

Argyll and Bute Council  
Comhairle Earra Ghàidheal agus Bhòid



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Sunday 22nd November 2020

Dear Parent/Carer/colleagues

I hope this letter finds you all safe and well.

Each week the Scottish Government deliver updates around the increase in Covid cases and the impact on society, like changes to who is in what tier for example. Argyll and Bute remains in Tier 2. Although I am sure you would agree that we would love to drop down a tier or two. At least we have not experienced any further changes and this is certainly welcome within the school setting.

School life in our new normal continues apace thanks to the diligent efforts of all our staff who have adapted admirably to the changes in place; as have our pupils who, on the whole, have begun to thrive and enjoy their new experiences. The longer lessons are a tad more challenging in the afternoon in a couple of subject areas but the ability to develop and enjoy lessons, such as Science, Technical, Music, PE and all the vocational subjects have seen revolutionary changes in how much depth of learning can be achieved with the time saved from not moving the kids eight periods a day. If only we could condense the lunchtime period then we could split the day more evenly.

However, this isn't possible at this time because of our need to keep us all safe whilst learning. As well as having split lunches in bubbles, all facing in the same direction and wearing masks when not eating, we of course still insist that pupils stay at home if feeling unwell; they use hand sanitiser when entering and leaving the school / each class; they remain in the same bubble / class whenever practical; they have breaks in a smaller bubble; we use a one-way system; pupils can go to the toilet at any time but only by themselves; the playgrounds are split into bubbles; there is a constant and effective cleaning regime across the school; and there are staggered departures from school.

Whilst we should never assume we would not have a confirmed case in our schools, as of course Covid can be contracted anywhere and brought into our school community, we are confident that all our measures would help restrict any spread and, as already evidenced, will reduce the numbers of pupils and staff who would have to self-isolate if a confirmed case did occur. Schools across the country who have not made changes to their timetables and lunch arrangements in particular are having to self-isolate dozens, even hundreds of pupils. Those who are able to apply a strict application of the Government guidelines see less pupils losing out on traditional in-school learning.

We shouldn't be complacent and we have to be ready for a confirmed case necessitating any number of those self-isolating. We also have to be ready for any national lockdown that would make blended learning or full on-line distance learning a requirement. We have been preparing for these scenarios for many months as each teacher has developed their IT skills; we have provided on-going IT training; we

have bought in more and more IT live learning equipment; we have purchased more pupil devices for those who require either device or data support at home; and we have every teacher uploading every lesson onto Google Classroom, every day: which helps get pupils and staff used to digital learning whether in school or not, even now.

## **Contingency Plan**

Our contingency plan is clear. If individual youngsters are off school, they can access Google Classroom for every subject. If a whole class or year group were to self-isolate, the lesson/s will be delivered by Google Meet and using Google Classroom. If too many teachers were forced to self isolate and we had to restrict the timetable provision, then S5/6 would be taught at home using Google Meet and Google Classroom: as would be the case for all year groups if our schools were to close as part of a national lockdown.

Of course there will be variations in the quality/quantity across this new way of learning and teaching as not all pupils and teachers learn and develop their knowledge and experience in this new mode of learning at the same pace. What is crucial however is that if a pupil is off school, either by themselves or as part of a partial / total closure, their learning will continue and they will have the resources and experience to cope.

## **Support**

Although we are aware of who needs help at the moment, many in our community are facing new or increasingly difficult times as the economic impact of prolonged change to the economy begins to bite deeper. If you are having difficulty with the IT/lessons; with money issues impacting on breakfast / lunches / school issues; or the emotional impact of Covid restrictions on the family, please take the opportunity to let us lend some support wherever we can.

We have a pastoral support team which includes a Depute Headteacher, Guidance teacher, Family Liaison Officer, Youth Worker; and IT and Admin Support staff for each clan. We help lots of families every day. You won't be alone, so don't worry about calling us. We will help you if we can, if you wish.

Please call your child's Guidance teacher or use the Contact Us section of the website in the first instance.

<http://www.obanhigh.argyll-bute.sch.uk/contact>

I hope you and your loved ones have a lovely week ahead.

Yours faithfully



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