

Portlethen Academy

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

Dear Parent/Carer

Portlethen Academy December 2020 Parent/Carer Update

When we returned to school in October I was very concerned that this term would be seriously disrupted by positive Covid 19 tests that would have led to significant self-isolation for groups of young people and staff. While I don't want to jinx the last few days of term we have done incredibly well and have had minimal disruption to teaching and learning. While a host of factors will have contributed, I want to acknowledge the fantastic efforts of everyone in the school community to work within the advice and procedures. Pupils, staff and yourselves have all pulled together and I am sure that has been key in reducing the impact. As a small gesture of our appreciation for all the wider community has done to support us and of the impact the pandemic has had in the community our prefects have delivered Christmas cards to all households in the schools catchment. This amounts to nearly 6,000 cards and has been a major undertaking by these young people. I'm sure you will join me in thanking them.

You may also recall we had a Dress as Please Day back in November, organised by one of our S6 pupils, Daisy McNeil, as part of her Youth Achievement Award. This raised £804.70 which was split equally between Children in Need and the Northsound Cash for Kids Appeal. We also received 354 items of food for The Larder, Portlethen and repeated this with a similar number of items last week. Thank you for supporting these initiatives in these challenging times.

As we head rapidly towards the end of term I want to take the opportunity to update you on a number of points.

Christmas Holidays and return to School

We break for the school holidays at **3.30pm on Friday 18 December**. We work on our usual curricular content until that time. This is essential for all pupils and is particularly so for those in S4-6 who will have prelims in the New Year. Some subjects may use Christmas themes to add to the context of their work at this time of year but only where this is relevant. We ask staff to ensure they provide meaningful work.

We return to school after the break on **Tuesday 5 January at 8.45 am**.

Christmas and New Year Covid 19 Situation

You will be well aware of the Covid 19 situation in the local area and nationally. We are concerned to avoid any situation that could lead to transmission of cases and interruption at the start of term. This is particularly crucial as our S4-6 pupils will begin their prelim assessment diet on Monday 11 January and this will run for two weeks. As we have moved to Level 3 this will mean Senior pupils and Staff will have to wear Face coverings in class. This was our plan for Senior pupils regardless of the level we were in as we have real concerns about the potential impact of non-compliance with Advice over the festive period. Any rise in transmissions could jeopardise the exam diet and mean that young people cannot sit their prelims at this time. We are concerned that some young people will struggle to follow the advice and procedures during the festive period and would ask that you

support them in making the right choices. This is so that they do not impact on their own chances and those of others. While our greatest concerns are around the possible behaviours of some older pupils Covid 19 cases amongst younger year groups could also impact on the prelim diet and could lead to numbers of pupils having to self-isolate and work from home.. A separate letter regarding the Prelims was issued last week to parents of S4-6 and can be viewed on our website by parents/carers who do not have pupils in those year groups.

In relation to the wearing of face coverings in class, for S4-6, we know this makes learning and communication very difficult and we will require all pupils to display exemplary behaviour to ensure learning goes ahead as effectively as possible. We know this is overwhelmingly the case with our pupils however a small minority can struggle, and we wish to avoid any negative influence. I suspect we will all require patience and adjustment as we learn to cope with the difficulties of communicating through face coverings with up to 30 young people and a teacher in the room.

Clans

As we move to roll out our Clans the first step will be the reintroduction of the Daily Contact period after the holiday. This has no implications yet and will continue to be when we do our school Daily Briefing, any administrative tasks and small pupil activities. Further detail of Clans will follow. The Daily Briefings have been a tremendous way of ensuring common messages are communicated and that we can pick up on issues around our procedures. Latterly we have had more general inputs from pupils and staff. These have been a pleasure to see and I want to formally note my appreciation for all who have been involved and to stress it is no small challenge presenting to an audience of nearly 1,000 – even if you cannot see them as the meetings are virtual.

In conclusion, I want to stress our thanks to you and your children for your support and encouragement in these difficult times. Staff have done incredibly well, and it is reassuring to witness the great learning and experiences that our young people are receiving. The New Year will undoubtedly bring challenges however I am confident that we can overcome these by working together with you. In the meantime I want to wish you a happy and safe festive period.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Morrison

Head Teacher

December 2020