



18th May 2021

Parent/Carer Update

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing with some important updates regarding the rest of this term and the start of the new session.

SQA Arrangements

As you will all be aware this term has been very busy for our Senior Phase pupils as they complete their SQA courses and assessment requirements. We have been so impressed with the resilience and positive attitude they have demonstrated in challenging circumstances. We are now heading towards the final phase of the SQA Alternative Certification Model where final provisional grades will be decided at school level based on demonstrated attainment. Once finalised these grades are submitted to the SQA. Here is the summary of what happens this term:

- All courses have been fully completed. This has been helped by prioritising our Senior Phase pupils during the phased return before Easter and the fact that there was very little disruption over the course of the session before and after lockdown due to positive cases in the school and pupils having to self isolate. All teachers are confident they have covered all aspects of the courses that are required
- All necessary key assessments across all subjects will be completed by 28th May allowing teachers to have the necessary evidence to make decisions on provisional grades based on demonstrated attainment
- There may be some individual circumstances where we may require to do some catch up assessments after this date to gather any missing evidence of demonstrated attainment
- From the 28th May teachers will be marking key assessments and pulling together evidence of demonstrated attainment in line with the SQA guidance to decide on final provisional grades
- They will also be involved in subject, school and authority moderation to ensure that all pupils are being assessed fairly and at the same standard
- Admin and data checks will take place to make sure grades are entered into the system accurately
- Once complete across the school the provisional grades will be submitted to the authority for final quality assurance checks
- The school will issue a final report during week beginning 14th June showing pupils and parents the final provisional grades for each subject that have been submitted to the SQA based on demonstrated attainment evidence

Change of Timetable

Following the completion of the course choice process for pupils moving into S3 and above we are on track to change timetable on **Weds 2nd June**. This means that pupils will move up a year and begin their new courses from this date. We have built in flexibility to allow for any senior phase pupil who still needs to finish providing evidence of demonstrated attainment for this year's SQA courses to be able to do so. Pupils will receive their new timetables in advance of this date.

Covid 19 Guidance for schools

I am sure we are all relieved that restrictions across the country are beginning to be relaxed. At the moment the Scottish Government guidance on safety in schools remains in place. This means that unless we are told otherwise the mitigations we have in place in school to keep everyone as safe as possible remain unchanged. This includes the wearing of face coverings (unless exempt), split breaks and lunchtimes, sanitising routines, one way system, voluntary LFD testing etc. will continue. We will let you know should there be any changes to this before the end of term.

We have had a very positive take up of the self testing programme across the school. We have been asked by Scottish Government to share the following key messages:

1. Testing continues to play an important role, in and out of schools/settings, in our fight against COVID-19. Testing and self-isolating can help limit the likelihood of the virus getting into schools/settings, and help mitigate the impacts if/when it does. Vaccinated staff and pupils should continue to test in line with NHS advice.
2. Please ensure that all test results, whether positive, negative or void, are reported using the digital portal or telephone service (119). Reporting test results can be done from mobiles, online or by phone, and should be completed straightaway. Reporting not only supports contact tracing in the event of a positive case, but assists our collective understanding of rates of infection in communities and schools/settings across the country. If we only record positive results, the level of COVID-19 cases in schools/communities may look worse than they really are. Health professionals can use the information provided by the testing programme to spot patterns and outbreaks more quickly and accurately, and ensure better targeting of responsive and preventative action, helping reduce the risk of future lockdowns.
3. Please ensure that, if you have a positive LFD result, you self-isolate immediately, report it and book a confirmatory PCR test. Self-isolation is vital to help limit the potential spread of the virus in your school/setting and wider community. Taking a PCR test is really important - PCR tests are more accurate than LFD tests, and can help identify whether your positive result is incorrect (a false positive). If the PCR test is negative, in most cases you and your contacts will be able to end self-isolation subject to further advice from Test and Protect.

There is support available to households who have to self-isolate and who need help. This includes: the Self-Isolation Support Grant which provides £500 to those who earn less than the real living wage and have to self-isolate. Practical support is also available, including food or essential medicine deliveries, through the local self-isolation assistance service. You can either contact your local authority directly or contact the Coronavirus National Assistance helpline – available at 0800 111 4000, Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, to find out more

Pupils can pick up additional kits once they run out of tests from the school office.

