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23rd December 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

Scottish Government Announcement Saturday 19 December 2020 – Next Steps

As you will be aware the First Minister has announced various new measures to suppress the spread of COVID-19. This includes a document about school re-opening arrangements for January 2021. The entirety of this document can be found [here](#).

As part of this letter, I have included a summary of 'next steps' for the Inverurie Academy school community, and additionally communication from Mr Vincent Docherty, Head of Education for Aberdeenshire Council (Appendix I). Our school next steps are drawn directly both from the Scottish Government document (linked above) and from local advice from Mr Docherty.

- For the majority of students, the holiday period is extended until 11th January 2021, and after this date learning will be delivered online until at least 18th January.
- All school staff will return to work as scheduled on the 5th January in order to prepare and plan for this phased return.
- Children of keyworkers and vulnerable children (Categories 1&2, and only where there is no other alternative) will be invited to attend school between 6th and 8th January (and then again between 11th & 15th January). The Scottish Government advice suggests that '*definitions of key workers agreed with local authorities previously... will continue to apply*'. This means we will use the information we used for the March-June lockdown period to contact those families of key workers / vulnerable students who meet the criteria. If your circumstances have changed since June, and you believe that both parents/carers qualify as key workers (or one in a single parent household), please email us at inverurie.aca@aberdeenshire.gov.uk. Please remember that young people within these categories who are isolating must not attend. A copy of keyworker categories is also attached with this letter.
- Our plan for online learning will be shared with you on or shortly after 5th January 2021.
- After 18th January, assuming the virus is under control, the aim is to reopen the school fully to all students.

As you can imagine, there is a good deal of the finer detail yet to be outworked. We will communicate with you further as we continue to work with the Head of Education for Aberdeenshire Council and local authority colleagues. I realise this news creates further uncertainty in a year where this has already become common – my commitment is that the Inverurie Academy staff team will work hard to support your young person through these challenging times.

Yours sincerely

Mr M Jones
Head Teacher

MESSAGE SENT ON BEHALF OF VINCENT DOCHERTY, HEAD OF EDUCATION/CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

Dear Parent/Carer,

The following is the proposed plan for Aberdeenshire schools after the First Minister's announcement on Saturday 19th December. It adheres exactly to the guidance provided by Scottish Government and will hopefully allow local decisions to be made in the most effective way for children and young people across our Council.

1. Schools (including nursery provision where offered) will open to staff only on the 5th of January 2021. The expectation will be that all staff attend to prepare for the programme ahead.
2. Children of keyworkers and vulnerable children will attend school on the 6th of January for school age learning and childcare during normal school operating hours. The keyworker definitions have been updated and are attached to this communication. As before, both parents would require to be category 1 or 2 workers (or one in a single parent household). Children within these categories who are currently isolating should not attend.
3. Transport and catering for these groups will be in place from 6th of January. Parent/carers of pupils with Free School Meal entitlement have received a payment via BACS on Wednesday 23rd December 2020.
4. On-line learning for all other children and young people will commence on Monday 11th of January. Schools are expected to have planned how this will be coordinated during the previous week.
5. The delivery of on-line learning will continue until at least Monday the 18th of January 2021 when the situation will be reviewed. This means that other than vulnerable children and children of keyworkers, no pupil should physically attend their school.
6. Central teams will be on hand to support schools with identified vulnerable children and others who may be at risk.
7. A further communication will follow week commencing 29th of December with further advice.

Whilst this situation is unexpected and was announced after staff and pupils had started their Christmas break, we are confident that working together we will be able to put in place arrangements that allow effective learning for all of our children and young people. We continue to rely on your support to ensure that we do the right thing for your children under these very difficult circumstances.

We wish you all a happy and peaceful Christmas.

Thank you all for your continued support through this challenging time.

Yours sincerely

Vincent A Docherty

Head of Education

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