



1. School Closure and related matters

The format of this school report has changed slightly to focus on school closure and related issues.

School Closure

There are no plans to re-open schools at the moment. We will re-open as and when the Scottish Government, and in turn, East Ayrshire Council deem it safe to do so. Until such times, remote learning and remote provision of as many of our other services as possible will continue.

The content of this report and the discussion at our meeting needs to be framed against the very clear position of East Ayrshire Council, the Scottish Government and teaching associations. Education delivered online cannot replicate the classroom, and our collective immediate priority is the health of every member of our school community. While staff are working extremely hard to support families and to action school business, we cannot lose sight of the fact that any expectation of service provision being in line with that during normal business is unrealistic and counterproductive. Similarly, school staff recognise that at different times during school closure, it may not be possible for all young people and families to engage with work set. We trust that when it is possible, young people will engage with work but fully understand that this situation is challenging for everyone.

As will be the case for families, school staff are not immune to the challenges of home learning or COVID-19 more broadly. Many staff are caring for school age children of their own, and/or dependents or relatives in high risk groups. Some are experiencing technical issues akin to those experienced by pupils and are sharing devices at home. Sadly, some staff have experienced significant loss during school closure. The same is true of young people attending our school and their families. Notwithstanding the above, we are confident that in the circumstances, we are well placed to provide education for as long as the school closure period continues, less the teething problems that are inevitable with such a sudden move to online delivery.

It is also important to consider that for different families and young people, different education priorities currently exist. For example, families of those in S4-S6 would expect as much immediate guidance as possible around SQA certification. At the same time, families of P7 or S6 leavers would expect immediate clarity on transition arrangements, while parents/carers of those in S1, S2 or S3 will wish the school to prioritise immediate timetable change and online learning provision.

While all of the above are shared priorities, the simultaneous pressure to deal with them is placing strain on an already tested system during this unprecedented period of school closure. Staff cannot access all IT systems we would usually access, and almost all matters out with provision of online learning content are being handled by a very small group of staff working in isolation. For very good reason, it is not possible for us to access the school building or secure as frequent or widespread access to our IT systems as would be the case if we were open. This presents challenges when addressing the aforementioned priorities.

SQA Certification 2020

SQA released a number of statements prior to the Easter break, and have now settled on a submission date of May 29th for all estimated bands for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses. No exams or coursework components will be marked.

Extract from SQA guidance released to parents/carers and available online at <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/93825.html>

Step 1 – Estimates

Your child's results will be based on estimate grades, which their teacher or lecturer will send to us by Friday 29 May. Schools and colleges have information on how to do this. An estimate grade is what teachers or lecturers would expect your child to achieve. They will use their professional knowledge and experience of how your child has performed through the year. An estimate grade is not just the result of one prelim or one project. It's an overall judgement based on all activity across the year.

Step 2 – Awarding

- We check and validate the information sent to us and adjust it, if necessary, to ensure consistency across all schools and colleges and with results from previous years.
- We use the estimated information, as well as previous results your child may have achieved, to produce their 2020 results.
- We will produce your child's results, using our national grades for each subject and level.

Step 3 - Results and Certification

- We process your child's results and issue them by 4 August. Please encourage your child to [sign-up to MySQA](#), so they receive their results by text and/or email.

Step 4 – Appeals

- If your child disagrees with their result, they should contact their school or college who will be able to use a free appeals service. This will enable the school or college to question your child's result. The school or college must have evidence to support their estimate.
- The evidence will be reviewed by senior examiners. We will provide schools and colleges with further details on this service as soon as we can.

Further extract from the FAQ on the SQA website:

Experienced teachers and lecturers will review all the evidence that is available to them to assess whether you have met the course aims. They have a strong understanding of your performance and know how you compare to other learners in each department, and in previous years.

Your teachers and/or lecturers will take account of any available work that you have completed throughout the course. Using their professional judgement, and their knowledge of your work and your progress so far, they will make an estimate of the grade and band you would have achieved under normal circumstances.

Estimate grades will be based on your demonstrated and inferred attainment of the required skills, knowledge and understanding for each course at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher.

We will then have the information we need to adjust estimates where necessary, and to ensure consistency — both across the country and in comparison, with previous years.

Key dates for school staff

The following arrangements are in place to assist school staff in both understanding the process and in submitting estimates.

