

Dear Parent/Carer

School Arrangements January 2021

In light of the First Minister's announcement on Monday 4 January 2021, you will know that the school is closed to pupils until at least early February and, possibly, longer (with the exception of a limited number of key worker's children and other identified pupils). We understand the latest lockdown and the associated school closure will have a significant impact on young people and families.

Learning and support for young people will move online with effect from Monday 11 January. This week staff are implementing planning for the resumption of online learning and support for pupils. It is our intention to issue details of this on Friday this week with information available, variously, on the school website and in the Teams/Google Classrooms that pupils have access to. Pupils should access these from Monday 11 January. In the senior phase support will fall broadly within the column or timetable structure with teacher led sessions for SQA subjects and other work being set proportionately to the subject time. Our aim is to provide a structure that will enable young people to continue learning and to be supported from school and by families. Experience from the first lockdown has shown that one size does not fit all circumstances with young people and families requiring some flexibility so that they can work around competing demands at home. We will use many of the approaches from the first lockdown period as staff, young people and families are already familiar with these. However, we have adapted or refined these using the lessons learned and feedback from that first lockdown. We had hoped to be able to record sessions in Teams and Google Classrooms so that any pupils who miss the initial one can access these later, however, Education Scotland have made a national decision to switch this function off in GLOW, primarily for Child Protection reasons. We are disappointed in this and will continue to lobby for this function to be enabled.

SQA/Senior Phase

The nature and timing of the announcements around schools during the holiday period means that much of the fine detail at National and Aberdeenshire level has still to be clarified and to make its way to schools. This is particularly the case around senior phase and SQA arrangements. If you have a child in the senior phase you will be concerned about the impact of a second period of lockdown on their learning and assessment. We know that national discussions in respect of this are taking place and as soon as we know the detail and implications, we will communicate with you. As you know we would have had a prelim or assessment window starting on 11 January. Clearly, this will not take place and the likely

duration of the lockdown means we intend continuing to deliver coursework online. As the assessment picture becomes clear we will alert you to arrangements however, in the interim, we ask that pupils ensure they fully complete any tasks when set by staff from Monday 11 January. It will be crucial that all senior phase pupils fully engage with the learning offer. We would advise they work within the structure of the school day if feasible. We will track engagement, as we did in the first lockdown, and will contact you if we have concerns. We understand that there are often a range of reasons why young people struggle to engage and would ask that you work with us so that we can attempt to alleviate any barriers to your child's progress.

Supports for Young People

ICT: In relation to the supports available to young people, staff use Teams and Google classrooms to link with young people and we are fortunate in having good ICT connectivity and hardware. Many of our young people have benefitted from Scottish Government funding that has provided Chromebooks. If your child has particular ICT issues you should contact school through the usual email, or phone the office, and we will try to provide support within resource availability.

Health and Well Being: all young people are in Teams with their Guidance teacher and can access school support that way or through their daily contact with staff. If you have any particular concerns, please contact the school through the normal avenues and the office will pass on the information to the appropriate person who will then respond.

I realise that you will have many further questions and wish to assure you that as fuller information comes together, we will ensure it is issued it to you. I thank you for your on-going support and understanding at what is a challenging time.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Morrison

Head Teacher

Portlethen Academy

7 January 2021