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14<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Hello,

I'm delighted to be able to tell you that the Scottish Government has confirmed that next week, Monday 19<sup>th</sup> April, we will welcome all pupils back to school full time and that for schools **the second lockdown is over**. I wrote to you all on 31<sup>st</sup> March with details of the return to school in anticipation of this announcement and that letter is copied below. It gives details of what we need pupils to do and how we together can keep the school environment safe and minimise any further need for self-isolation. I am not going to repeat the content that you can read below and instead just want to give you the headline messages that I need you and your young person to be clear about before next Monday:

- 1) There is no requirement for pupils to physically distance from other pupils, but it is still a good idea.
- 2) Face coverings must always be worn in the building unless you have a medical exemption, or you are eating- in a socially distanced manner- in the social area.
- 3) There is no requirement to socially distance on school buses, but you are always expected to wear your face covering when on the bus or in the taxi. For this reason, no food or drinks can be consumed on the bus or taxi.
- 4) The twice weekly COVID testing programme is a major part of our plan to keep the school open. It remains voluntary but I would appreciate it if you would encourage your child to participate. As someone who has been doing it since mid-February, I can confirm that it is not pleasant but it has the potential to make a huge difference to the number of pupils who miss any more in-school learning due to the need to self-isolate.
- 5) We will extend registration and provide pupils with details about the day-to-day pupil experience on Monday 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Copy of Letter of 31<sup>st</sup> March:**

Last Tuesday-24<sup>th</sup> March- the Scottish Government published updated guidance 'to ensure a safe and supportive environment for learning and teaching'. It included the sentences that we have all been waiting for:

It is anticipated that children and young people will have full-time, in-school learning after the Easter break. All secondary learners will return to full-time schooling after Easter, subject to continued suppression of the virus. This will involve the removal of strict 2m physical distancing between pupils in secondary schools.

A final decision about the success of the suppression of the virus will be taken on 6<sup>th</sup> April and- I believe- publicly communicated on 7<sup>th</sup> April. Thereafter Highland Council need time to consider the ramifications and so it will be Monday 12<sup>th</sup> April when I can finally confirm arrangements.

What follows is the information that parents and pupils will need if this full return to school is confirmed. Should there be a decline in the public health situation meaning that the full return does not happen, I will withdraw this letter and provide updated guidance on or shortly after 12<sup>th</sup> April.

Key Points:

1) **The asymptomatic testing programme.** Pupils in S4-6 have already been given access to Lateral Flow devices so that they can test themselves twice a week for the period that they are in school. On the first day back consent forms and an information pack will be issued to all S1-3 pupils and the tests will be available the next day. Participation in this scheme is voluntary but I strongly encourage all pupils to participate as it will significantly reduce the risk of transmission should there be further positive cases in the community. S4-6 pupils are not expected to test during the holidays but should resume on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup>/Monday 19<sup>th</sup> before returning to school. Top ups of testing devices for S4-6 pupils will be organised in the new term.

2) **Actions required from contacts.** Previously it was the case that if you are a contact of a positive case you just had to self-isolate. That position has now changed. The following is a direct extract from the recent guidance. "All contacts should be asked to get tested. This doesn't replace self-isolation and any contact who has a negative test during the isolation period must still complete the 10-day isolation period recommended for contacts, as they may still be incubating the COVID-19 virus. Contacts who test positive will be asked to self-isolate for an additional 10 days from the day of the test result. Any contact who has a positive test during their isolation period will be managed as a case and subject to contact tracing."

3) **"Ensuring the right behaviours is key"**. I was very impressed by the conduct of all our young people during the recent two week return to school and it is essential that this approach is retained on and after 19<sup>th</sup> April. Pupils need to support all the following messages:

- Use the hand-sanitising equipment and hand-soap
- Come prepared for ventilated rooms
- Spend as much of their break and lunch outdoors as possible. To help with this point I am currently working to have temporary roofing erected over some external areas to make them more all-weather.
- Follow the one-way system at all times.
- The current stipulation about all pupils wearing face coverings at all times in the building is also- I believe- still in force.
- If eating in the social area, you do so at a single seat.

4) **Separate areas for year groups.** We have designated areas for S1-6 pupils to socialise and pupils are asked to go to these areas at social times and if they arrive early. We also ask that at start of day, end of break and end of lunch pupils avoid tight crowds- stand back, wait, arrive at class 30 seconds later with my permission. I will issue specific advice to year groups through registration.

I would like to thank you for all your support these last three months. The last two weeks gave us a taste of what it is like when the school starts to get busy again and we are really looking forward to getting pupils back in the building and getting back to being an actual rather than an online community.

If you have any questions, please email them to [culloden.academy@highland.gov.uk](mailto:culloden.academy@highland.gov.uk) before Monday 12<sup>th</sup> and I will issue a set of answers on the website.

Best wishes,



Dr J Vance