

25th March 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing with some important updates for next term.

Update on COVID arrangements for Term 4

Following the FM update last week the latest guidance for schools has been published. You can find the updated guidance here :

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-reducing-the-risks-in-schools/>

There are a number of changes to bring mitigations in school in line with wider society. The main areas for you and our pupils to be aware of are:

- an end to asymptomatic tests from next term. There is no longer a requirement for twice weekly LFD testing for pupils and staff. We still have some testing kits left but won't be receiving new deliveries. We will be distributing the remaining kits before the holidays and pupils can pick up additional kits from the school office.
- from the start of the new term pupils should self isolate if they display symptoms, have tested positive or have been a close contact and are not fully vaccinated and are over 18. PCR testing will also be phased out towards the end of April. Isolation periods can be shortened by testing negative on day 6 and day 7. If your child displays symptoms they should not attend school and please notify us in the normal way.
- from the new term the "warn and inform" letters to parents where there has been a positive case in a class will stop.
- from the new term face coverings (unless exempt) will still be required in communal areas and corridors. They are not required to be worn in class. They will not be required to be worn in exams. Anyone wishing to continue to wear a face covering in classrooms will be supported to do so. Face coverings will be required on school transport. Please continue to remind your children to remember their face coverings each morning.
- hand hygiene and surface wipe downs will continue.
- ongoing increased ventilation and monitoring will continue.
- all Drama, Music, PE and Dance restrictions will end.
- all visits and residential visits are now allowed with appropriate risk assessments in place.
- an end to visitor restrictions although all visitors must follow any school mitigations in place.
- our arrangements for the start of the school day, split break and lunchtimes and one way system will remain in place. Given the positive impact on pupil safety due to reducing overcrowding we will keep these measures in place for at least the remainder of the session and potentially beyond subject to consultation across the school. We know that positive case numbers remain high and particularly in the run up to exams we will want to continue to reduce risk as much as possible.
- an end to restrictions on parents' evenings and parent info events etc. Given the positive feedback from parents regarding our virtual video meetings we will consult

across the school on whether or not we return to in person parents' evenings next session.

Over the last two years there has been a tremendous effort across the school community to keep to the mitigations and keep everyone safe. Your children have done an incredible job in following all the safety measures we had in place and wearing face coverings day after day with hardly a complaint. It's great to see some of the restrictions being lifted but we are still mindful of the relatively high number of positive cases across our pupils and staff. Thank you for your unwavering support during the last 2 years.

Important SQA exam information for S4/S5 and S6

Final tracking reports and SQA presentation levels and estimates – we have had to make a change to the date of issue of the final tracking reports for S4/5/6 to ensure we are providing you and your children with the information SQA require to be shared. The report will be issued on Friday 1st April. This is an important report as it includes the SQA Estimate grade that the school will send to SQA prior to the exams taking place. For each subject pupils are studying you will see the level they are being presented at (National 3, National 4, National 5, Higher, Advanced Higher or National Progression Award). For National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher you will also see the SQA Estimate grade that the school is submitting. This will be A,B,C,D or No Award. For National 3, National 4 and NPAs this will be Pass or Fail.

SQA Exams and Contingencies

As you will be aware at the moment exams at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher are planned to go ahead next term. For most courses adjustments and modifications have been made to course content, how it is assessed and the final exam to take into account the disruption caused by the pandemic. SQA also recently provided additional support to pupils to help prepare for exams. This was different from subject to subject and took the form of clearer guidance about what will be or won't be assessed in some exams or hints and tips for pupils. Class teachers have shared these with pupils.

How is the SQA Estimate Grade decided?

For National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher the school submits an "estimate grade" to SQA based on "demonstrated attainment". This grade comes from evidence the school has from a range of assessment – prelim type assessments, end of unit assessments, class tests, assignment work, and classwork. The grade is based on the evidence we have for each pupil in each of their subjects.

How is the SQA Estimate grade used by SQA?

Exceptional Circumstances – if a pupil is unable to sit an exam due to illness or an exceptional family circumstance such as a bereavement the SQA will look at the estimate grade. They will ask the school to submit the evidence that was used to decide on the Estimate. If they agree that the evidence is accurate they will award the SQA Estimate Grade as the final grade.

Appeals – due to the challenges caused by the pandemic to pupils and teachers the SQA has decided to bring back an Appeals system for this year only. If after sitting the exam a pupil's final grade is lower than we would expect and lower than the SQA estimate the school submitted, pupils and the school can consider to appeal the final grade. In these cases the school will submit the evidence used to decide on the SQA estimate. SQA will then consider that evidence and award whichever grade is higher – the grade they think the SQA estimate shows based on the evidence submitted or the final grade including the exam.

