



BELL BAXTER HIGH SCHOOL

Weekly Update

Monday 23rd March, 2020

WHOLE SCHOOL MESSAGES

Dear Parents & Carers

Two significant statements affecting education were made yesterday. One by the Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, and the other by the Chief Executive of SQA & Scotland's Chief Examining Officer, Fiona Robertson.

Both statements have generated lots of questions, for us in Bell Baxter, for young people within the Senior Phase and their families and we are working through the detail of this on an ongoing basis.

The Deputy First Minister informed parliament that the SQA exam diet in 2020 cannot go ahead and he has requested that the SQA put in place an 'alternative certification model'.

In terms of how young people secure a grade when there is no formal examination, our understanding at this stage from the limited information available to us is that pupils' achievements will be recognised based on the completion of SQA coursework and the teacher estimate grade which is generated based on a range of evidence including prelims, formal assessments and also teacher professional judgement.

Teachers will be generating estimate grades over the next couple of weeks. Some of these judgements are subject to SQA verification, which has still to take place. Understandably, a number of young people and families are requesting estimates at this stage. We understand the anxiety and concern around this, but we are not in a position to generate these grades yet as we want to ensure the estimates are based on as much up-to-date evidence of pupil performance. This is essential for the integrity and reliability of the qualifications in these challenging circumstances.

The SQA has stated learners will receive their results no later than 4 August, as planned. All candidates are [strongly encouraged to sign up to MySQA](#) the online text service as a direct way to receive their results. Please bear in mind estimates do not automatically become results as must pass through the SQA verification process noted above.

Although there will be no formal exams, schools are expected to continue to work with young people in order to complete outstanding coursework e.g. projects, assignments, portfolios and dissertations. These should be completed to the SQA's existing deadlines, or earlier where possible.

Since the announcement, we have been working to draw up a programme that allows a proportionate and manageable approach to addressing this commitment, which does not disadvantage any young person either on grounds of attainment or health. Therefore, over the next week, we will target smaller groups of young people to invite in to school in order to carry out assignments under exam conditions. You will be emailed directly to inform you when your child should be in school and for what purpose. In some cases, work will be able to be completed at home and teachers will liaise with young people to make arrangements on how this can be supported. There are a number of practical cookery exam groups over Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday next week and parents have already been notified by email.

Monday 23 March: AH Physics (project arrangements); AH Art (folio arrangements).

Where any young person is unable to attend school to complete coursework due to ill health, or if they are self-isolating, then they will be subject to the SQA exceptional circumstances service. Details of this service can be found on the SQA website.

Please be reassured that all staff at Bell Baxter are working very hard and I know will continue to do everything possible to support pupils through this. It has been a privilege to work through this very challenging context with our dedicated team of staff - they have been outstanding. I hope that all families appreciate that over the next week teachers will be prioritising the Senior Phase pupils for the reasons outlined. We are in this for the long-haul, potentially months. Over the coming weeks teachers will build on the digital learning resources to maintain learning and are able to support this learning remotely.

Finally, we understand and appreciate the high level of concern. Our young people are under huge pressure and they must remain our priority. Through no fault of their own they are most directly affected, and I feel deeply for them. Rest assured that we care a great deal and will be doing all we can to work through this as a school community to ensure the least impact on their health and well-being, their learning and their attainment.

We will get through this. Please look after yourselves and genuine thanks for your ongoing support.

Carol Ann Penrose, Rector

Stay Up-to-Date

Stay up-to-date with all the news from Bell Baxter High School by following us on social media:



Parent Council Meeting (CANCELLED)

The Bell Baxter Parent Council meeting that was scheduled for **Wednesday 25th March**, has been cancelled in light of the Coronavirus. As soon as there is a rescheduled meeting, we will let you know.

Karen Brown, Chairperson

Looking After Mental Health

Understandably, most of the talk right now centres around the coronavirus. While this is vital to get information across, it can also be scary and affect the mental health of young people and adults alike. This can be especially exacerbated by the need to social distance or self-isolate.

Some quick tips to take care of your, and your child's mental health:

- Try to avoid speculation on the virus outbreak
- Use trusted sources for your information such as gov.uk, the nhs or Health Protection Scotland
- Follow the advice given – wash your hands, don't touch your face
- Try to stay connected – phone, email, social media, Skype or contact a helpline
- Talk to your children – keep them in the loop and explain things to them if you can
- Check in with those who are vulnerable – phone your granny or friends who live alone
- Disconnect from the media for a while – let yourself have time off from the news
- Anticipate anxiety and stress – you know you will be upset so try some calming techniques and avoid triggers such as smoking, drinking or eating junk food

For more information visit: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>, <https://www.mind.org.uk/> or the [NHS](#)

The most important thing to remember is that you're not alone. Talk to someone, whether that's a friend, family member or someone professionally trained to help.

