



From mountain to sea

Mearns Academy

Handbook 2024/25



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<p>Aberdeenshire Council is committed to meeting the additional support needs of children and young people in their local mainstream school. Planning starts an exploration of what steps need to be taken for their local school to be ready to welcome them. This includes consideration of, for example, curricular adaptations, teaching and learning approaches, support strategies, environmental adaptations, communication requirements, specialist equipment or staff professional learning needs.</p>	
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All information in this handbook is correct as of November 2024

Introduction to Mearns Academy

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Mearns Academy handbook. Our young people benefit from attending a new school with high quality accommodation and served by highly committed staff and very good resources in a learning community steeped in very strong local traditions and ambition.

As a school we value very highly our links with parents and see you as vital partners in ensuring the success of your child at Mearns Academy. Our primary aim is to offer a caring, safe and happy environment in which all pupils' needs are met and that young people are equipped with the skills, abilities and attitudes to face the challenges that lie ahead as they move through their lives as citizens of this country. We aspire to deliver the highest possible levels of learning and teaching and aim to provide a range of enriching experiences both inside and outside the classroom for our young people. We offer a wide range of subjects and courses and additionally provide a broad choice of extra-curricular activities for young people which blend together to give a high quality experience for our students.

School Contact Details

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Website: www.mearns.aberdeenshire.sch.uk

Adverse weather and emergency closure

<https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/Apps/schools-closures/>

Mearns Academy is a non-denominational school. Mearns Academy serves the population of the town and the surrounding rural area. The total roll of the school currently stands at 673 pupils of whom around one third live in Laurencekirk itself. Apart from Laurencekirk Primary School we draw pupils from our other associated primary schools at Auchenblae, Fettercairn, Luthermuir, Marykirk, Redmyre (Fordoun) and St Cyrus.

Devolved budgets are managed in accordance with authority guidelines to support planned improvements in the school.

Relationships and Partners

Mearns Academy enjoys increasingly strong partnership with parents, business, further/higher education establishments, charitable trusts and the local community. We value parental engagement and recognise that parental involvement has a positive impact on raising attainment and achievement; Mearns Academy is fortunate to have an active and supportive parent council group.

The school is very well supported by local business partners who provide valuable advice and mentoring as well as Work Experience placements. The curriculum offered by the school is enhanced through partnership arrangements with Community Learning and Development, Skills Development Scotland, Dundee and Angus College and NESCOL. As a result of our partnership working, our learners have access to a range of learning pathways through which they can develop essential skills required for learning, work and life.

The School Day

The School operates a 6 period day. Periods are organised for the following times, Monday to Friday:

Period 1	9.00 - 9.55
Period 2	9.55 - 10.45
Tutor	10.45 – 11.00
Interval	11.00 – 11.15
Period 3	11.15 - 12.10
Period 4	12.10 - 13.00
Lunch	13.00 – 13.45
Period 5	13.45 - 14.40
Period 6	14.40 – 15.30

Our Vision, Values and School Ethos

**MEARNS
ACADEMY**

Vision

Brilliant Futures

Mission

**Inspiring through
Challenge and Opportunity**

Values

Respect • Wellbeing • Ambition

The infographic is enclosed in a dark blue border. At the top, the school name 'MEARNS ACADEMY' is written in large, bold, dark blue capital letters, flanked by horizontal lines. Below this, the word 'Vision' is written in bold orange, followed by a horizontal line. The vision statement 'Brilliant Futures' is in bold dark blue on a grey background. Next, 'Mission' is written in bold orange, followed by a horizontal line. The mission statement 'Inspiring through Challenge and Opportunity' is in bold dark blue on a grey background. Then, 'Values' is written in bold orange, followed by a horizontal line. The values 'Respect • Wellbeing • Ambition' are in bold dark blue on a grey background. At the bottom, there is an illustration of school buildings in white and orange, and a small square icon with a blue background and white lines depicting a building.

Curriculum

Within our school, we aim to provide a curriculum that is both inclusive and ambitious for all – a curriculum which is both academically challenging as well as providing opportunities to develop skills for learning, life and work.

Our curriculum will be based around the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence – to ensure our pupils are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors, and responsible citizens. Our curriculum will also reflect the principles of curriculum design to ensure breadth, depth, personalisation & choice, challenge & enjoyment, progression, coherence, and relevance. We will therefore, have a curriculum which we will adapt continuously over time to meet the needs of our pupils.

Following the principles of Curriculum for Excellence, achievement of children and young people is celebrated in its broadest sense. This means looking beyond formally assessed learning, to recognise activities like volunteering and participation in arts, sports, and community-based programmes. This approach complements the nurturing and aspirational outcomes of Getting It Right for Every Child, and our aim in Aberdeenshire to overcome inequality by Raising Attainment for All, promoting Equity and Excellence in schools, and Closing the Gap. Further information on the school's approach to Curriculum for Excellence including information for parents, can be found on the school website at: <http://www.mearns.aberdeenshire.sch.uk>

Curricular Areas

- **Literacy and English Language:** Listening, Talking Reading, and Writing.
 - **Numeracy and Mathematics:** Number, Money and Measure, Information Handling, Shape, Position and Movement.
 - **Health & Wellbeing:** Mental, emotional, social, and physical wellbeing, Physical education, activity and sport, Food and health, Substance misuse, Relationships, sexual health and parenthood.
 - **Social Studies:** People, past events and societies, People, place and environment, People, society, economy, and business.
 - **Sciences:** Planet Earth, Forces, electricity and waves, Biological Systems, Materials, Topical Sciences.
 - **Technologies:** Technological developments in society, Business technology skills and knowledge, Computing science, Food and textiles, Craft, design, engineering, and graphics.
 - **Expressive Arts:** Music, Drama, Art and Design and Dance.
 - **Religious and Moral Education:** Christianity, World Religions, Development of beliefs and values.
 - **Modern Languages:** French and Spanish
-

Curriculum Design

Our curriculum is designed based on the following 7 principles:

- Challenge and enjoyment
- Breadth
- Progression
- Depth
- Personalisation and choice
- Coherence
- Relevance

Developing Young Workforce

Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) is the Scottish Government's Youth Employment strategy to better prepare young people for the world of work.

Developing the Young Workforce is embedded in Scotland's Curriculum and along with the Curriculum for Excellence and Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) it is one of the three main building blocks underpinning Scotland's education offer for children and young people.

The DYW Aberdeenshire priorities are as follows:

- Development of the **DYW Curriculum** offer including embedding the Career Education Standard Entitlements 3-18 and the further development of BGE pathways and Foundation Apprenticeships in the senior phase.
- **Skills Development** – embedding skills for learning, life and work (**Metaskills**) and skills profiling
- **Partnership** Development, including partnership with employers
- Support for **Equalities**

As part of the 3-18 curriculum, pupils will develop skills for learning, life, and work and Skills 4.0 and Metaskills. Throughout their time in school, from Early Years onwards, all pupils will have an opportunity to engage with employers, through experiences like workplace visits, career talks, employability events and courses, work experience and curriculum based activities. They will also have the opportunity to learn about further and higher education as well as different career pathways into employment.

In S4-6, pupils will be given the opportunity to study for vocational qualifications, including Foundation Apprenticeships, alongside the more traditional qualifications.

Further information for parents on Foundation Apprenticeships can be found [here](#)

Curricular Levels

Early	The pre-school years and P1, or later for some.
First	To the end of P4, but earlier or later for some.
Second	To the end of P7, but earlier or later for some.
Third and Fourth	S1 to S3, but earlier for some. The fourth level broadly equates to Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework level 4. The fourth level experiences and outcomes are intended to provide possibilities for choice and young people's programmes will not include all the fourth level outcomes.

Broad General Education

Year 1

The Academy works closely with its associated primary schools to ensure a smooth transition. Following Aberdeenshire Council's commitment to a positive transition, primary and secondary schools are working hard at shaping a coherent and progressive curriculum from P6 through to S1. This will be underpinned by primary and secondary teachers working closely to develop a common curriculum; an emphasis on quality learning and teaching and a shared reflection by pupils on their development as learners.

Information relating to primary attainment is used to allocate pupils to mixed ability classes for all subjects on their arrival in S1. Moreover, pupils will have one period a week where there will be an emphasis on Health and Wellbeing.

During S1, pupils' attainment and achievement is monitored by a combination of continual and formative assessments. Learning conversations with subject teachers and day-to-day feedback, should ensure that every pupil knows if they are meeting their targets in each subject area. This information is made available during S1 tracking windows.

Year 2

Pupils will continue with the work started in S1 through Curriculum for Excellence. Pupils will continue to develop skills and knowledge through the 8 Curricular Areas. In addition, pupils will engage with Literacy, Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing across the curriculum.