Week beginning 27 April 2020

- We are designing an online course, which we hope will be helpful to you, to take you through the process of determining estimated grades, bands and rank order. This will be available on [SQA Academy](#) and we will let you know how to access it.

Week beginning 4 May 2020

- Centre Tables, which will provide information on the estimates that you have made, as well as the attainment achieved by your learners each August, for the past three years. The information will be provided for each subject and level.

Week beginning 11 May 2020

- We are working hard to ensure that a new service on our centre portal, SQA Connect, will be available to you. This will provide a list of all your learners for whom we have an accepted entry and is where you will input the required estimate information.

As you can see, the school level training is set to be released this week. Various meetings across EAC and within each school are ongoing as staff come to a shared understanding of the guidance. Ultimately, staff will follow the guidance issued by the SQA to determine an estimate grade for each N5, Higher and Advanced Higher pupil in each subject area. Given that this estimate will inform certification directly, we do not anticipate that we will release estimates to young people prior to certification. This is because the SQA clearly stated that they will 'check and validate the information sent and adjust where necessary'. As the certifying body, we will respect their role in determining an overall award. To release our estimates prior to SQA quality assurance would only serve to either increase anxiety or heighten expectation in advance of any final decisions taken by the SQA. We will confirm our definite position on this in due course but hope that parents/carers recognise that estimates are not final gradings, and as such, sharing estimates serves no direct benefit to young people or families prior to certification.

We do fully appreciate that this is an incredibly anxious time for our families and young people and wish to reassure you of the fact that staff are working hard to determine an estimate in keeping with course performance and in line with emerging SQA guidance.

P7 Transition to S1

Our P7 transition events can no longer take place. However, Mr Boyle and our Pastoral Care team have our transition packs ready to go. We are currently determining how best to share these packs with you and plan to create a dedicated page on our website for our incoming P7 cohort. We anticipate that this page will be live in mid to late May.

S6 Leavers

We are acutely aware of the fact that our S6 did not have the opportunity to conclude the year as they may have liked. On their impromptu final day, we held a farewell assembly and our S6 were given a guard of honour stretching the length of the street area. While small gestures, we did make every effort to allow them to mark their final day with us. Our pupil yearbook team have sent the final draft to Miss Quigley and Mr Kane, and the yearbook will be issued digitally in the first instance, with a hard copy to follow thereafter. S6 students remain enrolled until summer and we encourage them to make contact with school staff should they need assistance or support. In time, and once school re-opens, we do intend to invite S6 back to school for a more formal farewell.

For obvious reasons, the prom had to be cancelled. We will determine the viability or otherwise of re-scheduling in consultation with our outgoing S6 pupils and their families.

We do ask for patience from our outgoing S6 at the moment. We are committed to marking your time with us when we can and anticipate that June provides the most likely opportunity for us to formulate concrete plans that we can share with you.

Communication

School staff have offered regular and at times comprehensive updates via Twitter, the school app, Facebook and the website since school closure. We hope the information shared has been helpful to you. We encourage all parents/carers to download the school app and to follow us on Facebook and Twitter. Access to the SMS system is sporadic at the moment, and we cannot send out emails for now as the exported files are held on the school server. As such, the app and social media are the best ways to keep up to date with school matters during school closure.

Pastoral Care and supporting families

East Ayrshire Council implemented a range of measures to ensure that families requiring free school meals, access to sanitary products and direct support from social services and school staff are able to do so. We have submitted a list of seventy pupils to the local authority for whom regular contact with school staff is necessary for a wide range of reasons. Pastoral Care teachers are checking in with some families on a near daily basis and will continue to do so. Team Around the Child meetings are also still taking place remotely and in collaboration with colleagues from social work.

Our counselling services (Barnardos and Upstream) are maintaining or offering contact with almost all young people and families open to their services prior to school closure. Mr Kane and Mr Boyle delivered a variety of items to different families within our community. Educational Psychologists continue to engage with specific families and our PEF funded breakfast provision via 'Magic Breakfast' is being delivered to some families along with free school meals.

The volume of ongoing Pastoral work brings into sharp focus the extent to which we are at the heart of the community for many of our families. We fully appreciate the fact that for some families, online learning is currently of secondary importance given uncertainty around employment and access to services. This closure period acutely highlights the extent to which St. Joseph's is more than a school in the traditional sense. I would like to thank all our partner agencies, SLT and Pastoral Care team for the wider work that we are maintaining despite school closure.

