I hope you are all well and enjoying the warmer weather as best you can while still following the social distancing guidance. As the term continues we are working at pace through the key aspects of what a blended approach will mean for our young people at Nairn Academy on their return in August.

It would be very easy to focus on the challenges we have faced over the pandemic, but looking forward I see this as an exciting opportunity to use what we have learned to re-evaluate what we are doing and set Nairn Academy on a new pathway.

August will be a crucial time for our school community as we plan ways to:
- reconnect with our values so that we move forward together
- reconnect our young people with a love of learning and new opportunities for their aspirations to be realised
- reconnect staff with the freedom to innovate and create so that we build on the excellent digital learning during lock down and continue to develop exciting and engaging learning opportunities suited to all of our young people

The information below is a brief overview of the ongoing work at Nairn Academy this term.

**HUB Services**
I am so proud to be part of a school that is at the heart of the key services across the wider Nairn community. As well as a Community Hub we also have two hubs in place to support our young people. The commitment of school staff across the Primaries and Academy along with our partner services has been key to the successful support service we have been able to offer. Staff from across all services have been truly amazing in helping and going the extra mile at this time, only proving that Nairn is a truly unique community.

**Google Classroom - engagement**
Continued engagement in new learning is essential to ensure our young people are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to progress in their next phase of learning particularly when we return in August. Each week our teaching staff provide lists of names of pupils in both the BGE and Senior Phase who have not fully engaged with the work set. We are keen to ensure pupils continue to learn therefore information on pupil engagement is being collated and monitored to ensure this continues.

Where we have any concerns around pupils undertaking work or not accepting invitations to new google classrooms we will make direct contact with parents to encourage greater engagement.

We understand that with greater use of technology comes added complication from time to time and perhaps the technology does not always allow us to do what is necessary. Pupils should not panic in such cases but where possible they should inform their teacher or guidance teacher if any work will be submitted a little late.
Daily registration and absence
As part of our ongoing safeguarding responsibilities we continue to ask that pupils register every day before 12 noon in their respective PSE register class. Please be advised, where we have had no contact with a pupil this will be followed up directly with parents.

Transition
This week saw our new S1 pupils receive a ‘virtual’ welcome to Nairn Academy through our online transition days. Moving from primary to secondary is a key milestone in the lives of our young people, it should be exciting, interactive and joyful. The transition process from primary to secondary school can be stressful at the best of times, there is always nervous excitement around new subjects, new teachers and of course finding out who will be in the new classes.

Over the two days pupils have engaged in a variety of online learning and activities designed to help us get to know them. Parents were invited to a virtual ‘question and answer’ session to find out more about secondary school life at Nairn from the Senior Leadership Team and Guidance/ASN team.

Even though we have had to adapt our transition programme to deliver activities via a ‘virtual’ platform we fully intend to plan for more ‘face to face’ transition in the early stages of the new session when we return to the physical school environment.

11th August 2020 – Pupils return to school
The recent statement by the First Minister detailed a route map for moving Scotland out of lockdown. This included information on the approach to reopening schools on a phased basis. The Scottish Government has produced a document providing more detail on the points made in the First Minister’s statement – A strategic framework for reopening schools, early learning and childcare provision in Scotland. This document can be found on the Scottish Government website.

As you can imagine there are a number of complex issues that need to be addressed before we can have pupils back in any form. Over the June period we are looking closely at the logistics of the school building, class capacity, transition and timetabling of a safe phased return to school.

Highland Council set the following principles for our return to school focusing on;
- Equity
- Health and wellbeing
- Recovery of learning, teaching and assessment
- Attainment in session 20/21

Further details can be found on the letter from Nicky Grant, Head of Education which has been posted on our social media sites for your information.
We are working closely with Highland Council and neighbouring schools across Highland and the Northern Alliance to ensure we have everything we need in place for our staff and pupils’ return in August. Our greatest priority will be the wellbeing of our young people and a return to some sense of ‘normality’ whilst we adhere to Public Health advice.

More information will be shared with the Parent Council once we have finalised our draft model and further information will be made available to you all prior to the end of term.

**SQA Estimates Process**

Departments have been working through the alternative arrangements process this session. Looking at a range of evidence including pupil progress in course work, inferred attainment, previous attainment, learning observations and learning conversations as well as the prelim results, our teaching staff have been able to determine the estimated grade for each pupil.

In addition to this process we undertook rigorous quality assurance discussions with each Faculty Head relating to the data presented to us as a final check that we are submitting data that reflects the potential of each learner in a course. This information is now with the SQA who will carry out their analysis of the quality assurance checks and determine the final grades for candidates.

Although the estimate submitted may not be the final result, I am confident that we have been aspirational and pupils will achieve the best outcome supported by robust evidence.

Thank you for all your continued support over the last 12 weeks, I know it’s been hard for many of you and I know it has been stressful. It has been a huge learning curve for everyone with working at home whether pupil, teacher or parent.

I am confident that I am part of a community that will continue to work together to deliver the best solution and outcome for our young people. Our driver to keep going is the anticipation of seeing our young people back in August and for this I cannot wait.

Please continue to stay safe and take care
Best wishes
Alan Bruce
Acting Head Teacher