During S2 pupils will engage with the Experiences and Outcomes set out in national Guidance at the Third Level and where appropriate some pupils will move on to work at the Fourth Level. Again, during tracking windows, formative assessment will support learning conversations between teachers and pupils to monitor if personal targets are being met. By the end of S2 pupils will prepare to personalise their curriculum while still retaining a broad-based curriculum. Parents and pupils will be involved in this personalisation process for S3, which will take place between January and March of S2.

Year 3

Pupils will continue their engagement with Curriculum for Excellence through study within the 8 Curricular Areas, at the same time allowing for more personalisation, greater depth, and increase in challenge.

Pupils will through their S3 experience be guided and supported to make choices for their Senior Phase Qualifications in S4. This process will involve Guidance Staff, careers input, parental evenings and teacher reports. Pupils will all undertake a national qualification in English and Maths and 4 other subjects. This selection will be their S4 curriculum.

In S3 the goal is to ensure significant challenge so that pupils are best prepared for the transition to senior phase.

Year 4

Pupils will work towards National Qualifications and National Progression Awards (NPA) at an appropriate level. The work done in this transitional year will build on the work done through S3. Pupils will continue to be supported in thinking about their future paths, either by continuing on with their studies in school, going to college or to the world of work. Pupils, who are finding the curriculum a challenge, will be offered learning experiences to enable them to prepare for the world beyond school this will include college opportunities and links with external partners. To this end, the school will work hard with pupils and parents to ensure there are positive destinations for all pupils who leave at the end of S4.

Pupils and parents will be involved, as before, in the process of selecting a relevant curriculum for S5. This will involve a great deal of advice and support from Guidance Staff, careers input and teacher feedback. This process will be complete by March of S4, but depending on subject qualifications gained over the summer, pupils may have to renegotiate their curriculum.

Years 5 and 6

All Faculties and Departments offer National Qualification courses at Higher level, with some faculties also offering NPAs and Foundation Apprenticeships (FA). In S5 it is possible to study 5 Highers or a combination of Highers, NPAs, FAs and Nationals. Units can be built up over the two years often ending up in a full course award.

All students in S5 will choose a full timetable consisting of a combination of subjects in school, college and work placements; in S6 students may choose a free column of private study. This is normally to help with Advanced Higher courses or to follow wider school activities that contribute to the positive ethos of Mearns Academy. Senior pupils are given opportunities and are encouraged to participate in volunteering or Work Experience placements at relevant stages.

Development of Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Values

In our school we are committed to providing appropriate opportunities for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural values through both the ethos and the curriculum. This will be undertaken in partnership with parents and will take account of the individual needs of pupils and the views of parents.

Our school welcomes and encourages diversity and individuality, while emphasising our common commitment to moral values such as honesty, respect for others, compassion and justice. It is a fundamental principle of our school that all who are involved in the life of our school has the right to be respected as individuals and carry the responsibility to act in a considerate and respectful manner towards others. We implement the Council policy for Equal Opportunities and ensure that all pupils have access to the full range of educational experiences available within the resources of the school. We are firmly committed to the elimination of any form of discrimination on the grounds of age, race, religion, gender, sexuality or disability.

Religious and Moral Education

Throughout the school there are opportunities for pupils to learn about aspects of Christianity, other world faiths and to reflect upon their own moral standpoint in relation to world issues. During weekly whole-school assemblies, we encourage awareness of matters of a cultural, social and moral nature.

We aim to develop in our pupils an ethos of tolerance, understanding and respect for the beliefs and customs of others. The school is committed to supporting the development of its pupils as whole people and as a result, wish to encourage their development in moral, social and cultural terms.

The key human aspects of learning are supported by:

- Creating an atmosphere that is both caring and challenging and which provides opportunities for the development of personal responsibility.
 - Promoting social and moral learning through the way in which disciplinary issues are handled.
 - Ensuring staff and adults within the school provide positive models for pupils.
 - Arranging regular gatherings of the school community and using such occasions to encourage and reinforce the values on which the school is based.
 - Enriching the curriculum in all appropriate areas with an emphasis on moral, social and cultural development.
 - Providing opportunities within the curriculum to advance personal and social development.
 - Providing a programme of religious education in which consideration will be given to responses to basic questions relating to the meaning, value and purpose of human life.
 - Providing a programme of moral education.
 - Taking every opportunity to acknowledge, value and appreciate the various cultures and heritage of our pupils and to encourage them to appreciate and value the cultures and heritage of others including visits by representatives of other beliefs or faiths.
-

Extra Curricular Activities

Mearns Academy alongside Active Schools has an extensive list of extra curricular activities which is updated regularly on our website – www.mearns.aberdeenshire.sch.uk

1+2 Language Learning

The Scottish Government policy 'Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach' is now embedded in our curriculum. Children are growing up in a multilingual world and to allow them to take their place as global citizens, they need to be able to communicate in many settings. This approach entitles every child and young person to learn two languages at school in addition to their mother tongue language.

In Mearns Academy the first foreign language is French. This language will be learned from P1 (in Primary School) through to S3 (in secondary school). At different stages young people have the opportunity to study Spanish.

If you would like your child to access Gaelic Medium Education and they have not yet started to attend a primary school you can make a request for an assessment of need for Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE). For more information, please go to:

<http://aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/information/gaelic-in-schools/>

The parent or carer of any child or young person can make a request for their child to attend to any school which offers GMPE. This will enable your child to be taught by specialist staff. As there are currently no schools in Aberdeenshire which have GME provision learners are transported to school in Aberdeen City.

Further Information

Further information on the school's approach to Curriculum for Excellence including information for parents, can be found on the school website at:

<http://www.mearns.aberdeenshire.sch.uk>

More general information on Curriculum for Excellence and the new Qualifications can be found by clicking on the hyperlinks below.

Policy for Scottish Education:

<https://education.gov.scot/about-education-scotland/policies-and-information/education-policy-and-legislation/>

Early Learning & Childcare:

<https://education.gov.scot/learning-in-scotland/sector/early-learning-and-childcare-elc/>

Broad General Education (Pre school – S3):

<https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/curriculum-in-scotland/broad-general-education/>

Senior Phase and beyond (S4 – 16+):

<https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/senior-phase-and-beyond>

National Qualifications:

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/58062.3806.html?pMenuID=5605>

Assessment and Reporting

Pupils move through the curriculum at their own pace. A wide range of assessment techniques are used in school depending on what is being assessed and the reason for the assessment e.g.

- Observation of what the pupils “say”, “write” and “do”.
- Homework
- Self and peer assessments
- Marking of class work and other individual/class assessments
- Ongoing tracking and monitoring procedures in school
- Scottish National Standardised Assessments (P1, P4, P7 and S3)

Progress will be evidenced using a variety of approaches that best reflect the learning that has taken place and will track the skills that your child or young person is developing.

Assessment is ongoing throughout the Broad General phase and is a continuous process which influences the goals set for your child. As part of assessment, each year children and young people in P1, P4, P7 and S3 will participate in the Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA). These national assessments are completed online and provide teachers with immediate feedback on each child or young person’s progress in literacy and numeracy. Children and young people do not have to prepare or revise for the assessments, which take place as part of normal learning and teaching. The assessments do not have any pass/fail mark and the results are used to help teachers plan the next steps in learning for each child/young person. Further information on SNSA is available at

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-national-standardised-assessments-purpose-and-use/>

The results of children’s achievements are discussed with them regularly so that they are involved in taking responsibility for their own learning. This may take the form of oral discussion and/or written comment. In this way, it is hoped to assist the pupil identify what has been learned and the next steps to their learning. Children regularly set targets in their work.

Parents will be informed of progress:

- through pupil profiles/learning logs
- through parent consultation evenings and other meetings
- through curriculum/learning events/parent workshops
- by the annual school report
- Individual Education Plans and associated documents

Parents and carers are encouraged to contact the school at other times throughout the year to discuss their child’s progress.

Secondary schools: Assessment & Reporting in the Senior Phase (S4-S6)

In the Senior Phase pupils embark on the National Qualifications.

As pupils enter this phase, they are set an aspirational target grade for each subject they are studying. This forms the basis for learning conversations between staff and pupils to discuss progress and identify next steps. This is shared with parents/carers through TRACKING Reports.

Further Information on Assessment, Reporting & Profiling can be found on Parentzone:

<https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/curriculum-in-scotland/assessment-in-the-senior-phase/>

Transitions (Moving On)

We understand that transitions can be anxious times for parents and pupils. At Mearns Academy we have arrangements in place to support transitions and these are outlined below.

Transfer to Secondary Education

Most children from the Mearns Academy associate primary schools attend Mearns Academy. Mearns Academy is part of the Laurencekirk Schools Network.

An induction programme for P7 is in place to help ease the transition into S1. P7 pupils spend three days at Mearns Academy towards the end of the summer term. Further information is communicated to parents about the induction calendar for secondary school around January each year. Parents also have the opportunity to visit Mearns Academy where information will be shared and questions can be asked. This is also an opportunity for parents to meet their child's guidance teacher and to ask any questions or share any information about your child's needs which will help support them through any transition.

