



Your Ref:
Our Ref: ES/SP
Contact: Eleanor Sheppard
Location: Marischal College

Date: 15 January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Remote Learning Update

Following the First Minister's announcement that schools will operate on a remote learning basis until at least the beginning of February, I write to update you on the first week of online learning. I am delighted to be able to share that all of our schools have plans and systems in place and operating effectively to ensure the successful delivery of online learning for all learners in Aberdeen city.

Teachers have very ably switched to digital delivery of the curriculum, delivering new content and/or consolidating key knowledge and skills through Google Classroom. We are aware that this return to online learning has the potential to create challenges and tension for families who are once again having to quickly adapt and balance the pressures of home working, caring for others and supporting learning and we recognise and value your vital contribution in challenging times.

During the first period of lockdown in March we experienced high demand for chromebooks and issued around 5000 devices to children and young people. The Council took the decision to invest in a significant number of additional devices to ensure that we were well prepared for any eventuality. We are extremely pleased to have taken this action as at this point in time we have issued a total of 11,322 chromebooks to support children and young people during this second lockdown period. We thank you for working with your school to safely collect devices.

We are tracking pupil engagement carefully so that we can keep our approach under review and make any changes necessary. As of yesterday we had 21,541 children across our primary and secondary schools engaging with their Google Classroom with a chromebook or PC, and we estimate around 1000 more making use of devices such as I pads. This level of engagement constitutes around 97% of all children and young people in our schools and is marginally higher than the level of engagement we recorded in March. We are extremely grateful for your support as this enables us to better maintain the provision of education.

As of yesterday, there are 6057 active Google Classrooms with 18,583 Posts by teachers.

The last period of school closure showed that some children and young people adapt better to a digital learning environment than others and it is important that you make your child's school aware of any issues you may be experiencing at the earliest opportunity so that we can work with you to ensure the best possible outcomes for your child.

In order to maintain continuity of their educational experience it is important that our young people continue to work with their teachers and engage fully with their Google Classroom. You will be informed if school staff notice that your child is not engaging with Google Classroom to the extent we would expect and your support in encouraging your child to participate fully in the online learning offer is greatly appreciated.

You will be aware that schools routinely check attendance and have procedures in place when children do not physically attend. As you would expect, we have reviewed arrangements in light of school closures. In keeping with national guidance, teachers are being asked to monitor the 'virtual attendance' of each pupil through engagement with the online learning tasks or check ins with school staff. They are asked to alert the senior leadership team if children and young people are not visible so that we can check that everyone is okay, in most cases this check will be done through Groupcall. If you receive a text, please reply and let us know you are okay.

The Scottish Government has indicated that they will inform schools of any extension to remote learning on 18 January 2020. Whatever is decided, I want to assure you that we will adapt to the circumstances and continue to work in partnership with you to support all Aberdeen's children and young people.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Eleanor Sheppard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'E' and 'S'.

Eleanor Sheppard
Chief Education Officer