff with coughs cover up. Being able to use face coverings for periods of time allows us to reduce anxieties while we resolve issues around symptoms.

We appreciate that this is difficult for some young people who do not like wearing face coverings or who are isolated by the lack of facial expressions. Equally, we have seen an increasing number of pupils wearing face coverings in classes and asking for a system such as this to support them. Our prime concern is to keep school open and we feel this is a measure which can support pupils and, crucially, staff.

We do appreciate that this is a change beyond the current Scottish Government advice but would appreciate your support in this

I apologise for not getting this to you sooner.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Morrison

Head Teacher, Portlethen Academy, 14 September 2020