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Dear Families

Before Christmas 2020 the First Minister announced that most school pupils would learn remotely, rather than in school, until Monday 18 January 2021. On 4 January 2021 the First Minister confirmed that the Scottish Government had decided to extend this date and keep school buildings closed to the majority of pupils until 1 February 2021. This will be reviewed in mid-January. This change applies to all pupils, except vulnerable children and children of key workers. It includes nursery provision, as well as primary and secondary schools.

Remote Learning

Local Authorities have already produced remote learning guidance and have shared this with schools to assist with planning and preparation for the current situation. We are working together to plan and implement this guidance in the way that we believe is right for our learners. At Laurencekirk School, we remain committed to providing our children with high quality learning experiences. What has changed is the way in which we are seeking to attain these for our learners. Our new approach to remote learning is very much in its infancy and it is vital that we continue to adjust and tailor our approaches to help ensure the very best for all of our learners, families and staff. We have had many positive comments from our families this week in relation to the remote learning provision and I would like to thank you all for your support as we navigate this learning journey together.

We know that all our parents and carers want the very best for their children. It is important to stress that, in a period of remote learning, parents and carers are not expected to be teachers and we understand that many of you will be juggling work and childcare. As a school team, we would like to stress that children need not complete all 3 learning tasks which are offered each day. Please do not place yourselves or your children under undue pressure. Although your children's teachers do love to see the tasks produced, they completely understand that there are pressures and barriers to engaging in this way as they too are juggling personal priorities and home working. Many of our teachers are also simultaneously attempting home schooling and may (like me) discover that even the best teacher training and years of experience does not necessarily prepare you for that! Mental and emotional wellbeing are so important and we have to make the choices that work for



our families. Some days your child might manage one or two tasks, another day they may just check in to their class team and say 'hello' to their teacher. If that is all you can manage that day, that is absolutely fine! The most important part is to stay in touch and stay connected!

Remote learning can be delivered in a variety of ways. It may include reading, doing, creating and inventing, playing, problem solving, observing and investigating with some of the best learning examples not requiring technology at all! Learning takes place in a variety of ways and in many different contexts including outdoors and in the community.

Reading widely for enjoyment remains one of the greatest tools we have in raising attainment. Reading improves concentration, develops the imagination, stimulates empathy and of course supports literacy and vocabulary development. Perhaps most importantly, it can play an important role in promoting good mental health. I would encourage you to share stories and texts with your children, whatever their age!

We are nearly at the close of the first week of remote learning (for most of our children) and I think everyone deserves a huge pat on the back for making it this far! Our staff are meeting regularly to reflect on our approaches and for the week beginning 18th January 2021 we have made some slight adjustments.

Some teachers will provide live lessons/interactions for their pupils. The times of these will be posted in the class team. If a live lesson/interaction is offered, this will replace one of the activities posted for the day. So if a live interaction is taking place, there will be two further activities offered that day.

Our teachers will endeavour to offer our children feedback on their learning. Please do be aware that this feedback may not always be given on the day the learning is handed in but may follow in due course.

We wish to support our families as best we can and understand that learning may be completed outwith the school day dependent upon family schedules and routines. Our staff are working within school hours only so there may be a delay in responses etc. Thank you for your understanding of this.

Please continue to use the school office and email address for queries and Mrs Clark will divert these to the correct staff members.

Can I also politely request that parents refrain from using the class teams to communicate and chat with each other. This is a facility for our children to interact with each other and their teacher and this type of communication would be better suited to personal social media channels.

In School Support

We also have a dedicated team of staff working in school who are supporting our key worker and vulnerable children with their remote learning. They are also doing an excellent job and working hard to make this experience nurturing and productive. Office, catering, cleaning and janitorial staff are also in school alongside the Senior Leadership Team to support these efforts. It is important to stress that this support looks very different from our day to day school and no new and direct teaching is taking place.

Finally...

This is not an easy situation for any of us, we have all had to make huge adjustments to our daily lives and routines in order to work towards defeating this virus. However, we are a close school community characterised by strong relationships. Our community is fractured at the moment and this is emotionally challenging for us all. Wherever we are, we are still part of the Laurencekirk School team and we all still play a part in making this school a brilliant place to learn. This situation is certainly not easy, but it will be worth it. I know that we have got this. I send my love and best wishes to all your wonderful children. Please take care of each other.

Kindest Regards

Jill Smith
Head Teacher