

Harlaw Academy

18-20 Albyn Place
Aberdeen
AB10 1RG
Headteacher: Mr R McLaren



22 September 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

Headteacher Update

I am sure you will agree that it has been a very quick first few weeks back in school. As the September weekend approaches, please can I bring to your attention a small number of important updates;

1. **Harlaw Academy – building improvements and entry barriers**
2. **Use of the rear school gates – Albyn Lane**
3. **COVID – 19 Mitigations and Protocols**
4. **Pupils feeling unwell**
5. **Expectations around school uniform**
6. **School reporting to parents and carers**

1. Harlaw Academy – building improvements and entry barriers

As I highlighted in my last update, while society is finding ways to try to return to something resembling normality, a range of improvements to the fabric of our building has taken place or is underway. Our new front path has been completed providing pupils with a safer access route in and out of the front of the school. This removes the need for pupils to walk through the car park.

As part of the work our new entry barriers have been installed and are operational. The barriers require a “key card” to open but can be opened for parents, carers and guests via an intercom positioned at the entry gate. This is the gate on the left-hand side as you look at the school from Rubislaw Gardens. In order to ensure there is no vehicular movement at key times, the barriers will not operate at the start of day, breaktime, lunchtime and end of day when pupils are in the playground. Whilst this may cause a degree of frustration for drivers, I welcome your support in helping to ensure the safety of our pupils remains our first consideration.

I have been working with our school Architect and contact within the Corporate Landlord team to finalise plans for our toilet refurbishment. As I have indicated previously, this represents a significant amount of work and disruption to the building. In order to minimise the impact of this disruption, the main body of work will be undertaken during our longest holiday – Summer. ACC have confirmed that preliminary building work will begin during the last week of the

summer term with work starting officially as we break up for the Summer holidays. This is a welcome investment in our building I am sure you will agree.

2. Use of the rear school gates – Albyn Lane

Our rear gates onto Albyn Lane are secured by magnetic locks. This means that pupils can use the gates in the morning allowing them to arrive in a staggered fashion. In order to ensure the same staggered departure, from Tuesday 28 September, we will be asking all pupils to depart using the exits at the front of the building only.

This will reduce congestion in Albyn Lane and help to stagger the number of pupils leaving the school. I am concerned that if all pupils leave at the same time from different doors, they all tend to arrive at Holburn junction at the same time. This approach should minimise this.

Additionally, it will also help our staff to provide better supervision of pupils departing the school campus.

3. COVID-19 Mitigations and protocols.

As we approach the end of the first half term of the session, despite the high numbers of cases we have seen across the country, mitigations in school continue to play a key part in helping to reduce transmission. There is no question that pupils, and of course staff, are becoming weary of the high levels of mitigation but these remain key to our work in ensuring safety for all. We must remain vigilant and focused in this area.

I would again ask for your support in encouraging your child to comply with the following mitigations.

- wear face coverings on school transport and in schools,
- follow strict hand washing/sanitising,
- sit in designated seats when in class,
- maintain recommended distance of over 1m from all staff and pupils,
- maintain hygiene routines around chair and desk use.

4. Pupils feeling unwell

Over the past few weeks and, as we approach ‘that time of year’, we have started to see pupils contract a range of bugs and illnesses. I understand the desire for parents and carers to send pupils to school to minimise the amount of school time missed, however, approximately 40% of our first aid calls occur between 0830 and 0930. Please could I request that if your child is unwell, you do not send them to school. Anything we can do to prevent the spread of infection, be it COVID-19 or otherwise, is in our collective best interests.

It is not unusual for children to have a few days of feeling unwell, but if you are concerned that your child seems to be unwell more frequently than that, please contact your child’s guidance teacher to discuss.

5. Expectations around school uniform

Please can I take this opportunity to thank you for your efforts to support our dress code. There is a clear difference this session now that we have returned to school uniform. Guidance teachers are routinely challenging pupils who are not wearing uniform and offering supports where required. If you feel you need our support in this area, please do reach out to your child’s Guidance teacher.

As pupils continue to grow and replacement items are required, please can I remind you of our agreed dress code.

S1-3 Pupils

- Black tailored trousers or skirt
- Harlaw Academy polo shirt
- Harlaw Academy sweatshirt

S4-6 Pupils

- Black tailored trousers or skirt
- Blue or white shirt with school tie
- Harlaw Academy Blazer

Our full uniform information can be viewed here; <https://harlawacademy.aberdeen.sch.uk/uniform/>

6. School reporting to parents and carers

Following the success of our online parents' evenings last session, we are now fully set up to continue this practice this session. In addition to this, each pupil will be issued with an interim report and a full report. Miss McLellan has been working with colleagues in school to fine tune our arrangements. Whilst the offer is the same for each year group, the timings will be different based around a number of factors including coursing, prelims, and final assessments not to mention the move to a two-year provision for subject choice in S3/4.

Miss McLellan has prepared a letter for each year group and will send this out over the coming week.

As I often close a letter to you, please can I take this opportunity to say thank you for your continued support. As I reflect on the past 18 months, I think it is fair to say we have been on some journey but I remain confident that the best way to navigate these challenging times, is to travel them together.

Yours sincerely



Mr R. McLaren
Headteacher