Now that Pastoral staff are in the routine of checking in with identified families and young people, we are in a position to open up communication channels for all other families and young people. Anyone wishing to make contact with Pastoral Care staff to raise a wellbeing concern should fill in the form found here:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=oyzTzM4Wj0KVQTctawUZKemCK91JmxBBla uv6O9Xj xUQzcwSE9QRIVRWDIyVkrDOVExNUUwQ0tDQy4u>

Staying Active During Lockdown and Faith Life

PE staff continue to share examples of activities young people and families can engage with via online learning platforms. In addition, we have shared a weekly challenge this morning and will continue to do so on a weekly basis.

St. Joseph's Church have shared some content to allow young people to continue to engage with their Parish and Faith. We will continue to share this via social media and are actively sourcing other links and materials that can be shared.

Timetable Change, Options and Advanced Highers

Our timetable schematic was finalised over the weekend, and Principal Teachers now have department level timetables. Principal Teachers will confirm the allocation of classes this week. That will then leave us one week to enter the new timetable on SEEMIS. However, access to SEEMIS is restricted to less users than would normally upload this data. We are aiming to change timetable by the 11th May, but we recognise that this may be ambitious given the time that it takes to manually transfer the timetable to SEEMIS. Further communication will be issued on Thursday 7th May. If we need to postpone, we will aim to move on the 18th May. We will be in a better position to advise on this by the 7th May.

It should be noted that our current S4 and S5 would not normally begin their new SQA courses until late May or early June, and as such any formal timetable change before this date will still provide the opportunity to engage in new courses earlier than would otherwise have been possible. I caution against any notion that this should be accelerated by default. The constraints we face in the absence of access to school and school systems are significant, and to expect by default that we can bring forward course start dates in the current circumstances would be unmerited. I ask for your patience as we do our best to change timetable earlier than planned for senior phase pupils.

Until timetable change, all pupils should continue to follow the advice and guidance of staff within Glow. There is nothing to prevent pupils from accessing either SCHOLAR (for some subjects only) or BBC Bitesize (for all subjects) should they wish to look at content covered in new courses. We are aware of some other schools implementing short term mechanisms by which some courses are starting online now. However, we have resisted this approach for two reasons. The first is that with around 150 pupils not yet engaging, we are reluctant to launch courses a month early until we can get them online. The second is that any short-term solution not synced with the new timetable will require unpicking to allocate pupils to the class teacher taking their class post timetable change – in essence duplicating a significant amount of work within a two or three week period. Our view is that it is better to migrate fully or not at all. If we successfully migrate by mid-May we are confident that we will be adequately prepared to deliver new courses for as long as school closure is mandated. If we opt for a short-term solution, any implementation will have to be re-done when we get to the point of timetable change (such is the manner in which Glow and SEEMIS synchronise data).

Options

In total, 444 pupils made 2752 choices. We need to revisit the options for 25 young people. Around half of the issues are to do with clashes between school and College provision. Pastoral staff will begin the process of re-interview at some point this week or early next week.

Our normal options procedures were curtailed somewhat by school closure. The options we have are usually double checked with all parents/carers and pupils to allow for the resolution of human error during capture. This is not possible at the time of writing. Significant time was invested in the creation of class lists without use of SEEMIS and those for our new S3 – S6 were issued to staff last week. However, there is no way to carry out a mail merge that can be issued to parents/carers and pupils. For now, we will proceed with the class lists we have and would encourage parents/carers pupils to note subject allocation at the point when our timetable changes. We would only anticipate a very small number of errors in allocation and will address those as they come to light.

It should be noted that in some cases, while subjects selected could be delivered, re-interview may still take place if we are concerned about the suitability of options made. Similarly, we acknowledge that after SQA certification, it is normal for some pupils to change their mind about options for next session. Now that the schematic is finalised, any pupil wishing to make changes needs to do so within the column structure that exists for each year group and only after timetable change.

Advanced Highers

Our normal timeline in relation to Advanced Higher provision is to determine the school timetable and to then evaluate remaining staff availability against demand and local consortium arrangements. However, this usually happens in mid-June after our new S6 would return from study leave. We are aware of all Advanced Highers selected and will begin the process of examining our availability against choices in mid to late May. We will then advise on any Advanced Highers that we can offer at that time, and source the Advanced Higher offerings elsewhere in East Ayrshire. To some extent, we are dependent upon the timetable change dates at the other local schools and cannot say with certainty that decisions around Advanced Higher will be made in line with our normal timeline.

