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Falkirk Council

Children's Services



Parent & Carer Newsletter - October 2021

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Dear parents and carers,

As we reach the end of this first term, please accept my sincere thanks and gratitude for your ongoing support for the school and your child. The ongoing Covid-19 restrictions continue to present our school community with many challenges. But our collective positivity and determination to do the best for our pupils continues as strong as ever.

I appreciate that for many of our families the impact of Covid-19 continues to be felt in a variety of ways. To that end I am delighted that in addition to the Scottish Government covering a large portion of curricular costs, usually required of parents, we will also continue to use some of our Pupil Equity Funding to ease the cost of school on our parents and carers. This includes supporting families with the purchase of uniform and/or a winter coat. Please contact the school if you wish to take up this support.



I would also like to update you on a number of important items at the end of term:

Covid-19 Vaccination

The Scottish Government and Chief Medical Officers of the UK have agreed that a vaccination programme will be offered to all 12-15 year olds to continue suppression of the Covid-19 virus, protect school communities and give schools the best possible chance of preventing further closures.

We have been advised that the vaccine will not currently be administered through schools in Falkirk Council, but rather by appointments which will be sent directly to families by letter. The school recognises this is a matter of individual choice, however, we would encourage you to give this serious consideration and discuss this with your child to allow them to make an informed choice.

Regretfully, schools are receiving hoax and threatening emails and messages about these vaccinations. These are passed to the local authority for investigation. Please note that the school will only pass on information to parents and carers that is provided directly to the local authority from NHS Scotland.

Lateral Flow Tests

Lateral Flow Tests are a crucial part of keeping our school community safe. They help identify potential cases of Covid-19 and reduce the risk of infection in school. Scottish Government figures suggest the uptake of Lateral Flow tests is very low nationally. However, some of this may be due to low levels of reporting rather than taking the tests. **Please record your results as per the instructions in the test booklets. This can be done by using the QR code on the test strip.**

Both this week and after the holidays we will be sending messages and guidance on lateral flow tests to pupils and parents to promote a strong uptake of these. When our current stock is finished, we will be moving to the new nasal only tests which also provide a result in a shorter time. Updated guidance on how to respond to a positive Lateral Flow Test or onset of symptoms has been sent out to all parents and carers.

Covid-19 school mitigations

At the time of writing, we await a government update on any changes to Covid-19 restrictions in school after the October holiday. We will update all parents and carers when this information is available.

Vision Schools Award

I am humbled and delighted to share with you that we are the first school in Falkirk Council and one of only 5 schools in Scotland to have received the Vision Schools Holocaust Education Award (Level One). A small group of staff and pupils will be attending the Scottish Parliament in November to receive this prestigious award. We continue our commitment to Holocaust Education which also complements our school values as well as current and new developments in a variety of areas, including our Rights Respecting Schools award and Mentors in Violence Prevention programme.

Parent Council

I am delighted to report that Mr Ross Anderson has agreed to take on the role of Chairperson of the Parent Council. We are very grateful to Mr Anderson for taking on this key role and representing our

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parent community. There are still some roles to be filled on the Parent Council which we hope will be addressed at the next meeting on 19th October at 6.30pm. The meeting will be held online again, however, we are hopeful these may eventually return to in-person meetings should restrictions ease after the October holiday.

School Charity and non-uniform day

Our new School Captains have decided to continue supporting Strathcarron Hospice as our primary school charity. They have set themselves the target of beating last year's fundraising total. We were delighted to welcome Marion Blaney from Strathcarron to a presentation of last year's fundraising. The Falkirk Herald reported the story which can be found here:

<https://www.falkirkherald.co.uk/education/grangemouth-high-schools-go-yellow-activities-help-raise-ps4600-for-strathcarron-hospice-3400719>

Friday 8 October, the last day of term, will be a **non-uniform day** and we encourage staff and pupils to **wear something yellow in support of Strathcarron Hospice and Marie Curie**. Marie Curie is being supported by Mr McGurk, the parent of one of our pupils, who is running the London Marathon to raise funds. If you are able to support these causes on our non-uniform day, please use the links below to make your donation. Alternatively, your child can hand in £1 to collection buckets that will be available when pupils arrive at school on the Friday. If you have more than one child at school, then a single donation is also welcome.

