



Dear Parents/Carers,

Reporting

We are unable to facilitate face to face Parents' Evenings this session. Consideration was given to telephone based or online meetings but neither solution was considered viable when scaled across a secondary context. Instead, we will report to parents/carers as follows:

	Tracking	Interim or Update Report	Full Report
S1	December 2020	February 2021	May 2021
S2	-	April 2021	December 2020
S3	December 2020	June 2021	February 2021
S4	November 2020 January 2021	December 2020	March 2021
S5 and S6	November 2020 January 2021	April 2021	March 2021

Tracking reports provide a basic overview of progress (on track or off track) and behaviour, effort and homework grades. Tracking grades for S2 courses will be included in full reports issued in December 2020. We would normally send one tracking report per year. This session S4-S6 groups will receive two tracking reports.

Interim or Update reports (depending upon the time of the year) will provide more detail than a tracking report, and at least two key strengths and two areas for improvement per subject area. Interim reports do not normally feature in our reporting cycle but are included in response to the challenges associated with not offering parents' evenings.

Full reports are extensive and should provide a full overview of progress, areas for improvement and potential pathways.

I thank you for your patience and know that staff are working on S2 full reports, S4 interim reports and tracking for S1, S3, S4 and S5/6 at the time of writing.

Consultation on the potential relocation of Willowbank S1 to S6 to a bespoke area of St. Joseph's Academy

East Ayrshire Council will release central communication for all schools impacted by the above consultation in the next few days. I will share this with you as soon as possible and would encourage all parents/carers to participate in the forthcoming consultation.

Litter

While general conduct in school is broadly very good, we continue to face challenges around litter. In particular, litter is left on the astro-turf pitch and in corridors and stairwells on a daily basis. I ask that all parents/carers remind pupils of the need to use bins as appropriate. I also visited all classes to express my displeasure at the prospect of our cleaning and catering staff having to pick up circa one hundred items of litter per day.

During a time where vigilance around hygiene and cleanliness are vital, it is extremely disappointing to see that the work of colleagues within our catering and cleaning teams is being undermined by a significant minority of pupils on a daily basis.

If the young people concerned were to exemplify the level of good conduct evident in the overwhelming majority of lessons, then the issue would disappear within days. I look forward to more positive reports from my colleagues in catering and cleaning in the coming weeks and thank you in advance for reinforcing the importance of using bins as necessary.

SQA – National 5 Courses

SQA are in the process of releasing further guidance for National 5 qualifications. All guidance should be released by Thursday 19th November. Given that there are no formal exams at National 5 level, all assessment judgements will be based upon work undertaken in school. Some of this work will take the form of practical activities, while other work will be folio based or delivered in a controlled and timed setting e.g. class tests or prelims.

Across the teaching profession in Scotland, there is ongoing legitimate debate around the relevance or otherwise of prelim examinations at National 5 level. This debate has resulted in the circulation of many contradictory messages over the past week or so.

In some subject areas, there may be no obvious need to offer a formal prelim, particularly where the subject guidance released by SQA makes no reference to exam style assessment or similar. However, in other subjects, staff are of the view that a prelim or similar will generate robust evidence that can be used to inform teacher judgement.

I would like to stress that our staff will work within SQA guidance to determine the best form of assessment for use in each subject area. While some commentators may express a view that no prelims should be scheduled, I would prefer to rely on the professional skills and abilities of my colleagues within St. Joseph's and across East Ayrshire when determining what is best for our learners. Where staff conclude that prelims are necessary in a particular subject area, we will proceed with a prelim exam. However, in other subjects, alternative forms of assessment may be best.

It is our intention to schedule two assessment blocks at National 5 level. During an assessment block, pupils studying for National 5s can expect to complete prelims or work that will contribute towards a folio or practical task. The first assessment block will run in January, the second in April. After considering all SQA documentation, we will release definite communication around the assessment methodology to be used in each subject area.

It should also be noted that most subjects allow for the use of up to four pieces of evidence when determining progress within a subject. This means that in some subject areas, the assessment blocks in January and April will not represent the totality of evidence used to inform professional judgement.

Anxiety around absence during periods of assessment

As a community, we are very fortunate in that no school level contact tracing has been necessary since August. While we hope that this continues, we also realise that on an individual basis, some pupils will be directed to self-isolate due to contact tracing outwith school. There is no escaping the fact that isolation during a period of assessment means that some young people may miss out on the completion of assessment activities. Please be assured that we are working to devise checks and balances that will support the administration of assessment activities should a young person require to complete work at a different time to their peers.

SQA – Higher and Advanced Higher Courses

At the moment, exams are still scheduled to take place at Higher and Advanced Higher levels. As such, there will be prelim diet in January for those studying Highers and Advanced Highers. A formal prelim timetable will be released to pupils in early December. As a contingency in the event of later cancellation of exams, we will also provisionally schedule an April assessment block at Higher and Advanced Higher level.

Supported Study

We are unable to offer after school supported study, but can facilitate lunch time provision on the understanding that pupils can only attend in their class group and using the same classroom as they would when attending a timetabled lesson. We are unable to amalgamate sections during supported study as we need to maintain class 'bubbles' and seating plans. All S4-S6 pupils were sent a copy of our extensive schedule and we encourage pupils to attend as many sessions as possible. We will also post the schedule on our website over the course of this weekend.

I appreciate that this letter addresses only some areas of school life. Please do not hesitate to contact the school should you have any further enquiries.

Kind Regards



Mr Kane
Head Teacher