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Education and Families

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Dear Parent/Carer

As I sit writing this latest letter to you, I can't believe we are already two weeks into the new school session. I must say, it has been a really enjoyable and positive start to the new school year and it has been great to welcome back all our young people to what we hope will be a more settled session ahead. Young people have returned to school with energy and enthusiasm, standards of behaviour and effort have been very high and we look forward to this continuing throughout the weeks and months ahead. It has also been wonderful to see so many of our pupils return in full school uniform with the high numbers choosing to wear their school blazer a real positive. I will mention uniform again later in this letter.

Although the guidelines and in-school restrictions related to the Covid pandemic remain broadly unchanged it has been pleasing to see so many of our young people continue to comply with them. As always, the safety of our young people continues to be of utmost importance to us and we continue to be mindful of the guidelines and advice or updates we receive.

There have been significant changes to the guidance for isolation and tracking close contacts compared to the last school year. On the advice of public health authorities, schools will no longer carry out contact tracing should there be a positive confirmed case. Test and Protect Scotland will work with the index case, and in the case of a young person their parents, to identify close contacts and they will get in touch to advise on next steps. Their focus will more likely now be on household members and other very close contacts resulting from, for example, a sleep over. However, should any young person display any Covid symptoms they should self-isolate, get a PCR test and only return to school should the test result returns negative. Those identified as close contacts by Test and Protect will also be advised to get a PCR test and again should isolate until a negative result is achieved. I would again like to encourage everyone to participate in the Lateral Flow, twice weekly testing scheme and also remind parent that pupils aged 16 and 17 are now eligible to be vaccinated. The most powerful tool we have to protect young people in Kilsyth Academy is to take every step to avoid the virus coming into school. Regular testing at home will help us achieve this.

Finally, in this regard, I would like to emphasise that at the moment, pupils are only likely to miss significant time in school if they test positive for Covid-19 and we would encourage all our young people, and especially our senior pupils in S4-6 to take all necessary steps to protect themselves. In particular, can I ask you to re-emphasise to your child(ren) the need to regularly sanitise their hands in school and encourage them to ensure they bring a face covering to school with them. Whilst we do have a stock of face coverings for those who genuinely forget, we are giving out a large number on a daily basis often to the same individuals.



Free School Meals/Footwear and clothing grants

These are available to families who qualify for this support and we would strongly encourage anyone who thinks they might be entitled to either grant to apply. I would also like to remind families who have previously successfully been in receipt of these grants that you have to re-apply every year and they do not automatically carry over. Whilst our primary concern is to ensure that our young people and families can access and receive the support they are entitled to, it is also worth noting that part of our funding is based upon the number of young people in receipt for Free School Meals. By ensuring everyone who is entitled to receive this support register, we can ensure we as a school get the support we are entitled to from the Scottish Government to support all young people. You can find out more information about free school meals and footwear and clothing grants [here](#).

Staffing update

I thought it would be useful to inform you of some changes to our staffing this session. A number of staff left Kilsyth Academy at the end of last session and we wish them well in their future endeavours. This includes, Mr McLean and Mr Chaaney from our Humanities faculty, Mr Gallagher from our Science faculty, Miss Henry from our Languages faculty, Mrs Wells from our Technologies faculty and Mrs Higney from our school office. This year we have welcomed Miss McClymont to our Humanities Faculty, Mrs Bell to our Technologies faculty and Mrs Price to our Science faculty. We would also congratulate Mr Clarke (Music) and Mrs Selkirk (Home Economics) on their respective marriages and Mrs Campbell (Careers officer) on the birth of her first child.

A number of staff have also recently taken up new promoted roles in the school including Mr Pryde who, as a new Principal Teacher has responsibility for wider achievement and engagement, Miss McFarlane who has responsibility for supporting closing the attainment gap and Ms Kirman who has a remit to support inclusion and wellbeing. Furthermore, Mr Clarke was appointed as our PT for developing the young Workforce supporting pupils to develop skills for learning, life and work and supporting pupils into positive post school destinations.

School photographs

On Thursday 2nd September, school photographs will take place for all pupils in S1, S4, 5 & 6. Pupils in S2 who missed their photograph in June will also be included.

Communication with parents/key dates

As we finalise our annual calendar, I will write to you shortly outlining key dates related to tracking and reporting and parents evenings. Whilst there are four formal reporting opportunities to parents across the year it is important to remember that if you have any concerns about your young person's progress and you require a brief update, or if there is anything you need to alert us to that you should get in touch. If this is the case you should arrange to contact your child's pupil support teacher in the first instance or, where it concerns a specific subject the appropriate faculty head. You can do so by calling the school office or sending an e-mail. It is also worth reminding everyone that the main form of communication about school activities, including updates from myself, will be via e-mail. Please ensure we always have an up-to-date email address for you and if you are unsure please contact our school office.

School uniform

The general standard of school dress has been very high so far this term and it is great to see our young people looking so smart. Recently, I issued information detailing our acceptable school uniform and I would also like to take this opportunity to emphasise the importance we place on a school blazer. School uniform helps create a sense of identity and community but also help keep us safe by enabling us to recognise those who should be in our school. It also supports families by discouraging the need for pupils to wear expensive and branded clothing to school.

However, I would appeal for your support in a couple of areas. The first is in ensuring that pupils do not wear P.E. kit to school in place of uniform. Pupils should bring P.E. kit to get changed in school for P.E. at both the start and end of the lesson. We understand that some are out of the habit as a result of changes during the pandemic however, it is important we return to our previous high standards. Similarly, it is crucial that when pupils have P.E. they bring kit with them. Already this year a number of pupils are turning up to P.E. without P.E. kit. However, it is worth noting that this was not an issue last session when pupils could wear P.E. kit to school in place of their normal uniform!

Lastly, and importantly, I find myself addressing the sensitive topic of modesty amongst many of our girls. Whilst we understand the fashion of wearing short skirts, there are obviously limits on skirt length that are required to protect ones dignity. Sadly, a significant number of our young ladies appear oblivious to this resulting in many being quietly counselled by my depute head teachers to protect their modesty. To be blunt, if the top of their tights or underwear are visible then the skirt is too short. As a parent to a secondary age girl I understand the challenges you can face around this issue but I do appeal for your help in this regard.

Parent Council

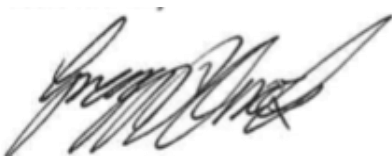
Our first parent council meeting of the year will take place soon. This will also be the annual general meeting with the re-election of members and office bearers. In Kilsyth Academy, we have a very supportive parent council who actively advocate on behalf of parents and pupils alike. I very much welcome the support and guidance they provide and look forward to continuing to build upon the work of that already strong forum. I will confirm details shortly but in the meantime, if you would like any further information on our parent council please get in touch.

Online newsletter

Finally, I would like to invite everyone to view our new monthly online newsletter. Initially developed to support our Primary transition last session, this new digital and interactive newsletter includes short videos, PowerPoint presentations, picture banks and written articles and will be issued monthly to provide you with updates and news on the school and to celebrate pupils achievements. This will be in addition to my letters to you and to the information published via our numerous Twitter channels. You can read this first newsletter by clicking [here](#).

I look forward seeing all our young people progress and thrive in what I hope is a productive year ahead. Can I wish all Kilsyth Academy families a restful and enjoyable weekend.

Yours faithfully



Gregg Orrock
Head Teacher