



**Laurencekirk School**  
Frain Drive  
Laurencekirk  
Aberdeenshire  
AB30 1EG  
T: 01561 400640

e: [laurencekirk.sch@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:laurencekirk.sch@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)  
w: <http://laurencekirk.aberdeenshire.sch.uk>

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Dear Families

We have reached the end of the second week of home schooling, home working or working differently and I believe we must all give ourselves credit because it is definitely due! This is a testing and tiring situation for us all for different reasons, but we are doing it and doing it well. I read these words recently, "It is OK to feel scared, that usually means you are about to be really brave." I like this saying, I think it is very true. I have absolute faith in this school community's capacity to be brave, to pull together and ensure that although our school gates remain closed, our children continue to thrive, learn and grow under our collective care.

The First Minister of Scotland announced on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> January that schools will remain closed until at least the middle of February with most of our pupils continuing to learn from home. The transmission of the virus is still too high to ease these restrictions. This situation will be reviewed on 2<sup>nd</sup> February. Of course, we remain hopeful that the scientific advice will enable a return to school in the near future.

Life without school and life without face to face teaching is tricky, isolating and overwhelming at times. There is no one size fits all model which we can apply to remote learning. It is our role and ambition as educators to pay close attention to the guidance that we are given and make the decisions that we believe are the right ones for our pupils. We have responded swiftly to this guidance and the shifting demands of this pandemic and I am very proud of the standard of remote learning being delivered in our school. We are passionate about collaboration in Laurencekirk and working together to achieve great things – Covid has not interfered with our collaborative spirit. We continue to meet regularly as a team of educators to reflect on our remote learning and review our approaches.

Remote Learning is a mixture of strategies which may include a combination of recorded lessons, videos, links to websites, live interactions, personal projects, physical activity, creativity and outdoor experiences, to name a few. Your child will experience a range of these strategies.

Some teachers may plan live interactions for pupils and the times of these may vary. All our class teachers are working remotely at the moment and 'going live' can present its own unique set of challenges at their end too as they attempt to juggle a whole host of responsibilities including their own children's home schooling in many cases. EEK! If live interactions are planned, there may only be one opportunity in a day to join in as opposed to two, so please be sure to check for times if this is something you would like your child to take part in.

I would like to reiterate that the learning provided is to be completed at your discretion. We are teachers – teaching is what we do and we will always endeavour to plan and provide a range of learning experiences to engage and stimulate your children's thinking. However, we are also very realistic and understanding and would not want our families feeling a strain. Do what feels right, when it feels right. We get it! Please do check in each day with your team though, even if it is just to say 'hi!' Our teachers do like to touch base with everyone each day.

I know that teachers can't teach and learners can't learn without basic aspects of their physical, emotional and mental wellbeing being met. I know this from my years in the profession. I apply the same principles to parenting. So please, be kind to yourselves too. You matter too amongst all of this! This crisis has really forced us to think about the importance of our health and wellbeing, and now more than ever, we must come together and support and encourage each other.

On that note, we have received several positive messages from parents this week regarding the quality of remote learning being delivered in our school and these words really give us a sense of pride and purpose. Nothing gives me greater pleasure as Head Teacher, than basking in the reflected glory of the wonderful work going on in our school! Thank you to all who have reached out. These messages really do mean a lot to us.

As always, if we can help in any way, please do not hesitate to make contact through the school number or email. If you are experiencing technical issues, you can email the school or leave a message on the answer phone 24 hours a day and Mrs Begg will gladly help you.

Finally, thank you for supporting your children with our Burns Project. We will share a video of their achievements in due course.

Take care of each other...

Kindest Regards

*Jill Smith*

Head Teacher