Liaison between our primary schools and Mearns Academy is very good. During the P7 year, pupils have many opportunities to join with P7 pupils from the other Laurencekirk Community Schools Network. Transition science projects, sports festivals, trips and other ad hoc activities are arranged for Primary pupils to get together.

Information about our P7 pupils is shared with guidance and additional support needs staff at the academy to help support appropriate continuity of education. Parents are welcome to attend these information sharing meetings, especially when additional support has been provided previously. Mearns Academy staff also visit our pupils in our associate Primary schools where information is shared and questions can be asked.

Where parents opt to send their child to any other secondary school, (following placing requests) Mearns Academy supports any alternative transition arrangements wherever possible.

If you have any particular concerns regarding transitions, please make an appointment to see the head teacher.

Transitions post school

All pupils have the chance to take part in flexible work experience in S4 and beyond, to become accustomed to the world of work and opportunity to experience learning outside of school.

Skills Development Scotland offer careers guidance to all pupils through Personal and Social Education and through individual and group work with pupils. In Personal and Social Education all pupils also receive vocational guidance.

We work closely with Community Learning Department to build links and to flexibly meet the needs of pupils.

We work hard to ensure that pupils leave school for positive destinations to address the More Choices More Chances agenda.

The school highlights jobs that are available in the community, through publicising them in the daily news sheet, through the careers board in school, through the Mearns Academy DYW Facebook page and via the Careers Advisor.

Through senior school Personal and Social Education the UCAS Applications process is supported and pupils are informed of University open days. Pupil References are also provided as part of the job and college application process. During our Senior Induction we work with other providers to help our pupils gain insight and preparation for their post school experiences

Visit Parentzone for more information about transitions:

<https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/my-child/transitions>

1 Admissions

Nursery Admissions.

Early in each calendar year, all parents/carers should complete an application form and submit this to the nursery of their choice. This can be your local school nursery or any other early learning and childcare setting within Aberdeenshire. The application form can be found here:

<http://aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/information/early-learning-and-childcare-information/>

Primary Admissions

New entrants to P1 are enrolled early in the calendar year for entry to school in August. This is for children who will be five on or before the school start date in August. Those that have their fifth birthday between the August start date each year and the end of February the following year, may also be admitted. Go to:

<http://aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/information/primary-school-registration/>

To view the school catchment area for your address, go to:

<https://aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/school-info/admissions/school-zones/>

2 Placing requests & School Zones

For all advice and information on placing requests and guidance on school catchment/zones go to:

<http://aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/information/choosing-a-school>

Your child would normally attend a school within the school catchment area (zone) close to where you live. However, you can request that your child attends a school in another zone (out of zone). Please follow the links for more info:

[Out Of Zone Placing Request Policy & Procedures](#)

3 Skills Development Scotland

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is Scotland's careers service.

Qualified SDS Careers Advisers work in schools and careers centres across the whole of Scotland. The SDS Careers Adviser in our school is Karen Youngson. Contact with the Careers Adviser should be done through the school.

Careers Advisers will meet with young people to help them make decisions about their future career pathway. Alongside other school staff, Careers Advisers are involved in supporting young people through subject choice at relevant stages in their education. This may involve working with individuals one to one, or with groups or classes. Young people can continue to access support from advisers when they leave school, through the Career Centres in Peterhead, Inverurie and Aberdeen.

Support for Children and Young People

4 Getting it Right for Every Child

Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is the national policy approach in Scotland which aims to support the wellbeing of all children and young people, by offering the right help, at the right time, from the right people. Certain aspects of this policy have been placed in law by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

Aberdeenshire's Children's Services Planning Partners are strongly committed to fully embedding the Getting it Right for Every Child approach. This shared commitment is expressed through the vision statement of Aberdeenshire's Children's Services Plan, which Aberdeenshire's Schools play a key part in delivering:



Its vision is that:

'Our commitment to Aberdeenshire's children and young people, is to provide them with the right support, in the right place, at the right time.'

In helping them reach their individual potential and goals, we will work together to make Aberdeenshire the best place in Scotland to grow up'

You can find out more about our Children's Services Plan at:

<http://www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org/who-we-are/our-childrens-services-plan/>

5 Wellbeing

The Getting it Right approach is reflected in agreed local processes for assessing need and planning support for individual children and young people. In Aberdeenshire, we have a strong ethos of partnership working, with a shared sense of professional accountability for improving the wellbeing of children, young people and families.

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is about safeguarding, supporting and promoting children and young people's wellbeing and ensuring support is provided if, and when, this is needed. GIRFEC is:

- Child-centred
- Holistic
- Accessible and responsive
- Joined up
- Rights-based

The concept of Wellbeing is at the heart of the GIRFEC approach and is defined in Part 18 (s96) of the Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, through eight Wellbeing Indicators. These Wellbeing Indicators reflect the Scottish Government's aspiration for all Scotland's children and young people to be Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included.

These 8 Wellbeing Indicators need to be met in order for children and young people to grow and develop into confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens.



The Getting It Right approach means services will work in partnership with children, young people and their parent/carer(s) and we want every child at our school to feel happy, safe and supported to fulfil their potential.

GIRFEC lies at the heart of our daily work at Mearns Academy. We have a GIRFEC Leadership Team which consists of the Senior Leadership Team, four Guidance Teachers and the Principal Teacher of Additional Support for Learners. The group takes a strategic overview of ongoing GIRFEC issues in the school in respect of Behaviour, Attendance, multi-agency issues, Continued Professional Learning etc. In addition to this the DHT Pupil Support meets with Guidance Teachers and Pupil Support Workers on a regular basis to discuss operational issues relating to Young people as well as planning multi-agency meetings etc.

Pupil Support team/Guidance

Guidance at Mearns Academy operates within the context of the school as a caring community in which young people know that they are valued as individuals and feel encouraged to learn. Indeed the school offers opportunities for all its members, pupils and staff, to exercise care and concern for each other.

The principal aims of Guidance are to offer effective pastoral care which is responsive to the individual needs of pupils, to provide quality in the curricular and vocational guidance offered to pupils, to foster the development of good relations between teachers and pupils and to establish a close relationship with parents.

Guidance at Mearns Academy is concerned with all pupils and fosters their personal, social, intellectual and emotional development so that pupils can achieve their potential. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves, their learning and their behaviour, to become aware of how they relate to other pupils and to staff and to participate in the decision-making which affects them throughout their time at school.

Continuity of contact from year to year between a pupil and a member of the guidance team ensures that each pupil is known personally and in some depth by a specialist Guidance teacher. In addition, pupils have a Registration Tutor, the first link in the guidance chain. The Tutor builds up a sound and trusting relationship with the pupils in the tutor group through daily contact.

Pupils in all years have a daily tutorial session which provides opportunities for the teacher to know and to be known by a group of pupils. The promoted Guidance Staff co-operate with Tutors to ensure that pupils and students are offered support when necessary.

A high priority is given by Guidance staff at crucial times in a pupil's and student's school career: the transition from primary to secondary; the making of choices or decisions in courses or careers; the preparation for further and higher education or employment; the assessment of progress and development; and the compilation of an individual Record of Achievement for each school leaver.

In addition the Guidance work of the school is contributed to by caring and supportive services such as Pupil Support Workers, Skills Development Scotland, the Health Service, Social Work, the Educational Psychological Service and the school's Support for Learning Team and Behaviour Support Team. Guidance staff work closely with these services in conjunction with parents, as appropriate to the needs of the pupils.

The Guidance Structure

A Depute Rector is responsible for the coordination of all Pupil Support issues in the school. The school is sub-divided into four House groups across all years – Conveth, Drumtochty, Johnston and Thornton. A Principal Teacher (Guidance) is responsible for each group which is then further divided into tutor groups (of approximately 20 pupils). Each tutor and the Principal Teacher of Guidance make up a team responsible for all Guidance matters for that group.

6 Children's Rights

Every child/young person has rights in addition to human rights. These are called Children's Rights, and they're written in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. They outline what children need to give them the best chance of growing up happy, healthy and safe. Adults such as parents, schools, councils and governments have a responsibility to make sure that children access their rights.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a statement of children's rights. It has 54 articles that cover all areas of a child's life and it sets out the political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights that all children are entitled to.

UNCRC is now firmly embedded in Scots Law. This will ensure that rights are binding rather than guiding and all levels of government must apply the rights in legislation, policy and practice.

Children and young people are learning about these rights in school and some schools take part in The Rights Respecting Schools programme, a UNICEF accredited programme to support schools in developing rights-based practice as part of the school ethos.