Inservice Days this Term – school closed to pupils

Please remember we have 3 Inservice Days this term. Two additional inservice days had been allocated by the Scottish Government to allow teachers to undertake the necessary additional work required to support the SQA Alternative Certification Model this year. These are:

Monday 24th May 2021

Monday 31st May 2021

Tuesday 1st June 2021

School Uniform Next Session

As you know during these unique times we relaxed our school uniform expectations for a number of reasons including comfort and to reduce school day costs to families. Reflecting on this experience we think next session will be an ideal time to review our school uniform policy and involve the whole school community in this process which will be led by pupils. Given that our school uniform is likely to change from session 2022-23 following this process we have decided to keep the flexibility that has been in place over the last year and a half into next session. We hope this will also help to reduce financial pressures that families may be experiencing as a result of COVID19. From next session school uniform will be as follows:

- White shirt/polo shirt
- Black jumper / sweatshirt
- Black trousers/Leggings/Skirts
- School Tie will remain optional next session and can be purchased from the school office
- Further info about S6 blazers/ties etc will be shared with S5 pupils returning to school
- PE kit – t-shirt/shorts/sports leggings/trainers
- There have been some real benefits in allowing pupils to wear their PE kit to school on days that have PE. This has included an increase in participation in PE and more time being spent in lessons rather than changing rooms. For these reasons this arrangement will continue next session

S6 pupils will continue to wear blazers, shirts and ties and they will receive more information on arrangements for blazers soon.

S2 Residential Experience Next Session

Parents and carers of current S1 pupils will already have received information about our plans for every pupil in S2 to benefit from a residential outdoor adventure experience at Dalguise next session. We would appreciate if all consent forms could be handed back into school by 28th May. The groups have been changed slightly from our original letter. Groups will now go in the following practical sets:

Mon-Wed: A,B,C,G,H & J
Wed-Fri: D,E,F,K,L,M & N

This allows Pupil Care & Support staff to go with their own groups so that each pupil has a familiar staff member with them on the trip. If you need any further information, please contact Mr Howat at the school.

Leavers' Arrangements

The mitigations in place for schools mean we can't have the normal celebrations we would like to have for pupils who are leaving school this summer. However, we still want to say good bye properly to our leavers. Pupils in S4 or S5 who are leaving school will be invited to a short leavers' ceremony on Friday 28th May in the Theatre. Unfortunately, due to the restrictions in place parents and carers are not able to attend. Pupils will be invited by their Pupil Care & Support Teacher who will give them a bit more information. This is the last day that all leavers will be required to attend.

A group of pupils are working on a plan so we can say goodbye to our S6 leavers later in June, again within what is permitted under Covid safety mitigations, and we will share information about this shortly.

There is no requirement to complete leavers' forms but we would ask that all leavers hand in all of their school equipment i.e. ipad + charger, locker key and any textbooks or resources to the office by Friday 28th May.

Prize Giving Arrangements

Although we will be unable to hold our normal prize giving event due to COVID restrictions we will be holding a school based event for all of our prize winners. Unfortunately we are unable to invite parents to this but are looking at how we can record this and make it available across the school community. More details to follow.

Wishing Mrs Callander All The Best

After an incredible 44 years service to Forfar Academy and the wider Forfar community (even more if you count her years as a pupil here!) Mrs Callander will be retiring at the end of this session. I am sure that many parents and even grandparents (!) will have many fond memories of the support Mrs Callander has provided over the years and will join with the whole school community in wishing her all the very best for a long and happy retirement. A true Forfar Academy legend.

And finally...

Every year at around this time I thank our parents, carers and wider community for their support over the year. And although I really do mean it every year this year in particular I am in awe of the support, understanding and teamwork we have all demonstrated as a school community. As we start to see the positive shoots of recovery and a return to so many aspects of life we have missed so much I genuinely believe that we emerge from this as a stronger school community. The demands on us all have been tough and unprecedented and called on us all to be strong, resilient and sensitive to our individual challenges. The unconditional support that we have received from our parents and carers this year has meant that we have all been able to focus on doing the very best we could by our young people. We could not achieved all we have without coming together in the way we did. I am humbled by this and cannot thank you enough.

Kas Mohamed
Head Teacher