Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL

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Dear Parent/Carer

I would firstly like to take an opportunity to wish you all a happy and healthy new year and hope that 2021 treats you all well.

The First Minister's recent announcements over the Christmas holiday period has meant more changes in relation to the arrangements for the new term. As schools were already closed for the holidays an additional closure day was granted for Tuesday 5th January to allow schools to make arrangements for the children of keyworkers and some other groups of children and young people requiring specific supports to be in place for Wednesday 6th January and thereafter for appropriate learning arrangements to be in place from Monday 11th January. Head Teachers will need to ensure they have sufficient staffing available to support in-school arrangements with other staff supporting home learning from 11th January. The difference this time around compared to the lockdown last March is that provision will be in local schools, whereas last time it was only available in 17 hub schools. To that end, we need to ensure sufficient staff availability for each establishment as well as sufficient staff to support home learning. However, this is the current position and will be subject to review to ensure we are making the most effective use of our resources. For example, some of our schools will have very few key worker children on the school roll and as such we may look to amalgamate provision where possible rather than opening every single school building. However, we will review this in line with relevant national advice and guidance.

The current position with regards Covid-19 is worrying. There has been a significant increase in cases and the slight relaxations around the Christmas period is having a negative impact on positive cases. Whilst we will all have been pleased to hear the positive news about vaccines, the roll-out will take some time and as such the public health advice we must all adhere to remains the same and we should do all we can to minimise contact with others outside our own households until the situation improves. To that end, schools are only open for the children of category 1 and 2 keyworkers and for children and young people identified as requiring additional support. The vast majority of children and young people should be learning from home up until the end of January 2021 in line with the recent announcements. If there are any changes to this position we will update parents as we are advised by Scottish Government.

If your child does attend school over the coming period then we would ask that they remain on the school premises over lunchtime and do not leave to buy their lunch in the town centre. Our catering service will ensure lunch is available in schools for those who wish to have a school lunch.

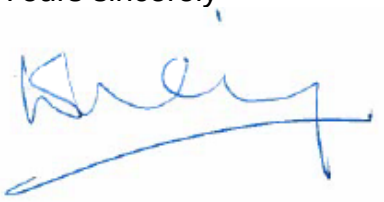
Your Head Teachers locally will keep you informed of local arrangements for your own school with regards home learning. In the meantime, I would like to thank you all for your ongoing support of your schools and wish you well for the year ahead. This is not the start to 2021 that we had hoped for and yet again an evolving situation. Our schools and central teams have worked very hard to

deal with regularly changing advice and I would like to thank everyone for their efforts so far in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.

I will be arranging to meet again soon with Parent Council chairs as I have done regularly throughout the pandemic and if you have any queries you wish to have addressed please feed these in to your own Parent Council.

Stay safe!

Yours sincerely



Laurence Findlay
Director of Education & Children's Services