You can also donate to either of these great causes using the links below:

Strathcarron

<https://www.strathcarronhospice.net/fundraisers/ghs-captains-charity->

Mr McGurk for Marie Curie

<https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/fundraiser-display/showROFundraiserPage?userUrl=gavin-mcgurk-SAVMLMBONDS333-2020-234397&pageUrl=1>

20/21 Awards Ceremony

Despite the challenges of Covid-19, Mrs Paterson (DHT Attainment & Achievement) along with a small band of dedicated staff managed to pull together a scaled down Awards Ceremony to celebrate the achievements of our pupils last session. The video of the ceremony will be shown to pupils on the afternoon of the last day of term and a link to the video will be group text to parents the same day. Many congratulations to all prize winners. We are incredibly proud of you all and indeed all of our pupils for coming through the last 18 months. We look forward with hope to a full Awards Ceremony this session if this becomes possible.

S1: Sharing Our School Values

The Senior Leadership Team visited all S1 classes in Personal and Social Education last week to deliver lessons on our school values. We were impressed by their engagement and positivity and they gave us some very useful feedback on how the school looks, sounds and feels to them. We are following this up with visits to all S1 and S2 classes either side of the October break to look for our school values in action.

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This is a key part of our school recovery and reconnecting as a school community with our shared values.

Attendance Updates

We are re-starting monthly attendance updates for parents and carers. The first update will be emailed in October showing your child's September attendance and lates, as well as their overall attendance. We know from studies on attainment that pupils with an attendance below 90% generally do not attain as highly as those who maintain a high level of attendance. We understand that Covid continues to impact on attendance and our registration system takes account of this. If you have any queries about your child's attendance record please contact your child's Pastoral Principal Teacher.

We are also in the process of appointing an Attendance Officer. They will play a key role in working with parents and carers to help our pupils maintain as high a level of attendance as possible. We will share more about this when the post is filled.

SQA update

The SQA have outlined their plans for a full exam diet in 2022 but have also shared their contingency plans if this is not possible. Last year's Alternative Certification Model is not being proposed as one of the options. Further details can be found here:

<https://blogs.sqa.org.uk/qualifications2022/sqa-national-qualifications-assessments-2021-22-a-message-for-parents-and-carers/>

Senior Pupils: SQA Prelim Exams

With the above information in mind, we intend to hold a full prelim exam diet spread across either side of the Christmas holiday. Planning for this is underway and information will be shared with pupils and parents as soon as this is available. Subjects will aim to provide Supported Study in school, although some of this may be via Teams. The National E-Learning Offer via e-sgoil continues to include Supported Study for Senior pupils as well and can be accessed here:

<https://e-sgoil.com/study-support/>

Connected Falkirk iPads

It was a welcome boost to our S1, S5 and S6 pupils to receive their iPads across 27th and 28th September. This is a huge step forward for teaching and learning across Falkirk Council. We would very much appreciate your support in ensuring your child brings their iPad to school each day fully charged. Further information about these iPads and how to support your child was emailed to all parents last week.

Pupil Health & Wellbeing Support

We continue to offer a range of supports to pupils who require assistance with their health and well-being as we continue our recovery from the effects of the pandemic and school closures. Our Pupil Support Centre and Lighthouse facilities offer a range of supports despite current restrictions and support a large number of pupils every week. Our School Listening Service provided by trained

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counsellors continues to support many pupils each week. Our Pastoral Team also work tirelessly to monitor and support the wellbeing of our pupils. If you have any concerns about your child that you wish to discuss with the school please contact us and ask to speak with your child's Pastoral Principal Teacher in the first instance.

Parents' Evenings

Until restrictions ease, we will continue to operate online Parents' Evenings as we did last session. Dates for reports and Parents' Evenings were emailed to all parents and carers earlier in the term. These will also be available on our website.

Information on how to book and attend online appointments for Parents' Evenings will be sent out to the relevant year groups closer to the time. If restrictions change and allow a return to in-person evenings, we will consult with parents, carers and staff on whether to resume these in full or retain the online option. Feedback last year indicated parents and carers were very positive about the online appointments.

Last Day of Term and Return to School

I hope this newsletter has provided you with some valuable information about our end of term arrangements. The school will close for the Autumn holiday on **Friday 8th October at 2.40pm**. Staff resume on Monday 18th October for an In-Service Day and **pupils return on Tuesday 19th October**.

Thank you again for your much valued support and I wish all families in our school community a restful and enjoyable autumn break.

Yours faithfully,



Mr Ashley Wood
Head Teacher (Acting)