

Covid-19 Update for Parents/ Carers 27/3/20

It is hard to believe that we have been learning remotely for just a week. So much has changed during that time, and we have all been on a very steep learning curve in this short period of time. Some of our staff and many of our pupils had had little or no experience of using MS Teams, Glow, or video conferencing but in a few (long) days the level of expertise in many has grown hugely. We have been truly learning together despite being separated. We hear a lot about developing skills for the future in our young people and this type of independent, remote working is very high on the list of skills for the future.

This week has been very much about learning about the systems we are trying to use and staying in touch. Pupils have been doing classwork and staying in touch with their subject learning, but as the time extends we need to maintain focus on aspects of our curriculum; whether it is the Senior Phase or Broad General Education.

Senior Phase

The information coming out about SQA qualifications is being regularly updated and, with the removal of external assessment this year, what is clear is that schools and the SQA will need to draw on a wide body of evidence to back up their professional judgement. Ultimately it is the SQA who will make the decision on what grade a young person is awarded, but we can continue to use the time we have to provide and collate evidence of the level of work a young person is capable of. I have heard of young people who are upset that the work they have done towards assignments is now wasted: it isn't. This will be valuable evidence of the work they are capable of, and will be judged alongside formal assessments, informal assessments and classwork in helping to determine the estimated grade. The body of evidence that teachers have to draw on is still being accumulated. Although we have been told not to undertake further formal assessments such as Prelims, students can still send their teachers work they have done and are doing. For most of our students, formal learning will continue after the course they are currently taking has ended. It may be at a higher level in school, at college or university or through work-based learning. Learning is like any other skills in that the more you do it, the better you get at it. So as well as contributing to their current course, by continuing learning young people are also developing and maintaining skills for the future.

Broad General Education

The learning in BGE is no less important, indeed just like the foundations of a building, it is just as important as what goes on top. Students in BGE do a large number of subjects compared to the Senior Phase. At the moment there seems like an almost overwhelming amount of work on sites like ShowMyHomework. As we progress we will start to organise this so it is spread better through the week. Staff are putting up lots of work at the moment - just to be safe. Don't let it overwhelm the students. We would expect them to be doing a bit of everything but your family can plan their work around other family activities. The key thing is that they are learning something, and that core areas like Literacy, Numeracy and Health & Wellbeing are progressing.

Support for pupils

Pupil support staff have been working out ways to stay in touch with families whilst we are all away from school – and for some these contacts are already taking place. These might be emails, MSTeams or personal contact on the phone. Free school meals have been distributed to collection points across the ASG and our normal offer of free sanitary products continued through these locations. From next week the Keith ASG Hub will start at Keith Primary School, for the families of key-workers who have no other childcare arrangements. These are being staffed by staff from Primary, Secondary and other agencies and we are all grateful for the staff who have volunteered to do this.

The future

None of us know for how long we will continue to be in this position, but whilst we are, please try and make the best of it for the benefit of all of our young people. Whilst trying to keep learning going, our primary responsibility remains keeping young people happy, healthy and safe.

Try to enjoy our 2 week holiday which has now started. It may be that some learning activities will help maintain a routine and break up the day or you may wish to take a total break from this. Do try to get your hour of fresh air exercise while we still can and the weather is being kind. I hope you all stay safe and well.

Kind regards

Liz Bain

Acting Rector

KGS

27th March 2020