In our schools we will:

- Raise awareness of Children's Rights, and how rights can be accessed
- Ensure Children's Rights are provided and protected by the adults who support our children and young people
- Provide a variety of opportunities for children and young people to get involved in decision-making
- Make sure children and young people's views influence how we develop services
- Support children and young people to express their views
- Listen to and act on children and young people's views on what we do well, and what we could do differently

More information for parents on Children's Rights can be found here

[Parent Club Children's Rights leaflet.pdf](#)

Aberdeenshire Council has endorsed a Children and Young People's Charter. You can find out more about Children's Rights and opportunities for participation at:

<http://www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org/home/children-and-young-people/>

7 The named person

Prevention and early-intervention are seen as key to the Getting It Right approach in achieving positive outcomes for children and young people. By providing support at an early stage, most difficulties can be prevented from escalating.

One way the Scottish Government has decided this should be taken forward, is by making a named person available to every child and young person in Scotland. From birth to prior to starting school, the named person Service is provided by your Health Visitor. The Education Service provides the named person Service for all

children on entry to Primary One, until aged 18 (or beyond where a young person remains at secondary school). In Aberdeenshire the named person will be either the Primary Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher and in Secondary School the named person will be that young person's allocated Principal Teacher of Guidance (with a few exceptional circumstances).

The purpose of the named person role is to make sure children, young people and parents have confidence that they can access help or support no matter where they live or what age the child is. Acting as a central point of contact, the named person can help children, young people or parents/carers get the support they need if, and when, they need it.

The named person can help by:

- Providing advice, information, or support
- Helping a child, young person, or to access a service or support
- Discussing or raising a wellbeing concern about a child or young person.
- Being a key contact point for other professionals if wellbeing needs are identified for a child or young person.

There is no obligation for children and young people or parents to accept any offer of advice or support from the named person. Non-engagement with a Named Person is not in itself a cause for concern. The named person Services are currently delivered on a national policy basis.

For more information you can contact your child or young person's named person directly, or go to:

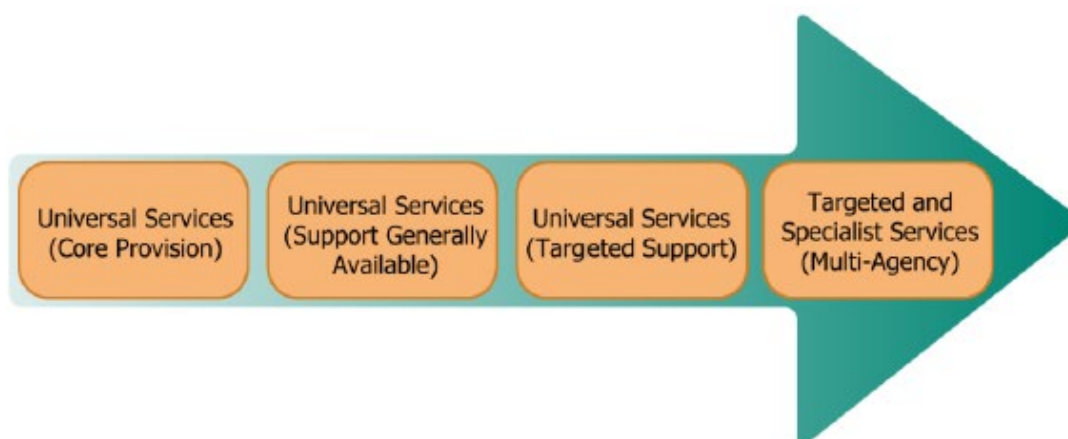
<https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/named-person/>

The Named Person for your child/young person is their Guidance Teacher

8 The Child's Plan

The *Getting It Right* approach makes sure children and young people are provided with a range of support, which is proportionate and put in place to meet assessed need. This is reflected in Aberdeenshire's staged approach to assessment and planning for individual children and young people, shown below.

- Universal Services (Core Provision)
 - Universal Services (Support Generally Available)
 - Universal Services (Targeted Support) Targeted and Specialist Services (Multi-Agency)
-



For a small minority of children or young people, there might be higher levels of wellbeing need or risk identified. These children may require a level of targeted support, which needs to be co-ordinated on a single or multi-agency basis through a Child's Plan.

Where a child or young person needs one or more targeted supports, the benefit of a Child's Plan will be discussed with them and their parents/carers. An assessment using the National Practice Model (My World Triangle/Resilience Matrix) would help to identify any wellbeing needs (*Safe, Healthy, Active, Nurtured, Achieving, Resected, Responsible, Included*) and highlights strengths and pressures in the child's situation. Families are fully involved as key partners in these discussions.

The Child's Plan will outline what action will be taken by the child, their family and professionals, and detail how these supports aim to help improve the child or young person's Wellbeing and overcome any difficulties.

A Lead Professional will be identified to co-ordinate and manage a multi-agency Child's Plan.

Information is available on the Aberdeenshire *Getting It Right for Every Child* Website:

<http://www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org/>

9 Educational Psychology

The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) provides a service across Aberdeenshire from the early years to school leaving age.

When there are concerns about a child or young person's learning or wellbeing an Educational Psychologist can support others to assess needs and problem solve their way through potentially difficult and complex situations. Consultation with people who know the child best forms the basis of Educational Psychology assessment. The purpose is to explore and understand the concern and support people to come up with solutions that will work in that particular context. More information about consultation can be found on the Educational Psychology Service website:

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/as/aberdeenshireeps/about-us/>

The website also has a range of helpful resources available for all parents:

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/as/aberdeenshireeps/parent-information/>

10 Universal Inclusive Offer to all Children and Young People

Aberdeenshire Council is committed to children and young people being educated within their local mainstream school. Education staff work with the families of children with additional support needs to identify their needs and agree the adaptations that are required to meet those needs. This may include, for example, curricular adaptations, teaching and learning approaches, support strategies, environmental adaptations, communication requirements, specialist equipment or staff undertaking professional learning.

All Aberdeenshire Schools take a solution-focused approach to overcoming any barriers to inclusion. They seek advice and support from relevant Education Support Services and multi-agency partners as appropriate.

A whole school inclusive approach embeds practices in the everyday life of a school that are known to be effective in supporting pupils with additional support needs. These practices often also benefit other learners who do not have additional support needs. There are a number of whole school inclusive approaches that are being implemented in all Aberdeenshire schools as part of our universal offer to all children and young people. These include:

1. The CIRCLE Resource to support inclusive learning & collaborative working.
2. Play Based Learning Approaches and Playful Pedagogy.
3. Staff who have the knowledge and skills required to understand and support autistic learners.
4. Staff who adopt dyslexia friendly approaches and who are able to identify and respond to difficulties that pupils with dyslexia may encounter.
5. Staff who are trauma informed and adopt nurture approaches to sensitively support children who may have experienced trauma or adversity.
6. A supportive and effective communication environment which uses every means of communication available to ensure learners understand and can be understood.
7. Use of restorative approaches to restore and maintain good relationships when there has been conflict and harm.
8. Staff who are culturally responsive, aiming to connect pupils' cultures, languages and life experiences with what they learn in school

11 Support for Learning

Children and young people may require support for learning at some point in their lives for a range of reasons. Some children may need a lot of support all the way through school. Others may need only a small amount for a short time.

A child or young person has additional support needs if, for any reason, they need extra or different help than others their age to benefit fully from their education.

Reasons for requiring support might include:

- Missing school because of an illness or long-term condition
 - Having a physical disability
-

- Being a young carer
- Communication difficulties
- Being particularly able
- Changing school a lot
- Being looked after or care experienced
- Difficulty in controlling behaviour
- Having a difficult family situation
- Suffering a bereavement
- Social and emotional factors

Each school cluster has an allocation of Teachers of Additional Support for Learning (ASL) who are employed to support pupils with additional support needs. They work across each cluster in primary and secondary in partnership with school staff, parents and other professionals (if appropriate). They identify barriers to learning, assess children's needs and support learning and teaching through a relevant curriculum.

Pupil Support Assistants (PSAs) assist teachers in promoting achievement and raising the standards of pupil attainment. They provide general support in relation to the needs of the class and individuals' care, health and wellbeing and safety and to promote a secure and safe environment.

12 Enhanced Provision and Complex Need Provision

Aberdeenshire Council is committed to meeting the additional support needs of children and young people in their local mainstream school. Planning starts an exploration of what steps need to be taken for their local school to be ready to welcome them. This includes consideration of, for example, curricular adaptations, teaching and learning approaches, support strategies, environmental adaptations, communication requirements, specialist equipment or staff professional learning needs.

All 17 Academies are Enhanced Provision Schools, and there is a dedicated Primary School within each of Aberdeenshire's 17 school clusters. Enhanced Provision Schools have enhanced staffing and resources to meet additional support needs. Some children may require outreach support from the Enhanced Provision to ensure their needs are fully met in their mainstream setting. This may involve advice and consultation to staff, or direct support to the pupil from, for example, an Enhanced Provision Outreach Practitioner, Pupil Wellbeing Worker or Nature Nurture Practitioner. Some children and young people will require more targeted support through an Enhanced Provision place. This involves them physically attending the Enhanced Provision on a full-time or part-time basis. Such placements are offered from Primary 3 upwards.

