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Our ref: JL/JM

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Dear Parent/Carer

I sincerely hope that this letter finds you safe and well.

The purpose of this communication is to give parents and young people within the Perth Academy community a weekly update.

I will also take this opportunity to update you on progress in Perth & Kinross and in Perth Academy following the First Minister's announcement that the new school year will begin on 11th August, if the scientific advice says it is safe to do so.

Staff are due to return over the course of June to help prepare for this. Please be assured that we are working hard to plan for the phased return of all children and young people in August. This involves considering all public health advice, particularly around physical distancing, to ensure that when children return, they are accommodated safely in our school.

What is clear, is that attendance at school for secondary pupils is likely to be on a part-time, and rota basis from 11th August. During that phased return, when children are not in school, they will continue to have access to learning at home, through digital online approaches or where required, packs of learning resources.

We will be issuing clear guidance before the start of term in August. In the meantime, I have included a useful link for information relating to the re-opening of schools at the very end of this communication.

I want to once again highlight the laptop initiative that was led by our Parent Council. The way that our parents and families have rallied round to very quickly initiate and support this activity has been superb. We have been overwhelmed at the generosity and the support we have received. As a result of this activity we have been able to support fifteen young people, quickly, with improved connectivity and we now have funds to increase our IT provision to continue this important work. We offer our thanks to Al Maktoum College, Perth Academy parents and

of course Pieter van Aswegen of VA IT Solutions, who has so generously given his skills and time.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the support you are providing for your child's learning at home. We appreciate this can be quite challenging. Our staff are working hard to provide resources and we are always keen to receive feedback from you on your experience of home learning. Please feel free to get in touch directly at perthacademy@pkc.gov.uk if you have any queries whatsoever. Alternatively, you can contact our parent council at pcperthacademy@gmail.com which is also a helpful point of contact.

You will find this week's update below.

Take care and keep safe. Best wishes from my house to your house.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Johnny Lothian', written in a cursive style.

Johnny Lothian
Rector

Rector's Update Friday 29th May

Online learning

As stated in my previous communications, our collective priority as a wider community of Perth Academy remains the safety and wellbeing of our young people. Continuing with learning at this time is of course very important as part of a daily and weekly routine, but we appreciate it may not have the same priority at this time and that families and young people will require flexibility, understanding and support.

I remind you also that we are tracking and monitoring the extent of our learner online engagement. The purpose of this is to do our best to ensure that where barriers exist, we can work with families to reduce them if we can. If we contact you in relation to your child's non-engagement with their learning, it will always be well intentioned and take cognisance of the challenging circumstances that families are facing at this time. We have asked that young people do their best at this time.

Parent Survey

Thank you to the large number of parents/carers (N=387) who responded to our Perth Academy Online survey. The survey is now closed and the feedback from this is already informing change and improvement.

One of the themes from the survey feedback is that parents would like more 'live' learning interactions with teachers. During the week beginning 11 May we had 3 live sessions, last week 9 and this week we have provided 22 live learning opportunities. You will appreciate the steep learning curve for us as a staff, however we are rising to that challenge and improving our IT skills all the time to do our best to meet the needs of our learners.

Support for parents

We have made a parent support video which will be shared next week which may help answer parent queries about how Microsoft Teams works and the user experience for young people. This may help in your efforts to support them.

A monthly overview of learning being covered by each department will also be available on the resources area of the school website from Monday 1 June. This will be high level information aimed at parents to ensure you have the overview for June. This will be available from Monday on the **Resources tab** of our website under **Home and Online Learning**.

New S2 and S3

Our S1 and S2 year groups are set up in Teams for their new studies in S2 and S3 starting on 1 June as per the letter issued to parents this week.

In the interests of consistency and clarity, we are no longer using Show My Homework to issue work for pupils and all work will be issued via Microsoft Teams, within GLOW.

Senior Phase S4-6

From the beginning of this unprecedented situation, we have tried to ensure that our young people and their families are kept well informed and that we are sensitive to the situation. We

have been concerned primarily with wellbeing for all in our learning community and this continues to be a priority. As time goes on and we continue working in an online learning environment, we are conscious that learners in the new Senior Phase are preparing for SQA presentation next year. Blended learning; with some in school contact and some online learning, will be the delivery model for next session.

With this in mind, it is important that we ensure parents/carers have the information they need so they can be effective in supporting their child's learning and progress.

Our data tells us that some senior phase learners are not completing all the work that has been issued to them. We understand that there can be a wide range of reasons for this and we want to work together with you to address any barriers to ensure the best possible outcomes for your child.

Next week, if your child is in the new S4 and has incomplete work you will be informed about this. The following week, this process will happen for the new S5/6. As always, if you have any queries or concerns please do get in touch with us.

Supporting our community – staying connected

Our community relies on us staying connected. This is a message that I would like you to reiterate with our young people. Connection facilitates mutual support. Please encourage them to stay connected with their friends via messages, calls and video conversations.

