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18 February 2021

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Dear Parent/Carer

Further to my last letter on 4 February 2021, the First Minister has now confirmed a phased return to school from Monday 22 February 2021 for those young people accessing early learning and childcare provision, P1 – 3 and very small groups of senior phase students in secondary schools to allow for the completion of practical assignments relating to SQA qualifications. Provision will continue to be available for the children of category 1 and 2 keyworkers and identified young people requiring additional support. In a very small number of schools with fewer than 25 pupils which have only one class and one teacher (all pupils together in the same class from P1 – 7) all pupils will be able to return. For all other young people, remote learning will remain the default position. Your own school should be in touch with local arrangements.

It is expected that further announcements on potential next steps around the phased return to schools will be made on 2 March 2021 and we will keep you updated on the potential implications as these announcements are made.

All schools in Aberdeenshire have been issued with asymptomatic testing kits for staff and for young people in the senior phase of secondary schools. These lateral flow testing kits can be issued to consenting staff, and young people in the senior phase, and allow them to undertake twice weekly asymptomatic testing with those taking part able to get results very swiftly. This is another very important feature of the battle against Coronavirus alongside all the other measures in place which are more familiar to us now such as physical distancing, face coverings and so on. Staffing arrangements will continue to be closely monitored as the phased return to schools begins and parents and carers are advised that there may continue to be occasions when we are unable to open schools either because staff have tested positive for the virus and are unable to attend work and/or because of the advice of Public Health colleagues. Parents/Carers would be advised of any closures via normal routes, but given the nature of the current situation this may be at relatively short notice and we would ask for your ongoing understanding of this situation.

Aberdeenshire, along with other local authorities, has been given additional financial resources to ensure appropriate staffing levels are available, including supply staff, and to ensure sufficient cleaning staff are available to keep our schools open.

I will continue to update you over the course of the coming weeks and months as further guidance is issued by Scottish Government and in the meantime I wish you and your families well and thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely



**Laurence Findlay**  
**Director of Education & Children's Services**