A very small number of children and young people will require access to specialist staff and resources beyond that which can be provided within a mainstream or enhanced provision setting due to the significance and complexity of their learning needs. Aberdeenshire's Complex Needs Provision includes four Special Schools and five Provisions which are integrated within mainstream settings (often referred to

as Integrated Complex Needs Provision). Both types of Complex Needs Provision meet significant and complex learning needs, with pupils accessing the Complex Needs Provision which their home address is zoned to.

For more information on all our resources and policies go to:

<http://asn-aberdeenshire.org/>

13 Child Protection

Child protection is the responsibility of all who work with children and families regardless of whether or not they come into direct contact with children. All staff must be fully informed of their responsibilities with respect to keeping children safe. All services working with children, young people and families are expected to identify and consider the wellbeing of children and to share concerns appropriately. Our Child Protection processes uphold children's rights.

In Aberdeenshire we recognise that physical and emotional safety provides a foundation for wellbeing and healthy development. The Aberdeenshire's Child Protection in Education Guidance is based on the [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021- updated 2023, and provides guidance for school based staff on protecting children and young people.](#)

Equal Protection from Assault (Scotland) Act 2019.

The Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Act 2019 provides children with the same rights as adults against assault by a parent or person with charge or care of them.

Within our school we have a designated member of staff appointed to be responsible for Child Protection matters. If there is the possibility that a child could be at risk, the school is required to follow the Child Protection Procedures laid out for Education.

This may mean that the child is referred to Social Work, the Police or the Children's Reporter. In our school the designated staff are: Mrs P Logue or Mr Campbell

Remember – if you suspect a child is at risk, do not rely on someone else to notice.

If you would like to speak to someone, seek help or pass on information or concerns:

You can speak to designated staff in our school

Social Work Monday to Friday during office hours contact your Children & Families local [Social Work Office](#)

Evenings & Weekends call the Out of Hours Service on 03456 08 12 06

Police Emergency 999, Non-Emergency 101

Signs of abuse can range from poor personal hygiene and hunger to unexplained injuries or self-harm.

If a child or young person tells you they are being abused:

- stay calm and listen to them
 - never promise to keep it a secret – tell them you must let someone else know
 - remind them that they are not to blame and are doing the right thing
-

- report it, but leave any investigation to Child Protection agencies

Protecting Aberdeenshire's children and young people is everyone's business, further information can be found on <http://www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org/child-protection/>

14 Further Information on Support for Children and Young People

The following websites may be useful:

Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)

<http://www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org/>

Aberdeenshire Council

<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/additional-support-needs/>

Support for All

<https://young.scot/campaigns/ayefeel/>

Enquire – National Parent Information Service and Helpline

<http://enquire.org.uk/>

Parent & Carer Involvement and Engagement

The term “parents” refers to anyone with parental responsibilities and others who care for or look after children or young people.

Both globally and nationally it is recognised that parents are the single most important influence on their children’s development, learning and achievement. The involvement and engagement of parents in their children’s learning is recognised as a key element in raising attainment, through support, help and encouragement given at home and whilst at school.

15 Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategy

The Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategy 2023-2026 demonstrates the commitment by Aberdeenshire Council to improve the quality and the extent of all parents’ involvement in their child’s learning and the important role they play in their child’s education.

The plan sets out a vision for parental involvement and engagement for the next three years and covers a journey that a child takes from pre-birth to age 18. It highlights the leadership of those who make the difference day in and day out.

If you would like to read the Aberdeenshire Parental Involvement and Engagement strategy it can be found on Aberdeenshire Council’s website here:

[Parental involvement and engagement - Aberdeenshire Council](#)

16 Parental Engagement

Parental engagement is about parents’ and families’ interaction with their child’s learning. It can take place in the home, at school or in the community: where it takes place is not important. The important thing is the quality of the parent’s engagement with their child’s learning, the positive impact that it can have and the interaction and mutual development that can occur as a result of that interaction.

17 Communication

The school uses a range of approaches to share information about your child’s learning and progress. These include:

- Use of Groupcall to text and email

Where contact details have been provided, all contacts identified as “parent contacts” will receive the information being sent. The exception to this is the morning absence text which will only be sent to the main parent contact.

- Use of Parentsportal.scot for notices, permission slips and school reports
 - Letters
 - School Website: www.mearns.aberdeenshire.sch.uk
-

- Parents Evenings
- Reports
- Social Media: Facebook, Instagram and Twitter
- Termly Updates
- Events
- Praise system
- Open days/mornings/afternoons

The school calendar highlights planned opportunities where we welcome you into school for events, and opportunities to talk about your child's progress, wellbeing, and behaviour (see Further Information).

18 ParentsPortal.scot

parentsportal.scot

In support of Aberdeenshire Council's ambition to offer more digital services to its residents, Aberdeenshire primary and secondary schools are rolling out a new national online service called **parentsportal.scot**. This is designed to replace the paper 'schoolbag run', giving a child's registered contacts access to a range of school-related online services, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

At the heart of the system, is a secure account through **mygov.scot**, which is referred to as '**My Account**' or '**MyAberdeenshire**' account. 'MyAberdeenshire' is already used to allow parents/carers to make online payments or receive notifications if a school closes unexpectedly. **Parentsportal.scot** and '**MyAberdeenshire**/'**mygov.scot** will work together, making this a convenient one-stop-shop, to access all Aberdeenshire digital services.

Initially, **parentsportal.scot** will allow parents/carers to see basic information about your child(ren)'s school and twitter account as well as:-

- make a link to your child(ren)
- complete the annual data check process electronically (child's main contact only)
- update their own as well as your child(ren)'s details at any time
- to register and access for online school meal payments using one sign in (iPayImpact)

How do I sign up? - If you **already have a myAberdeenshire account** to pay for school meals through iPayImpact, you can sign up using the same sign in details at <https://parentsportal.scot/home/> You **do not need** to register or set up a new **mygov.scot** account.

If you do not have a myAberdeenshire/mygov.scot account or are looking for more information and videos on how to access to **parentsportal.scot**, please go to <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/school-info/parents-portal/>

19 Learning at Home

Learning at home is the learning which happens in the home, outdoors or in the community. Your home is a great place to support learning. Your child can try out new activities or practice familiar learning, at home and in their wider community.

At our school we provide materials for you to work with your child to develop key skills at home. For explanation of this please go to our learning at home policy - www.mearns.aberdeenshire.sch.uk

20 Parent Forum and Parent Council

The Parent Forum is a collective name for all parents, carers, and guardians in the school.

The Mearns Academy Parent Council (MAPC) is a group of parents selected by the Parent Forum to represent the views of all parents, carers, and guardians in the school. The Parent Council works with the school to support learning and teaching, school improvement and parental and community engagement.

Contact the Parent Council Chairperson or Head teacher for more information about getting involved in the Parent Council or email: chair@mapc.org.uk

21 Parents and School Improvement

Our school has a range of priorities that we work on each year which are explained in our School Improvement Plan (SIP). Parents often have helpful and creative ideas about how to improve their child's school and what can be done to improve the quality of children's learning. In our school we will consult with parents in a number of ways. These may include:

- working groups/focus groups which any interested parent is invited to be part of
- questionnaires and surveys
- consultation with the Parent Council

22 Volunteering in school

There are many opportunities for you to support learning in school. These may include:

- volunteering to share the skills and knowledge you have
- supporting children and young people in the classroom
- supporting or lead extra-curricular activities
- directly supporting with specific skills (paired reading for example)

More detail about this can be found using the link below:

<http://jobs.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/volunteer-with-us/> or contact your Head teacher.

23 Collaborating with the Community

We work with many local organisations, community groups and businesses to ensure our children and young people benefit from further resources, experiences, and opportunities. If you are interested in working with the school, please contact the Headteacher

24 Addressing Concerns & Complaints

Aberdeenshire Council recognises the vital role that parents play in supporting their child's learning and is committed to fostering positive relationships with parents. No

matter how strong partnerships are, or how good our policies are, sometimes things can still go wrong and there may be occasions where parents wish to express unhappiness or dissatisfaction with council services, policies, or staff behaviour.

<http://aberdeenshire.gov.uk/contact-us/have-your-say/have-your-say-guide/>

When a complaint is made it must be handled in accordance with the Complaints Handling Procedure which provides two opportunities to resolve issues internally. In order to maintain positive relationships, it is usually better for all if parental concerns or complaints can be resolved at school/ early years setting level as quickly as possible.

If a concern or complaint cannot be resolved at frontline resolution (Stage 1) then it will progress to Investigation (Stage 2) and a detailed investigation into the matter will be carried out. Complaints that are complex, serious, or high risk and require detailed, lengthy investigation may be dealt with at the Investigation Stage from the outset.