Online Learning

a) Pupils with no internet access

To the best of our knowledge, three pupils are without internet access. Printed work was delivered to two of the three last week. We were unaware of the third pupil not having access until a Pastoral check in last week and intend to collate and deliver content as soon as possible.

b) Pupils with no device but with internet access

Mr Boyle and Mr Kane delivered devices to twelve of our young people across the authority area who have internet access but no device. In addition, unallocated iPads from our school were used by other schools in EAC for the same purpose and at the request of the local authority.

c) Online guides

A variety of online guides were created and shared on our website and via social media. The majority of issues being raised are addressed in these guides and we encourage pupils and parents/carers to use the guides first before logging a call with us.

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/ea/stjosephsacademy/2020/04/21/it-issues-guides-to-help/>

d) Engagement Survey

A total of 382 pupils completed the engagement survey. All other pupils will be contacted in due course. We cannot access cohort level activity reports within Glow, but our Pastoral staff are looking at individual access records for anyone who did not complete the survey. We are prioritising contact with our current S1-S5 pupils who have not logged in since school closure. Our estimate is that around 150 young people have not accessed Glow or made contact with us to report IT problems. We are acting on this as a priority. Mr Kane replied to all 85 pupils who had reported issues. Pupils should check their Glow mail if they have not yet read the advice offered.

e) Reporting faults

Now that our engagement survey has closed, we have launched a reporting form which will stay live for the duration of school closure. It can be accessed here:

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/ea/stjosephsacademy/2020/04/26/report-it-issues-during-school-closure/>

Overall, the school issued iPads seem to be the most restrictive device to use at the moment as the firewall prevents access to YouTube and some other links. We have logged a call with EAC to resolve a google classrooms issue on school iPads and hope to advise on resolution this week or next.

f) Multi-platform delivery

A small number of parents/carers have asked why we decided to offer delivery via Groups, Teams and Google Classrooms. Groups is not an online learning platform but is a shared email area. In order to provide content as quickly as we could, we launched groups as a means by which all pupils and staff could access a shared email space in Glow, and prior to the launch of the majority of Teams or Classrooms. Groups is a short-term implementation designed to provide baseline provision accessed via email.

Use of groups in this way ensured that provision could begin the day after school closure and allowed staff time to set up dedicated learning areas. Some staff may elect to use Groups for the duration of school closure, but gradually most staff are migrating to Teams or Google Classrooms.

The main reason for using both Teams and Google Classrooms is to avoid a situation where we have a single point of failure. That is to say if we chose one platform only, and that platform was down for an extended period or inaccessible to certain users (which is the case as evidenced by our engagement survey) then we would either have no provision at all or render our provision inaccessible to a sub group of families in the long term and for the duration of school closure. In addition, those staff active online prior to school closure were already using either Teams or Google. Duplication will not generally take place (i.e. there will not be one Team and one Google Classroom for every class). However, staff and pupil proficiency in both protects against system failure in one as described earlier.

Teams is generally regarded as having greater functionality than Classrooms but has a steep learning curve for staff and pupils. Google Classroom is more accessible but less functional. Avoiding a mandate to use one over the other also supports staff engagement, as almost all staff will be able to setup and use Google Classrooms fairly quickly, while those who have already invested significant time using Teams can continue to do so.

ShowMyHomework was not a viable online learning option as it did not initially allow for the submission of work on the day that it was set. This was only rectified last week. Staff are beginning to share deadlines again via ShowMyHomework after initially prioritising the need to upload content for pupils to access elsewhere in Glow.

It is our opinion that multi-platform delivery is only a long-term issue if access problems exist on either platform. If young people use the planners on our site, and reference the directory we will issue this week, we anticipate that they will quickly get used to using different platforms depending upon their teacher or subject. Provided access issues are resolved, it takes less time to switch between Teams and Google Classroom than it does to walk from one end of the school to the other. That is to say, the migration to online learning is like the experience of P7 pupils joining our school. Initially, it is tricky to find different classes, but routine gradually removes this as an issue. This is reflected by the fact that over 300 of our 385 respondents report no issue online and the majority of the 85 encountering issues can now access both platforms.