You can find all the information from SQA at the following link :

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/95157.html>

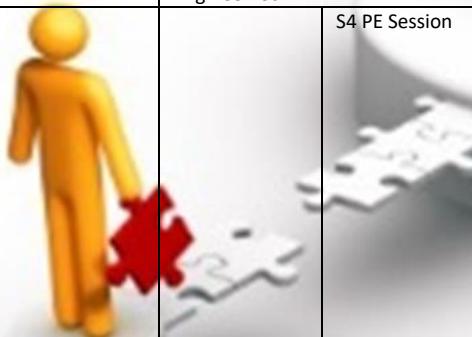
Exam Diet and Pathways to Success Programme for S4/S5/S6 – Next term SQA exams run from the 26th April until 1st June. You can find the exam timetable here :

https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/nq-2022-exam-timetable.pdf

Arrangements for S4/S5/S6 attendance at school during the exam diet are as follows :

- if parents/carers feel that their child would prepare best for the exams through studying at home or would rather their child only attends school to sit exams due to COVID risks then this is allowed. Please contact the school to let us know and we can record this as an authorised absence
- **Forfar Academy Pathways to Success programme.** We are putting together an in- school programme to support pupils in S4/S5/S6 prepare for their exams during the exam diet. This includes the café and atrium areas being open as study spaces during the school day. A programme of Masterclasses in all subjects at N5/H and AH has also been timetabled. These will take place during the time pupils would have their double period in that subject with two mornings a week for Maths and two afternoons for S4 English. Times and subjects are set out in the schedule below. Subject teachers will also be available through Teams to answer any questions pupils may have and provide individualised advice and support. Each year group also has a Happy Hearts Happy Minds session each week run by our Pupil Care & Support Team and partners with input on preparing for exams, dealing with exam anxiety, relaxation techniques and pupil wellbeing. Finally we know how important it is to keep active during this time so each year group will have a weekly session with our PE team where a range of physical activities will be on offer.
- For pupils in S4 who do not have any exams (pupils studying at N3 and N4) there will be a programme to support transition to the next stage of their learner journey including work experience and Developing the Young Workforce opportunities. Pupil Care & Support teachers will contact relevant pupils directly about these arrangements

S4/5/6 pupils will be having special assemblies before the end of term to go over all of these arrangements and prepare them for the exams. We wish all of our pupils the best of luck!

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mon	Maths and Application of Maths N5/H/AH – 2 nd May	Maths and Application of Maths N5/H/AH – 2 nd May	Maths and Application of Maths N5/H/AH – 2 nd May	Maths and Application of Maths (2/5) Media & TV Art Admin Practical Cook. Dance Biology Chemistry Health Sector History Mod Studs Prac. Woodworking	Maths and Application of Maths N5/H/AH – 2 nd May	S4 English (4A classes) S5 Happy Hearts Happy Minds session	S4 English (4A classes)
Tues		Drama Computing PE French Spanish Biology Chemistry History Geography Engineer. Sci.		S4 Happy Hearts Happy Minds session	S6 PE session		
Weds			S4 PE Session	Photography Business Man. Computing Practical Cook. Practical Cake Dance S5/6 English Biology Chemistry Physics History Prac. Woodwork. Graph.Comm.		S4 English (4B classes)	S4 English (4B classes)
Thurs	Maths and Application of Maths N5/H/AH – 28th April H/AH -5 th May Drama Music Music Tech Art Customer Service Games Develop. Biology Chemistry Physics Modern Studies Geography Travel & Tourism Graph.Comm.	Maths and Application of Maths (28/4) N5/H/AH – 28th April H/AH -5 th May	Maths and Application of Maths (28/4) N5/H/AH – 28th April H/AH -5 th May	Maths and Application of Maths (28/4) N5/H/AH – 28th April H/AH -5 th May	Maths and Application of Maths (28/4) N5/H/AH – 28th April H/AH -5 th May	S6 Happy Hearts Happy Minds session	
Fri	Music Art Practical Cook. PE S5/6 English Physics Biology History Geography Psychology		S5 PE Session				

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Term 4 Key Dates

Tues	19 th April	Term begins
Tues	26 th April	SQA Exams begin
Fri	29 th April	S3 Tracking Report 2 issued
Fri	13 th May	S1 Tracking Report 2 issued
Mon	23 rd May	Timetable changes
Weds	1 st June	SQA Exams end
Thurs	2 nd June	May Day Holiday
Fri	3 rd June	Jubilee Holiday
Mon	6 th June	Inservice Day 5 – school closed to pupils
Weds	8 th June	P7 Transition Day 1
Thurs	9 th June	P7 Transition Day 2 and P7 Parents' Event
Weds	29 th June	Last day of term
Mon	15 th August	Inservice Day 1 – school closed to pupils
Tues	16 th August	Pupils return to school