We have been continuing to ensure all our young people are connected and able to participate in their online learning. So far, we have provided 60 devices (tablets, I pads, laptops and/or dongles). Mrs Martin and Mrs Scott have been doing an excellent job organising and providing a “doorstop delivery” service. Socially distanced of course. There have been a few access issues with some of the devices, but Mr Barlow has been working his magic to overcome any technical barriers. If anyone still requires access to an Ipad or laptop, or is having any difficulty with any devices we have issued, please contact us PerthAcademy@pkc.sch.uk and we will do all we can to help.

Primary 7 Transition

Our Primary 7 Virtual Transition began this week with P7s added to MS Teams and given links to the Transition YouTube Channel. We have provided a brief introduction to some key staff in school, where to get help and Mr Lothian launched our #StayAtHome Steps to Perth Academy. As for all our young people, activities and challenges provided are not compulsory, but we would encourage P7s to participate as much as they can. This is a great way for us to get to know each other. We are waiting in anticipation for pictures of one of next week's activities – The Traybake Challenge. For anyone needing ingredients, FREE packs will be available in our stationery boxes in Tesco (South Street), Letham4All and the Spar (Scone) from lunchtime on Monday. School staff are also taking part in the activities. If only we could sample some of the traybakes!

Support for Pupils

The Guidance and Support staff are continuing to make contact with our young people and families to stay connected and provide support as required. In these times of uncertainty, it is

important to maintain relationships and this is a priority for us. If you have any concerns or worries please do not hesitate to contact us PerthAcademy@pkc.gov.uk

Leavers

If you are eligible and intend to leave school this summer, you are required to complete a school leaver notification form. Please note that you will not be registered formally as a school leaver until this form is fully completed. This can now be submitted online by clicking on the link below. This requires to be completed by 5 June 2020.

[https://my.pkc.gov.uk/service/School leavers return form](https://my.pkc.gov.uk/service/School%20leavers%20return%20form)

Should you need any guidance to complete, please email Perthacademy@pkc.gov.uk and your enquiry will be attended to as soon as possible.

We have teamed up with some local partners who are keeping a box of stationery resources on our behalf. These are free to Perth Academy students, just ask! Resources available at Tesco, South street, Letham4All (Letham Centre) and Spar, Scone. Please take what you need.

Parent Council LAPTOPS FOR LEARNING

Perth Academy's Laptops for Learning appeal delivers 15 computers for students during lockdown. The Perth Academy community has worked together through lockdown to collect and refurbish 15 laptops to support students' learning at home and has raised over £2,500 to provide further help.

The feat has been achieved through donations of old computers by local people and businesses, a successful Just Giving appeal, a £500 contribution from Dundee's Al Maktoum College and the invaluable help of local IT specialist Pieter van Aswegen of VA IT Solutions.

While the school had already taken steps to ensure all young people are able to access to their online learning, staff were aware of a number of learners who have been either sharing devices at home or required access to laptops in order to undertake specific types of learning.

Parent Council Chair Declan Gilmore said: "This is a really challenging time for everyone, and the Parent Council wanted to do something to help the Academy's students and staff. Thanks to the generosity of dozens of donors and many, many hours of voluntary work by Pieter, the appeal has made a big contribution to equipping pupils with the tech they need to take part in the online learning that currently replaces traditional lessons."

Course Choice – almost all the course choice process is now complete. Any remaining issues should be addressed as soon as possible to the Guidance staff or Mr Ross.

YASS – any S6 pupil intending to apply for a YASS course should do so without delay. These are funded by the Scottish government. Once the funding limit is reached, no further applications can be accepted. Application forms are on the school website. Once completed, these should be returned to Mr Ross. Those who have already submitted forms should hear from the Open University soon.

School College Courses – Any last-minute application must be submitted without delay. Most of you who have applied will have heard back from the college by now. A few courses are still accepting more applications. Please note that college courses do not start until after the summer break. There is, however, an induction programme throughout the month of June. More details about this will be sent to you next week.

Campus courses – Any pupil taking a campus course should have been added by now to the appropriate Team in the host school. If there are any issues, please let Mr Ross know.

Term 4 – what's coming up?

May

- From June 1st - Head prefect application process including applications, video presentation and virtual interview. Directions will be posted within S6 Assembly Team

June

- June 1st – Change of timetable – S1&2 classes will be moved into new classes and courses through online platforms. Letter to S1 and 2 parents week beginning 25th May containing details.
- June 30th - Perth Academy Annual Awards – we will be organising our awards and communicating with the award winners individually. We are developing an online / video communication to share the individual and group successes of the year and we will publish lists of winners.

Supporting Parents

This week, the First Minister outlined her roadmap for phased recovery. I attach a link which might be useful for parents and carers in terms of what this plan means for you.

<https://www.parentclub.scot/articles/reopening-schools>