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Dear Parent/Carer

Further to the Covid-19 update by the First Minister on 2 February 2021, I am writing to provide an update on plans from an Aberdeenshire Council perspective. The First Minister indicated that current plans are very much dependent on continued good progress in tackling the virus and a final decision on a phased return to schooling would be announced on 16 February. If a phased return does go ahead, the following groups of learners will be able to return to school from Monday 22 February;

- Young people attending early learning and childcare in school nurseries and in private provider nurseries
- Primary 1 – 3 pupils

For secondary students, the situation is more complex. Given the pressures around SQA assessment, small groups of senior phase learners (S4-6) will be able to return on a part-time basis to complete practical work required for assessment purposes. This will require to be carefully timetabled and no more than 5-8% of the school roll should be in at any given time. Physical distancing and face coverings will be required among staff and students. The management of this will be a challenge and our secondary schools will be developing their plans for this over the next two weeks and will communicate with parents and students in due course.

Category 1 and 2 keyworker children and young people identified as requiring additional support will also be able to continue accessing provision in schools as they have done since the start of 2021. For all other children and young people, home learning will continue to be the default position.

Clearly, there are significant staffing implications for our schools as they will require to ensure there are sufficient members of staff in school to teach and provide the childcare elements of provision as well as having sufficient staff working remotely to support home learning.

As indicated above, these arrangements for a phased return will be confirmed by the Scottish Government on 16 February and locally, your own Head Teachers will provide you with the information you require once plans are further developed. We will also keep you up to date with further Scottish Government announcements around plans for other year groups as these emerge.

In the meantime, I would like to thank all parents and carers for their continued support of our schools and school staff across Aberdeenshire. I would also like to thank our team of Head Teachers and all their staff for all they have done and continue to do on behalf of the young people of Aberdeenshire.

Yours sincerely



**Laurence Findlay**  
**Director of Education & Children's Services**