If you need help, or need to talk to someone, please contact:

Samaritans: 116113 (available 24/7)

NHS 24 – 111 (available 24/7)

Breathing Space: 0800 83 85 87

Childline: 0800 1111

They are all free and confidential.

Library Books

As has been previously announced, the school will be closed from Friday 20th March for an as yet undetermined time. This obviously includes the school library.





We would like assure pupils who have library books not to worry. Just keep them with you, read them as many times as takes your fancy and return them to the library when school reopens.

Coronavirus Information for Young People

Young Scot have put together a fantastic resource for young people all about the coronavirus. It's got everything from information about the virus, how it might affect people, tips on dealing with the outbreak, handwashing advice, mental health advice, relaxation exercises, a jargonbuster and so much more.



Visit: <https://young.scot/campaigns/national/coronavirus> to access all the resources available.

 <p>Get Informed</p> <p>Featured</p>	 <p>Get Informed</p>	 <p>External</p>	 <p>Get Informed</p>
What is Coronavirus and How Might It Affect Me? What is COVID-19? What are the symptoms of coronavirus and how to take steps to prevent it. Plus, what to do if you think you might have coronavirus.	How to Look After Your Mental Wellbeing It's important to look after yourself when there is lots of worrying news. Here's some tips on how to do so.	Young Scot's TikTok Handwashing Tutorial Each step, on both hands, for 20 seconds! Handwashing tutorial by @young.scot on TikTok.	Relaxation Exercises If you feel stressed, or are prone to panic attacks, it can be extremely useful to learn how to control your breathing. It can make you feel relaxed and able to concentrate better.

Skills Development Scotland / Career Services

Due to COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and the closure of the school, Skills Development Scotland cannot deliver career services face to face, but they are still there to help. You can contact your school Careers Advisers, for career information, advice and guidance or visit www.myworldofwork.co.uk.



Alison: Supporting young people in Douglas, Dawson & Bell – Alison.flint@sds.co.uk

Sharon: Supporting young people in Westport, Howe & Baxter – Sharon.Lennie@sds.co.uk

REMINDERS

- **Parental Contact Details**

Please ensure your contact details are up-to-date to allow the school to keep you informed. Email bellbaxterhs.enquiries@fife.gov.uk or phone 01334 659459.

- **School Trips**

In light of recent advice from the government, all school trips overseas have now been cancelled until further notice. We will be in touch at a later date with next steps. We hope that trips planned later in 2020 will go ahead as planned.

British Schools Judo Champion

Huge congratulations to George Brown of S5, who won the gold at the British Schools Judo Championship on Saturday at the EIS Sheffield. George won all his contests in the under 83kg category and is now the British Schools Champion.



Scottish School Athletics

Well done to Cian McCrickard, Isla Thoms, Hannah Staal, Esmee Thoms and Jen Pickard who all competed in the Scottish Schools' Athletics Association Cross Country 2020 Event earlier this month.



Isla won her age category and went on to be asked to compete in the Schools' International Cross-Country event. Sadly this event was subsequently cancelled, but we still want to recognise this fantastic achievement. Well done for being selected to run for Scotland, Isla!

World Challenge Group – Vietnamese Cooking

Recently the World Challenge Group got together to try their hand at preparing delicious Vietnamese dishes. They made Nem Prawn, Prawn Spring Rolls and Chicken Pho. Afterwards, the group sat down to sample what they had made. And the result? Delicious!





Statement by the Chief Executive of the SQA and Scotland's Chief Examining Officer – Thursday 19th March



This is an unprecedented situation, and the closure of schools for an extended period will affect almost every family across Scotland.

The Scottish Qualifications Authority has recently been working through a range of scenarios in relation to the exam diet, including disruption and postponement. However, as the Deputy First Minister has outlined in Parliament today, the exam diet in 2020 cannot go ahead and I have been asked by the Deputy First Minister to develop an alternative certification model.

That work has started, at pace, and I will say more on that as soon as I can. What I can say now is that we want to ensure that we have as much information on the achievements of learners as possible. That is why the Deputy First Minister has asked schools and colleges to continue to work with young people to ensure that any units and coursework are completed and estimated grades are provided by teachers, drawing on the available evidence gathered throughout the year, to SQA's existing deadlines, or earlier if that is possible. For many learners, we will also have prior attainment information which will be helpful to us.

I fully appreciate that this will be an uncertain time for learners who have worked hard throughout the year and will now, with their families, be worried about what this means for them. Everyone here at SQA will do their utmost, with the support of the education system, to ensure that their hard work is rightly and fairly recognised, and allows them to proceed to further learning or work.

We will work to ensure that learners receive their results no later than 4 August, as planned. We are considering more fully the impact this decision will have on our exceptional circumstances and post-results services. I will confirm that we will offer a free post-results service to ensure that schools and colleges continue to have a mechanism to question any result.

Everyone at SQA is fully committed to delivering for Scotland's young people at this exceptionally difficult time.

Fiona Robertson, SQA Chief Executive and Scotland's Chief Examining Officer