Once the two internal stages of the Complaints Handling procedure have been exhausted, the complainant must be directed to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to carry out an independent external review of the process. The SPSO is the final stage of the complaint procedure.

Once the SPSO reaches a decision they may contact the council with recommendations for improvement and will provide dates by which the recommendations must be implemented. The council is required to report back to the SPSO and evidence that the required action has been taken.

School Policies and Useful Information

School Policies such as the Learning at Home Policy; Promoting Positive Relationships; our Mobile Phone etc. are published on the school website and can be found by clicking the parents tab at the top - www.mearns.aberdeenshire.sch.uk

All Aberdeenshire Council Education policies can be found here:

<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/about-us/service-structure/education-and-childrens-services-policy-framework/>

25 Attendance

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. They are also responsible for ensuring the safety of their children on their journeys to and from school except whilst on school transport where Aberdeenshire Council has clear guidelines about pupil safety. Regular and punctual attendance is linked closely to achievement and school staff would wish to work with parents to ensure that children can achieve fully. The school is required by law to maintain an accurate record of the attendance and absence of each pupil and parents are requested to assist in this process by keeping the school informed if their child is to be absent for any reason.

Unplanned Absence

It is important to note that if a child does not arrive at school and there is no reasonable explanation provided for his/her absence then members of staff will be required to ascertain the whereabouts for the safety of the individual child. In order to avoid causing unnecessary concern for staff and parents the importance of good communication between home and school cannot be over-emphasised.

Parents are asked to assist school staff in the manner detailed below:

- If your child is unable to attend school through illness/other reason please telephone the school before 8:30am on the first day of his/her absence.
- If your child is home for lunch and becomes unwell at lunchtime making them unable to return to school in the afternoon, please telephone the school before the beginning of the afternoon session
- You should continue to communicate with the school should your child be absent over a number of days.

Planned Absences

As part of Government Regulations we are required to record all absences as “authorised” or “unauthorised”. Authorised absences are due to illness or family bereavement and can also include time off to attend, e.g. sporting events or music exams.

For health care appointments, the school should be informed beforehand, preferably in writing or by email with the relevant details. As far as possible such appointments should take place outwith the school day.

The school follows the Aberdeenshire Promoting and Managing Pupil Attendance in Education Establishments Policy and Guidance. The links for these can be found below

[Promoting and Managing Pupil Attendance in Education Establishments policy](#)

[Promoting and Managing Pupil Attendance in Secondary Schools Guidance](#)

Safeguarding is a number one priority for the school and the monitoring of daily absence is an important part of this. To support the school with this, and to ensure that all children and young people are safe and accounted for, it is essential that parents and carers contact the school to inform them of their child's absence.

The school is required to follow up on unexplained absences on a daily basis. Where no information is received about a pupil absence at a certain point in the school day, the school will call the main parent contact and where necessary, they will call any emergency contacts that are held on the school system for that child.

Where no contact can be made and it is therefore not possible for the school to confirm that a child or young person is safe and well, it may be necessary to contact other agencies such as Social Work and Police for support. To minimise the need for this, please contact the school to explain any absence, either prior to, or on the day of the absence.

26 Holidays during term time.

The Scottish Government has deemed that holidays taken during term time for primary and secondary children should be recorded as unauthorised absence unless there are special, exceptional circumstances. Should you wish to remove your child from school to attend a family holiday you must inform the Head Teacher. This will be recorded as unauthorised absence though there may at times be exceptional family circumstances previously discussed with the Head Teacher. Parents are advised to limit the number of holidays taken during term time, to minimise disruption to a child's education. For annual holiday dates for Aberdeenshire schools please see the section at the back of this book, contact the school office or go to:

<https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schooltermdates>

27 Dress Code



RESPECT
WELLBEING
AMBITION

MEARNS ACADEMY DRESS CODE

All students must wear a **school tie**. Ties can be purchased from reception.

White shirt/blouse with collar suitable for a tie.
Jumpers are not required. If a jumper is worn, it must be black with no large logos. The school tie must be visible under the jumper.



All pupils in a leadership position within the school are expected to wear a **school blazer**. Blazers are optional for all other pupils.
Jackets must be removed in classes and during assemblies.
Hoodies do not form part of school uniform.

28 Clothing Grants

Some families may be entitled to a school clothing grant per eligible child per financial year. More information about this can be found at:

<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/parents-carers/assistance/school-clothing-grants/>

29 Transport

To qualify for Home-to-School Transport, Primary school pupils must reside more than 2 miles from and attend their zoned school whilst Secondary school pupils must reside more than 3 miles from and attend their zoned school.

These distances are the shortest available route from the pupil's house to the school gate and can take into account main roads (including dual carriageways), tracks and paths. Pupils will be assigned a collection point, in villages and towns and where safe to do so, pupils may have to walk up to 1 mile to the nearest collection point. Pupils who reside in rural locations are usually collected at the nearest adopted road to them (track end or roadside). School transport vehicles will not use private unadopted roads or tracks. It is the parent's responsibility to escort the pupil to and from their collection point. Application forms (Form PTU100) are completed by the school.

30 Privilege Transport

Transport provision is also made available for pupils who are not ordinarily entitled to transport. Privilege transport is provided on school transport services subject to spare seating capacity. There are 3 types of privileged transport available.

In-zone Privileged transport

Pupils who attend their zoned school but are under the qualifying mileage can apply for In-zone privilege transport. If there is suitable seating capacity available and an existing route then the application should be approved, if there is not and there is a safe walking route available to the pupil, then it may be rejected. Please also note that if seating capacity is needed for a pupil who is entitled to school transport, In-zone Privilege pupils may be given written notice and removed from transport.

In-Zone Privilege Transport – Safety

Pupils who attend their zoned school but do not qualify due to their residence being under the qualifying mileage can apply for In-zone privilege transport. If there is no safe walking route available to the pupil, they are guaranteed a seat on transport by applying for an In-zone Privilege pass. A pupil who is guaranteed in-zone privilege transport would not be removed to make room for a pupil who is entitled to school transport.

Out of Zone Privilege Transport

There is no transport entitlement to pupils who attend a school which they are not zoned for. Pupils may apply for Out of Zone Privilege transport; pupils are required to meet the nearest available school transport vehicle to them, and it is the parent's responsibility to bring the pupil to the nearest collection point. Out of Zone Privilege transport pupils may be removed, with written notice, at any time for In-Zone Privilege and Entitled transport pupils. Processing of any new Out of Zone applications

received prior to the start of the new term in August does not usually begin until late September. This ensures that all entitled pupils have been allocated and there is a true indication of the remaining available seats. Please have alternative arrangements in place for the start of term and in the event the application is refused.

Applications can be made by contacting your child's school. For further information, see the Council website.

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/school-transport/>

or contact school.transport@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Local Bus/Registered School Bus Services

Some services operate as registered bus services. These operate on a fare paying basis and pupils will be required to pay a fare to the driver or purchase a season ticket for travel. National Entitlement cards (NEC) can also be used on these services (Young Persons' -Under 22s Free Bus Travel Scheme)

31 Early Learning & Childcare Transport

Transport to early learning and childcare settings will not be provided by Aberdeenshire Council.

32 Enhanced Provision and Complex Needs Provision

Aberdeenshire Council may provide free transport where necessary for pupils with additional support needs who access Enhanced Provision or Complex Needs Provision level support. In certain cases, it will be appropriate for pupils to make their own way to school by public transport and where this is authorised, bus passes are issued. Where a pupil's address falls in the delineated area of a resourced school, and is within reasonable walking distance, the Local Authority will consult with Specialist Health Services before deciding if free transport should be provided.

33 School Closure & Other Emergencies

Head Teachers decide if and when schools should close due to bad weather or another emergency. In bad weather they will decide this after receiving information about local weather conditions. This decision can be made during any time, day or night. These guidelines outline the procedures for dealing with school closures during bad weather or other emergencies.

If children are at school...

School transport contractors have been told not to allow children to walk home alone from drop-off points under any circumstances during extreme weather conditions. If you can't meet or arrange for your child to be met, the school transport will return them to school or another place of safety.

Public service vehicles – drivers of these vehicles follow a specified route and keep to timetables – they cannot make special arrangements.

If your child attends a Nursery, Primary or Special School, which is to close early, the school will contact you by telephone. If this is not possible the school will contact your named 'emergency contact'. No child will be released from school without contact being made. It is important contact details are current and the people named are available – particularly during bad weather.

If your child attends a Secondary School, because of the large number of pupils in Secondary Schools, parents will be contacted via text/email to inform them of closure.

If you are concerned about local weather condition contact the school. You may wish to collect your child yourself and are free to do so provided you make arrangements with the school.

Before the start of the school day...

