

Dear Parents and Carers,

The school term that has just closed has been both exceptional and unprecedented in equal measure, and has brought our pupils, their parents, and our members of staff incredible challenges. We have all been reacting to rapidly escalating Scottish and UK Government interventions, measures that we would never have envisaged experiencing in our lifetimes. These measures have brought with them a new reality, one which we are all trying to come to terms with.

May I first of all extend my best wishes to all of the Calderside Academy school community and I hope that all parents, carers and pupils are physically well and healthy, and that everyone follows UK Government guidelines in the weeks ahead in order that you do not expose yourselves and others to health risks. The new parameters that have been placed around social contact will without doubt also have an impact on mental wellbeing and it is important that we all try to support one another in new and creative ways, taking advantage of technology to do so wherever we can. It is also important to establish a sense of routine and to engage in daily exercise, again, following Government guidelines when doing so. We have uploaded to our school website some information on resources and materials that are designed to help us support one another's mental wellbeing. We will continue to update these as appropriate.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on school routine will be felt most acutely by our Senior Phase students, who were in the process of gearing up for SQA examinations and coursework completion, just as school closure was announced. I must take this opportunity to reiterate the view that has been expressed this week by Fiona Robertson, SQA Chief Executive, that no young person will be disadvantaged as a result of the current COVID-19 situation. Teaching staff at Calderside Academy will strive to ensure that that is the case for every one of our Senior Phase pupils. I have uploaded a Question and Answer document to the school website, which, I hope, will provide parents with all the SQA-related information that they need at the current time. I appreciate that this will be a worrying time for Senior Phase pupils and their parents. I will continue to provide you with the latest information as and when it becomes available.

Over the last couple of weeks we have moved to a new way of learning and teaching. Many of our pupils have been accessing materials from our school website and have been engaging with their teachers through our Google Classroom virtual learning environment. If your child has yet to access Google Classroom or our online resources, please encourage them to do so. If they have lost their password, we can provide this if you contact the school at the email address below, which will be serviced throughout the spring break period.

While it is encouraging that so many pupils have engaged with online learning over the last fortnight, it is also important that pupils and their families have a balance and structure to their day. We want pupils to be completing schoolwork, but we also recognise that this is a very uncertain and stressful time for families and the most important thing at present is to look after one another and to have as balanced and contented a routine as possible.

We recognise that the current situation is resulting in financial uncertainty for many families. With this in mind, South Lanarkshire Council has amended the way in which free school meal payments are made. As of this week, parents who are entitled to this provision will receive vouchers by post.

Our Senior Management Team members are in touch with one another constantly, albeit remotely at present, as we plan for the challenges ahead. As this current unprecedented situation is changing so rapidly, it is impossible to plan too far in advance. However, we will continue to communicate with you and update you during the weeks ahead.

Finally, can I once again extend, on behalf of all of my colleagues at Calderside Academy, best wishes to all parents, carers and pupils. Everyone has risen to the challenges we are facing and I am proud of the efforts that we are all currently making. Although we do not know exactly when life will regain a sense of normality, things will eventually get back to normal, and we will look back on this challenging period in our lives, having gained a great deal in terms of resilience and fortitude, which will stand us in good stead for the future.

I hope that you have as good a spring break as the current circumstances permit. It is important that you try to get some respite in advance of the challenges that lie ahead. Staff at the school will be taking a break over the next two weeks, but will be back engaging with pupils via Google Classroom on Monday 20 April. In the meantime, the Senior Management Team will be more than happy to respond to any queries or concerns that you may have over the holiday period. They can be accessed via the following email address:

office@calderside.s-lanark.sch.uk

Best wishes for the holiday period. Take care, look out for one another, and, most importantly, stay safe.

Skayne Dodds
Headteacher