3 April 2020

**Head Teacher End of Term Update**

Dear Parents and Carers

We have now reached the end of a term like no other in my 26 years of teaching. My thanks to all of you, parents and carers, who have done your absolute best to support your children with their on-line learning. We fully appreciate that this has its challenges, especially when you are working from home too and access to devices and technology must be shared out. If this become too much of a challenge, please get in touch after the holidays through the Bridge of Don email – at the top of this letter, there may something we can do to help including the loan of a device. We also know that many of our families will have members who are key workers and we thank you for what you continue to do to support and care for the people of Aberdeen often in difficult and trying circumstances.

**SQA and Exams**

I know that many of our pupils are truly disappointed that there will be no exams this year: they were looking forward to demonstrating the progress they had made this year. Earlier today I posted on the school website a letter explaining what the SQA would like us to do in estimating pupil grades and a FAQs document. They will issue further instructions and an update on 20 April. Information was also shared with all young people in S4 to S6 through Google Classroom.

**Engagement with Learning**

We hear from teachers that many of our young people are completing work set for them and, where there have been difficulties reported, our pupil support team have been helping youngsters. Some young people are responding very positively. Teachers do expect that work which is posted will be completed and have set appropriate deadlines. We do not underestimate the challenges associated with this when parents/carers are working from home and access to laptops and devices must be shared. Some of our teachers have the same problems and are having to do this too. The work, however, is not optional during term time. We have been asked by Aberdeen City to monitor young people’s engagement with on-line learning. A young person not logging on or completing work could indicate a need for further support.

**Open Learn - Free Online Courses from the Open University**

The Open University are offering access to over 1000 free online courses in a number of areas including: - Health & Sports Psychology, Education & Development, History & The Arts, Languages, Money & Business, Nature & Environment, Science, Maths & Technology, Society, Politics & Law.

On completion of the courses, you will be able to access and download a free statement of participation to use alongside a digital badge (if the course offers one). Make sure you sign up to have your progress recorded and recognised. More information at: <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses/full-catalogue>

This would be a really good way that a young person could demonstrate commitment to a particular pathway or career. It might also be useful for parents/carers who find themselves with more time on their hands.

**Digital Hub**

The Aberdeen City Council Digital Hub is now up and running with suggestions for families over the holiday period.  The team will continue adding content to it over the coming days. I really recommend this to staff, pupils and parents as a source of help, from how Google Classroom works to ideas for staying healthy indoors.

Link to ACC Digital Learning Hub:

<https://sites.google.com/ab-ed.org/digitallearninghub/home>

**The Importance of Routine – For After The Holidays**

For young people routine can be helpful when they are finding situations stressful. Getting up and going to bed at the usual time is a very good idea. Exercise can have a positive impact on mood – the PE department have posted a number of workouts in Google Classroom and young people have fed back very positively about this. None of us can follow the same timetables or routines that we are used to, and adjustment will be hard for all of us. Young people do not have to follow exactly their timetable as they would when in school, but some time should be set aside regularly each school day for learning activities.

**Health and Wellbeing**

The most important thing for all of us over the next few weeks and months is to be as well and healthy as we can under these difficult and challenging circumstances. The holidays are just that – a time for rest and relaxation as far as is possible for staff, pupils and families. I have planned to catalogue some family photos, clear out a cupboard or two, catch up on reading and perhaps pick up some old hobbies. But the news is worrying, and it can be scary when it all seems so gloomy and set to get worse. I have limited myself to watching one short bulletin per day. The digital hub which is linked above has some useful resources that might be helpful for young people and families who are feeling anxious.

Finally, my sincere good wishes to you all as we face an uncertain few weeks and months. We are doing our best to support the young people in our charge, to plan for and continue to supply them with appropriate learning activities and to ensure they get qualifications which reflect their efforts and achievements this year.

The next term begins on Tuesday 20 April 2020.

With kindest regards



Daphne McWilliam

Head Teacher