During bad weather some staff may not be able to get to school or bus routes may not be safe to travel on – so the school may have to close. Headteachers will advise parents and carers using the following communication tools:

Outwith school hours, your local radio station is a good place to find out information on school closures. The following radio stations receive updated information every 30 mins from our website:

- **Northsound 1**
FM 96.9
- **Northsound 2**
MW 1035 kHz
- **BBC Radio Scotland**
FM 92.4 - 94.7 MW 810 kHz
- **Moray Firth Radio**
FM 97.4 MW 1107 kHz
- **Waves Radio**
FM 101.2
- **Original 106 FM**

Twitter

<http://twitter.com/aberdeenshire>

Aberdeenshire Council Website

<https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/Apps/schools-closures/>

You also have the option to sign up to receive email alerts when your school(s) updates their closure status:

<https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/myAberdeenshire/>

34 Storm Addresses

When there has been severe snowstorm during the day it may be prudent for pupils who live some distance from the normal bus routes not to attempt to reach their homes but to spend the night in alternative accommodation nearer school. It is the parent's responsibility to inform school about any pupils who may be at risk in such situations and to provide the name and address of a relative or friend who is willing to provide overnight accommodation.

35 Change of address and Parental Contact Details

To enable us to make easy contact with parents, the school would appreciate if any changes of address, telephone number or circumstances is amended via your parentsportal.scot account (see Menu section 'Your Account') or notified in writing to the School Office. It is also important that the school has details of an Emergency Contact should it prove impossible to get in touch with parents in the event of an emergency.

36 Anti-bullying Guidance

What is Bullying?

Aberdeenshire Council Education and Children's Services define bullying as the following:

Bullying takes place when the actions of an individual or group of people cause harm to someone by taking advantage of an imbalance of power within a relationship (whether perceived or real). Bullying behaviour can be persistent and/or intentional, but often it is neither.

Bullying can be verbal, physical, mental/emotional, or cyber and is behaviour and impact. It can be intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect, persistent, or a one-off incident. The impact is on a person's ability to feel in control of themselves.

Bullying can be verbal, physical, emotional, or cyber. It can be intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect, persistent, or a one-off incident. People who experience bullying behaviour feel vulnerable and/or socially isolated.

What will the school do about it?

Schools should promote consistency of response to instances of bullying behaviour using a 6-step approach. They will:

1. Record **all** reported incidents of bullying
2. Speak to the individuals involved having frank and honest dialogue
3. Speak to parents/carers
4. Utilise Restorative approaches
5. Monitor the situation
6. Review and increase response accordingly

More information can be found in the [Aberdeenshire Anti-Bullying Policy: Bullying Prevention and Management for Educational Establishments](#) which adheres to the National Approach to Anti-Bullying which can be found at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/respect-national-approach-anti-bullying-scotlands-children-young-people/>

37 School Meals

Secondary School Lunches

Our academies offer a breakfast, morning break and lunch service. This is very different from the service in our Primary schools and is popular with Academy pupils.

We also provide an online pre-order system (Fusion) that works alongside our normal counter service. Academy pupils can order their lunch straight from their mobile device and then pick it up from a designated collection point at lunchtime. Fusion Mobile also allows pupils to check their balance. To place an order funds must be available on their account.

Secondary school prices

To view the available options and their prices see the link below.

View the

- <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/27407/secondarypupilpricelist.pdf>

There are many benefits of having lunch at the Academy:

- A delicious and varied menu offering great value
- Choice of main courses each day
- A varied range of snacks and hand held options
- A range of sandwiches, salads and fresh fruit are available

Additional information regarding Secondary school meals can be obtained via this link

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/school-info/meals/secondary-school-meals/>

Online payments system

We are encouraging parents/carers to register for online school payments to eliminate handling of cash. Parentsportal.scot is the recommended way to register to access all school payments including school meals.

Parentsportal.scot is securely linked to a myAberdeenshire account and to register follow this link

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/school-info/parents-portal/>

Please ensure there are always sufficient funds on your child's account prior to sending them for school meals. There is a formal debt recovery process for accounts that fall into debt.

If you are having difficulty making payments, please contact the school office as we are here to support families and will do whatever we can to assist you.

Free School Meals Information

Am I entitled to free school meals?

Click on the link to find information that explains the free school entitlement and how to go about it.

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/school-info/assistance/free-school-meals/>

If you have difficulties obtaining access to free school meals, please speak with your school and we will work together to provide assistance.

If you require any further information regarding School Catering send a message to this email address - schoolmeals@aberdeenshire.gov.uk.

38 Healthcare & Medical

Every child's health and welfare is very important to the school. Parents who have any concerns should let school know by telephoning or writing in. Alternatively, parents can inform the Health Visitor or their own GP. Parents are requested to let the school know of any hospital appointments.

Parents/carers are requested to keep children at home for 24-48 hours if the child has diarrhoea, flu-like symptoms or is clearly unwell.

Always seeks a GP's advice before sending a child back to school. Please remember that other children can be vulnerable to infection.

The school is fortunate to have a nurse in attendance to undertake Health Interviews and provide advice on health matters for pupils. The school doctor will play a vital role in monitoring a child's health and well-being.

Although our medical staff provide help and advice as appropriate, all pupils must be registered with a doctor in general practice who should be consulted about health matters as they arise. Parents should provide us with the name and telephone number of their child's doctor and an up-to-date emergency contact for themselves in case it becomes necessary for a child to be sent home during school hours because of illness.

Aberdeenshire Community Dental Service inspect P1 and P7 children in schools as part of the National Dental Inspection Programme. Written parental consent is not required for dental inspections, but parents will be informed in writing approximately one week before the inspection date.

Immunisation against Diphtheria, Tetanus and Poliomyelitis is provided for all pupils during the third year. If a pupil is unable to keep the school appointment, parents are advised to request immunisation from their own doctor.

HPV Immunisation to protect against cervical cancer is offered to all girls in S2. This is a series of 3 injections over a six-month period commencing in September each year. A catch-up programme is also in place for girls who miss any of their injections.

Most pupils will at some time have a medical condition that may affect their participation in school activities. For many this will be short term, perhaps finishing a course of medication to combat an infection.

Other pupils have medical conditions that, if not properly managed, could limit their access to education. Such pupils are regarded as having health care needs. Most children with health care needs can attend school regularly and, with some support from the school can access most school activities. However, school staff may need to take extra care in supervising some activities to ensure that pupils are not put at risk.

Please find the link below to our guidance: Supporting Children and Young People with Healthcare needs and managing medicines in Educational Establishments.

<https://asn-aberdeenshire.org/policies-and-guidance/>

This guidance supports schools to identify the necessary safety measures to meet the medical needs of pupils in collaboration with NHS Grampian, ensuring pupils and others are not put at risk.

If your child has long term medical conditions such as asthma or diabetes, which may require on-going support, this should be fully discussed with the school. In certain cases specific training of staff about a child's treatment may need to be given. In addition, some children have conditions which may require occasional staff intervention e.g. severe allergic conditions such as anaphylaxis.

Sunscreen - As children are outdoors for learning and for play, parents should apply this prior to sending children to school or nursery. School staff do not supply, nor do they apply, sunscreen creams.

39 Exclusion

The foundation for schools, learning establishments and education authorities is a whole school ethos of prevention, early intervention and support against a background which promotes positive relationships, learning and behaviour.

When a pupil displays behaviour, whereby attendance at the school would be likely to be seriously detrimental to order and discipline in the school or the educational wellbeing of the pupils there the Aberdeenshire Promoting Inclusion and Reducing Exclusion in Education Establishments Policy may apply.

<http://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/dataset/council-policies-education/resource/9e393d1a-2113-44c8-afb6-a517f2d495b6>

40 Educational Visits

We offer various educational visits during the school year. We believe that 'hands on' experiences greatly enhance a child's education, while also helping to make the necessary links between learning in school and life outwith school. Staff members and parent volunteers provide supervision to standards laid down by Aberdeenshire Education & Children's Services. We give parents as much notification as possible regarding visits their children will participate in.

There are grants available through the Aberdeenshire Educational Trust to help with the cost of school trips. For further information go to:

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/benefits-and-grants/educational-grants/>

41 Instrumental Tuition

From Primary 4 onwards, tuition is available for a range of musical instruments. Most disciplines are taught in the secondary schools however not all disciplines are available in primary schools due to limited resources. Orchestral string instruments are not normally available to beginners at secondary level. Tuition is subject to availability.

Guide to starting stage by discipline:

- Woodwind - P6
- Brass - P5
- Violin or viola - P4
- Cello or double bass - P4
- Percussion - S1
- Piano or keyboard - P4
- Guitar - P4
- Bagpipes - P4
- Pipe band drum - P4

As of August 2021, we are unable to offer tuition on more than one instrument to pupils.

