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23/08/2020

Dear Parent/Carer

I hope you and your families are all well.

It was great to welcome back all our pupils this week. Obviously we were all anxious about coming back into school after so long but the soft start the week before, when we had all our S1 and many pupils from the other year groups who saw value in coming in to meet with our staff and get used to being in the school building, proved to be a great success.

As we approached welcoming back over a thousand people back into the building, we added to that trepidation. However, the planning and preparation for the return proved to be worth the effort and the reintroduction of all our pupils and staff to the school, and into a brand new system of working, has proven to be time well spent.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all the staff for their efforts, the pupils for their willing adaptation and resilience and our very supportive parents who appreciate what a mammoth task it was to re-write a new timetable and prepare new operational procedures to our school in the final week of the holidays.

No doubt there are, and will be, tweaks required as we fine tune how the school works in this “new normal” but we will learn and adapt as we move forward. Learning and adapting will be a continual part of this new normal as the Government issues new advice for all of society, and schools in particular, on an on-going basis. I continue to provide you with links to these changes so you can see where we get the guidance that informs changes for the school. The most recent changes were announced a few days ago and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-19-framework-decision-making-scotlands-route-map-through-out-crisis-phase-3-update-20-august-2020/pages/3/>

As well as these changes, we are also expecting guidance specific to practical subjects like Drama, Music, PE, Technical and Home Economics over the coming days and weeks.

My one word of caution is that we should all base any view or understanding of the threat we face, or processes we follow, on these Government documents. I am aware that social media is awash with speculation and myth around what is safe, what schools should be doing, what

schools in other areas, or indeed other countries are doing. We follow Scottish Government guidance which itself is based on scientific advice. We don't listen to folk on Facebook or Twitter.

I am pleased to say that the feedback from staff and pupils has been very positive indeed, especially about the rigorous hygiene routines, the change to the timetable, the creation of the year group bubbles and the change to breaks, lunchtimes and end of the day. All of which contribute a multitude of added layers of protection against any possible spread of the virus.

Whilst it is fairly easy to ensure we follow these routines in school, I am aware that some members of the public have raised concerns about pupils not socially distancing outside of school and of not wearing masks in shops. I can assure everyone we do not have this issue in school. Whilst clearly we are not responsible for policing the shops and streets at lunchtimes, after school and even weekends as requested, we are of course responsible for playing our part in continuing to educate our youngsters about what keeps society safe and I have given a strong and regular message to all our pupils about them maintaining their high standards out in the community. I am sure the Police, the parents and the shopkeepers will likewise share this message. We were all teenagers once and thought ourselves bulletproof and immune to rules. Together we'll help them learn.

In addition to all the Covid changes, the biggest change this week was the announcement by the Scottish Government that they have agreed to honour all the teachers' estimates and new SQA certificates will be issued to pupils by post on **Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> September**. My congratulations to all our pupils who will have the results that quite rightly recognise all the work they put into last year. The school year may have been curtailed but between the previous May until March this year, the pupils worked hard and deserved the qualifications awarded.

From my discussions with our Clan teams, I am aware that parents still have many questions. Many of the answers can be found in the previous letters, videos and Government guidance I have shared. I now also attach a link to a FAQ sheet with answers.

<http://www.obanhigh.argyll-bute.sch.uk/admin/js/libs/tinymce/plugins/moxiemanager/data/files/FAQs.pdf>

We are very pleased to answer any and all questions our parents and pupils may have. By providing you with the answers to any questions, it should relieve any worry or concern and give you confidence that we will both educate and care for our children. Should you have any questions at all, as always please email your child's guidance teacher, or use the contact us facility on the website.

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

Another development I wish to raise is the work being done by our Senior Pupil Leadership Team. They have been busy going around the classes and meeting with the pupils in the clans. They have also started to launch their new clan challenges. Their intention is to post videos with messages and challenges each Friday on Instagram and YouTube. I would encourage you to sign up and support their work. We may not be able to have assemblies but we can keep promoting the importance of family amongst the clans online.

Another online opportunity I wish to ensure that all parents are aware of is Google Classroom. We may not be required to teach the blended learning programmes we developed before the holiday, but we still have the experience and facility to ensure we continue to make use of Google Classroom. All staff have been asked to keep posting their lessons online each week, so that any youngster who is absent for whatever reason, can keep pace (if they are able) with the class work they are missing. Your child will have these codes but if you require any GC codes, please just send us an email.

I hope you continue to find this information useful and that you all have a good week.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P A Bain', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

**P A Bain**  
**Executive Head Teacher**  
**Oban High School, Tiree High School & Tiree Primary School**