Finally, in almost all other areas of IT use, pupils are used to multi-platform access e.g. Android games and Xbox/Playstation, TikTok and Instagram etc.

g) Directory of classes

There are over two hundred class groups within the school. To allow staff time to setup learning areas, we began collating an index of classes against the online learning platform in use last week. A sample was shared with our Parent Council Chair over the weekend. At some point this week, we will issue this directory and we encourage young people to use it in conjunction with the planners emailed to them and shared on our website. Once we change timetable, a similar directory will be issued to reflect new class groupings.

h) Planners

As mentioned above, we have issued planners to assist young people and families in tracking where they can find learning for each subject area. Unlike a primary setting, some pupils, particularly in S1 and S2 may have up to fourteen different teachers. The planners will help clarify where to go when signed into Glow. Again, we anticipate that a week or two after timetable change pupils will depend less on their planner, but it will help in the short term. The planner files can be accessed here:

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/ea/stjosephsacademy/2020/04/21/pupil-planner-to-track-location-of-online-learning-materials/>

i) Staying safe online

Over the weekend, RespectMe, released online video guidance for parents/carers concerned about online safety and online bullying during school closure. These clips can be accessed via our Twitter feed.

<https://twitter.com/respectme/status/1253665656807067648>

Young people are under the care of their parents/carers at this time, and we encourage vigilance when online. School staff cannot take direct action as a result of online issues experienced on personal devices at home. However, we can offer general support to parents/carers and pupils. Should you have a concern, please either use the Contact Us page on our school website or fill in the wellbeing concern form mentioned earlier and released online today. Likewise, if something happens within one of our online classes, pupils should, in the first instance notify the class teacher who will pass the matter onto Pastoral staff or SLT colleagues for further action where necessary.

S1 Reports

S1 reports were due to be issued during the week beginning 18th May. Unfortunately, we have had to postpone the completion of S1 Reports for the following reasons:

- Staff cannot access the system used to submit reports
- Staff cannot access the school server, where assessment information is retained
- Concerns around the potential to breach GDPR regulations if not using SEEMIS to generate and share reports

Consideration was given to the submission of reports via Microsoft Word. However, given that assessment data is not held at home or on Glow, the relevance of generic reports sent via Word is questionable. This would also involve one member of staff copying and pasting over 1700 reports, before collating reports by pupil. Even then, there is no clear mechanism by which reports could be issued en-masse as we cannot access the parental email list from home.

Ultimately, the completion of S1 reports during school closure is not viable and also carries the risk of breaching GDPR legislation in the absence of access to the secure reporting system. This matter was discussed with the local authority, teaching associations and the Chair of the Parent Council, and all were unanimous in support of the school's decision to postpone reporting for S1.

If we re-open in June, consideration will be given to trying to issue reports by summer. If we remain closed until summer, we would hope to bring forward Parents' Evening for S2 to as early as possible in the new term.

Consultation on Willowbank

In light of school closure, the proposed relocation of Willowbank's Senior Phase pupils is not being discussed or progressed at local authority level at the time of writing. It is our understanding that in time, the proposal will reach cabinet again for discussion, but for now other COVID-19 matters have understandably taken priority. Until such times as the matter is raised at cabinet, there will be no further update from school staff.

2. Staffing

We have now welcomed the following staff to our school community.

Mrs Lynne Cunningham (PT Social Subjects)
Ms Susan Littlejohn (Clerical assistant)
Mrs Shona Devine (Teacher of RE)
Miss Laura Cathie (PT Pastoral Care)

We are delighted to welcome you to our school community and look forward to working with you in the years ahead. In addition, we have either welcomed back, or will shortly welcome back both Mrs Duthie and Mrs McGeer from maternity leave.

I would also like to record my thanks to Miss Rachael Devanney for so ably leading our Social Subjects faculty while Acting Faculty Head.

We bid farewell to Mr Paton (English) and Mr McGarry (Technical Technician). Mr Paton was with us covering Mrs Duthie's maternity leave and Mr McGarry leaves us after over thirty years of service to our community. We wish Mr Paton well in his next post and wish Mr McGarry every happiness in his retirement.

Our final staffing complement for session 2020/21 will not be finalised until late May, following the outcome of an authority wide staffing exercise. As is always the case, the authority wide exercise will involve the allocation of NQTs and redeployments where necessary and prior to external recruitment. We will advise on staffing changes and any vacancies to be advertised as and when we can, but not before late May.