Music tuition fees

Scottish Government Ministers and COSLA leaders agreed to the removal of fees for the academic years 2021/22 and 2022/23 which has been supported by funding from the Scottish Government to allow existing levels of provision to be maintained.

Funding for 2023/24 was also confirmed by the Scottish Government, there were no fees for instrumental tuition during this academic session.

<https://aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/music-lessons/youth-music-sessions/>

Aberdeenshire Youth Music Sessions (AYMS) provide ensemble music-making opportunities for children outside of the school day.

For further information go to:

<http://aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/ims/>

42 Education Maintenance Allowance

An Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is a weekly payment paid directly to young people from low income families to enable them to stay on in further education at school or college after they reach statutory school leaving age. This is funded by the Scottish Executive. Further information on EMA's and how to apply can be found here:

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/school-info/assistance/ema/>

43 Public Liability Insurance

Aberdeenshire Council holds third party liability insurance, which indemnifies the Council against claims from third parties, e.g. parents on behalf of pupils who have suffered injury, illness, loss or damage arising from the negligence of the Council or its employees. In these circumstances all claims are handled on behalf of the Council by external Insurers and Claims Handling Agents and compensation is dealt with on a strict legal liability basis. This means that there is no automatic compensation, the Council must be found negligent in order for any compensation to be offered by our Insurers and / or Claims Handling Agents.

Whilst the school will exercise reasonable care for pupils' property, it is inevitable that property will be lost or damaged from time to time. Pupils' property which is worn or brought to school or left in bags/cloakrooms is at their own risk. This includes but is not restricted to personal items such as jewellery, phones/tablets watches and bicycles. Aberdeenshire Council cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage unless caused by negligence of the school or staff.

44 School Off Site Excursion Insurance

Aberdeenshire Council has in place a School Excursion Insurance policy, whereby both pupils and teachers are covered for offsite activities / trips both within the UK and abroad (offsite meaning off the school premises). The policy covers medical expenses, loss of baggage, cancellation (as specified in the policy) , curtailment and change of itinerary (along with other sundry benefits) etc. for worldwide trips and adventurous activities (including winter sports), subject to policy terms and conditions being met.

If personal items such as jewellery, phones/tablets, watches etc. are taken on a school trip then these are taken at an individual's own risk and are not covered under the policy, unless damage or loss is caused by an Aberdeenshire Council employee.

Personal / individual cover is seen as a parental responsibility and it is your decision as to whether you feel it is appropriate to obtain this.

Where trips are booked and have subsequently to be cancelled because of any Covid related event then insurance will not be valid. This will of course be reviewed periodically.

Please be advised, however, that the Duty of Care aspect below is not insurance related:

Duty of Care

The Authority has a duty of care in respect of pupils in its charge during school hours and as such must take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of all primary and secondary pupils. This general duty of care continues if the children go home by way of school transport and ends when the child gets off the bus, at which point the parents then become responsible.

45 Data we hold and what we do with it.

The UK's Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 enacted the EU GDPR's requirements into UK law and, with effect from 1 January 2021, [the DPPEC \(Data Protection, Privacy and Electronic Communications \(Amendments etc\) \(EU Exit\)\) Regulations](#)

2019 amended the DPA 2018 and merged it with the requirements of the EU GDPR to form a new, UK-specific data protection regime that works in a UK context after Brexit as part of the DPA 2018 and is known as the 'UK GDPR'.

Aberdeenshire Council is committed to full compliance with these regulations. When you are asked for information by Education & Children's Services, we will tell you why we are collecting the information, how long we will hold it and the legal basis for gathering this information. A Privacy Notice has been issued to all schools relating to the information we hold on yourself and your child/ward.

46 The information we collect from you

Aberdeenshire Council collects personal data and information about your child in order to provide your child with a school education.

We will normally only share information (other than in child protection situations) in order to provide services for your child as part of his/her school education. We collect special category data about your child and process this because it is in the substantial public interest.

The information held by Aberdeenshire Council is used to assess, plan, coordinate, deliver, and quality assure the education services to your child. The Council does not use an automated process for making decisions about your child or the services required; decisions are made with you. We will keep this information for a period of 5 years from the maximum school leaving age of your child, as required to by The Pupils' Educational Records (Scotland) Regulations 2003, unless we have a legal responsibility to keep the information for a longer period of time.

47 Your Data, Your Rights

You have legal rights about the way the Council handles and uses your data. More information about all of the rights you have is available on our website at: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/online/legal-notice/data-protection/>

Alternatively you can contact the Council's Data Protection Officer by emailing DataProtection@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or in writing to: The Data Protection Officer, Town House, 34 Low Street, Banff, AB45 1AY.

You also have the right to make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office, (www.ico.org.uk). They are the body responsible for making sure organisations like the Council handle your data lawfully.

The Council is required, where it is the data controller, to act in a transparent manner by providing information to individuals about how it will collect and use their personal data. Privacy Notices are an essential part of complying with this requirement. The Privacy Notice must provide information to individuals in a concise, transparent, intelligible, and easily accessible way and must be written in clear and plain language. All Education & Children's Services Privacy notices are available on our website at: <http://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/dataset/education-privacy-notice>.

48 Parental Access to Records

Access Requests are the formal process by which individuals can seek information held about them (or their children) by the council. The requests can be broad, in terms of everything that is held, or quite specific - everything held by a specific department, establishment, team or individual. We have a legal requirement to provide the information under the Data Protection Act 2018. An Access Request is wider than an Educational Record in that it will include all personal data held about a child not just their educational record. Further information can be found at:

<https://ico.org.uk/your-data-matters/>

The Pupils' Educational Records (Scotland) Regulations 2003 means that you can get access to your child's records. Details of the regulations and process for obtaining information specific to pupils are available by contacting the school directly or can be found at:

<https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/my-school/general-school-information/my-childs-record/>

49 Information Sharing

In terms of effective communication, including sharing relevant and proportionate information, where appropriate, Aberdeenshire Council in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and Human Rights Act 1998 adheres to this as part of our current routine practice.

50 ScotXed

ScotXed is a term used to represent the Scottish Government's Education Analytical Services, which is part of the Scottish Government's Learning Directorate.

ScotXed have legal powers to request data with regards all children and young people being educated in Scotland's schools, with the information collected about pupils and staff in schools used to help to improve education across Scotland. They do not collect the names of your child/children and they do not receive any contact details the school may have for you (e.g. telephone number, email address), and no information is published or made publicly available that would allow your child/children to be identified. More information on what and why they need data about your child/children, along with how they collect and store it is available in their Education Statistics Privacy Notices for parents and carers:

<https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/ScotXed/SchoolEducation/ESPrivacyNotices>

If you have any concerns around the national ScotXed data collections, you can:

- Contact the Data Protection & Information Assets team at the Scottish Government on dpa@gov.scot, or
 - The Head of Education Analytical Services, Mick Wilson, on at mick.wilson@gov.scot,
 - You can write to them at Education Analytical Services, Area 2A-North, Victoria Quay, Leith, EH6 6QQ.
 - Alternatively, complaints may be raised with the Information Commissioners Office at casework@ico.org.uk.
-

Further Information

The links below take you to the most up to date information on these topics.

School Improvement Plan

Our Improvement Plan is available on our website www.mearns.aberdeenshire.sch.uk

Members of Parental Groups

The Mearns Academy parent council, MAPC, is a high profile and significant forum for parents to influence the policies and direction of the school. MAPC arose from changes in the previous School Board and PTA arrangements into the new Parent Forum body.

This has come about with the introduction of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 which places significant emphasis on parental responsibilities in their child's education and the rights and expectations that they have with the school. The importance of having constructive open dialogue between the school and the parents is perceived as being one of the key issues. All parents are automatically elected to the Parent Forum with their Council (MAPC) comprised of up to 16 volunteer parents acting on their behalf. Following the rules laid out in the MAPC Constitution, each MAPC parent member serves a term of up to two years with 6 of the 12 parents stepping down automatically.

Since its formation the group has been well represented across the board with positive support by parents, teachers, pupils, local plus community councillors, co-opted members and Aberdeenshire Education Authority.

MAPC are keen to have parents/carers play an active role and are appreciative of any assistance at social and other events where an extra pair of hands is always welcomed. To contact MAPC please email chair@mapc.org.uk.

Stats for Attainment

The Scottish Government have developed a "School information dashboard" that provides a range of statistical information about each publicly funded school in Scotland. This includes school attainment information about Curriculum for Excellence Levels Achieved (for primary and secondary schools) and attainment in National Qualifications (for secondary schools).

The dashboards can be consulted <https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/>

School Events Calendar & holidays

For calendar dates please see our website www.mearns.aberdeenshire.sch.uk

Aberdeenshire Council School Holiday Calendar

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/school-info/school-term-dates/>

Map of catchment area

<https://gis.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/maps/map.aspx?geolocate=true&resolution=2&initialDialog=localKnowledgeDialog>
