



Date: 8 January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

I would first like to take the opportunity to wish everybody a Happy New Year and hope that 2021 is healthy, happy and safe for all.

When I wrote to you on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December, we were all working on the understanding that schools would return from 5<sup>th</sup> January. The announcement by the First Minister on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> December and subsequent announcement on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January has resulted in major changes across our community. While I appreciate that the announcements made during the Christmas break are needed to ensure we reduce the spread of the virus. I am also very aware that the move to home learning will have caused frustration and anxiety amongst many young people, parents and staff.

I hope you find the information contained in this letter useful. As we know the situation is subject to change and information will continue to be issued as the term progresses. Further information can also be found using our website.

### **Online Learning**

I would like to reassure you that Mearns Academy is well placed to move to home learning having already experienced this from March 2020.

- Google Classroom will be used as our Online Learning platform.
- Staff and Pupils are skilled in the use of Google Classroom and many subjects have continued to use this since our return.
- The learning experience and resources provided through Google Classroom will be Faculty and subject specific. These may include demonstrations, worksheets, visual slides, media clips, Google Meet, reading, set questions or project-based learning.
- Faculties across the school will provide quality learning for young people to engage with.
- As a school we have issued 100+ devices to young people to ensure that all young people have access to a device that supports learning. Should there be an issue with accessing a device please use the contacts noted below and the school will look to support where possible.
- Staff training has taken place on Google Classroom with further sessions to be offered.
- Google Classroom codes will be collated and issued to parents/pupils. The majority of young people will know these already.
- "How to" guides will be available via our website to support parents.

The range of online learning experiences mentioned above is in no way a complete list and I am confident that a strong online learning experience will be offered to our young people.

## Key Worker/Vulnerable Young People

The vast majority of children and young people should be learning from home up until the end of January 2021 in line with the recent announcements. Mearns Academy is open to support vulnerable young people and the children of key workers. As a school we have ensured that sufficient staffing is in place to support in-school arrangements for vulnerable young people and the children of key workers. This must be balanced with teachers providing online learning.

We are pleased to report that the number of pupils attending the hub is low which helps to support the “Stay Home. Protect the NHS. Saves Lives” message from the Scottish Government

If there are any changes to this position, we will update parents as we are advised by Scottish Government.

## Expectations & Engagement

We understand that in every home across our community circumstances will be different. We do however as a school have to set expectations for both staff, in the amount of work provided, and for pupils, with the amount of work to be completed. The work provided and to be completed by pupils will mirror the amount of time the young person would have been in that subject in school. For each year group and for each course this will vary.

As a general guide to the number of hours of work pupils should spend on each subject area, the tables below give an overview of the in-school allocation for each subject over a traditional 30 hour week. For example, an S1 pupil traditionally studies 4 hours of English and Maths, 3 hours of Science, ...

Mearns Academy Broad General Education Curriculum																														
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
S1	English				Mathematics				Science			Social			Exp Arts Art Dr Mu			Technologies Bu Co Tech			Mod Lan			Core PE	HMB	HE	RE	PSE		
S2	English				Mathematics				Science			Social			Exp Arts Art Dr Mu			Technologies Bu Co Tech			Mod Lan			Core PE	HE	RE	PSE			
S3	English				Mathematics				Mod Lang			Sci Choice	Soc Choice	Exp Choice	Tech Choice	Free Choice	Free Choice	Free Choice	Core PE	RE	PSE									
Mearns Academy Senior Phase Curriculum																														
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
S4	English				Mathematics				Choice 1			Choice 2			Choice 3			Choice 4			DYW	Study	Core PE	RE	PSE					
S5	Choice 1				Choice 2				Choice 3			Choice 4			Choice 5			Study	Core PE	PSE										
S6	Choice 1				Choice 2				Choice 3			Choice 4			Self Study / Wider School Contribution						P	E	PSE							

## **Engagement**

Engagement during the last lock down was extremely positive, especially within the senior phase. This is something we would look to build on with all year groups.

- Fortnightly, each Principal Teacher of Faculty will monitor engagement and record this centrally.
- Principal Teachers of Guidance will have an overview of engagement for each young person within their House.
- Should engagement be a cause for concern contact will be made by either Principal Teacher Faculty or Principal Teacher of Guidance.
- This call will be supportive to see how as a school we can help your young person engage with the learning tasks provided.
- To ensure progression in learning it is vital that each young person endeavours to complete all set tasks and meet all set deadlines. If there are any issues with tasks or deadlines, early communication should be made with the class teacher.
- If there are difficulties across a number of subjects then contact should be made with PTG.

As stated above we appreciate each young person is in a unique situation. Please see the wellbeing section in this letter for more information on supports available.

## **Tracking, Reporting and Parent Evenings'**

Information has been issued regarding level 6 and level 7 reports. The main purpose of these reports is to share feedback from the assessment window. Reports for other courses and year groups will be issued at a later date as the term progresses.

Parent Evening information was issued in December. As the situation has now changed significantly, we will again have to review how parent evenings will take place this session. Further information will be issued on this going forward.

## **SQA**

As a school we are working tirelessly in line with updated SQA guidelines to ensure that we do all we can to support our learners in their attainment and achievement. Our Senior pupils recently completed formal assessments during the December Assessment Window which will help inform progress/reporting and identify areas for improvement going forward. Further SQA developments will be shared with pupils/parents as and when they are announced. Any questions/queries about subjects should be addressed with the class teacher in the first instance with support from the Principal Teacher Faculty and Principal Teacher of Guidance where necessary.

## Wellbeing & Support

Throughout the pandemic the wellbeing of all has been paramount. As a school we are still here to support all young people.

- As an initial point of contact please use the school email address or phone number [mearns.aca@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:mearns.aca@aberdeenshire.gov.uk) / 01561 400700.
- For subject specific support each young person should contact their allocated class teacher through Google Classroom.
- Support from each Principal Teacher of Guidance is also available. Contact can be made by using either Google Classroom or the email address/phone number above.
- The Mearns Community Larder is open at the following times: Tuesday 2pm-4pm at The Venue, Wednesday 10am-3pm at Mearns Academy.
- Aberdeenshire Council Educational Psychology Service is offering their phone service again for parents/carers or professionals. The phone service will be available on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 9am to 3pm. Call 01779 403721 or email [eps@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:eps@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

As always I wish to thank you for your support and if you have any questions going forward please do not hesitate in contacting us at [mearns.aca@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:mearns.aca@aberdeenshire.gov.uk) or 01561 400700.

Yours Sincerely,



Gareth Campbell  
Head Teacher  
Mearns Academy