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### **Education and Families**

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### **Update 8 October 2020**

#### **Dear Parents and Carers**

I wanted to send you a brief update before we break up for the October holiday. It has now been, incredibly, more than nine weeks since we returned to school on 11 August. Those weeks have passed very quickly and there is a real sense of calm and purpose around the school. Young people are working hard and relationships have been excellent since we returned.

The safety measures we have put in place are working well and young people are following the guidelines. I wanted to thank you for your help in ensuring that your child brings a face covering to school each day and follows the hygiene procedures in place.

#### **Tracking Reports (S4-S6)**

The first set of tracking reports for senior phase (S4-6) are due to be completed by the end of October and will be sent to you week beginning 2 November 2020. This will provide you with information on your child's progress since August.

#### **Statement by the Deputy First Minister – SQA Qualifications 2021**

As you may now be aware the Scottish Government announced changes yesterday to the way in which National 5 courses will be assessed this session. I take some reassurance from the deputy first minister's statement that the Scottish Government will do three key things:

- learn from last year;
- consult teachers and educationalists; and
- listen to the experts in the design of awarding systems.
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**National 5 courses** will be assessed this session using an alternative certification approach. This will be based on teacher judgement supported by assessment resources and quality assurance. There will be no final examination in 2021 for National 5 courses.

SQA has also published broad guidance on evidence gathering and estimation, with a very clear focus on the quality, not quantity, of evidence. This will be followed after the October break by subject specific guidance on the work that young people need to complete for each subject they are studying this year.



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Higher and Advanced Higher examinations are planned to start on Thursday 13 May 2021 and finish on Friday 4 June 2021, with Results Day on Tuesday 10 August 2021.

SQA will publish the full exam timetable at the end of October.

I know this is a continuing worry for young people and parents. Please be assured that we will do everything we can to keep you informed of SQA developments and updates as we receive them. We will also do everything we can to ensure that every young person is given the best opportunities to meet the requirements of the new certification approach and that you are kept up to date on your child's progress. I will write to you again later in October with updates.

### **October Holiday**

School closes tomorrow Friday (9 October) at 2.55pm and reopens on Monday 19 October at 8.55am. I hope you have a great week with your families wherever you and whatever you are able to do in the current situation. Stay safe.

### **Face Coverings in Scottish Secondary Schools**

As you know staff and pupils must now wear face coverings when:

- teachers and young people are moving about the school in corridors and confined communal areas (including toilets),
- travelling on school transport;

Please remind your child to follow the rules on face coverings and to ensure that they bring their own face coverings to school each day.

### **First Year Pupils – Lunchtime**

Once again, I would ask parents of all year groups, but particularly first year, to encourage your child to remain in school at lunchtime. Children are crossing the very busy roundabout to get to shops and other takeaway restaurants despite our advice to remain in school.

If any of your children are having problems using the new Fusion Mobile App to order and buy snacks and drinks please let us know.

### **Parent Council AGM Monday 14 September**

We held the AGM on Teams. The outgoing chairperson Mr Jon McLeish provided an overview of the last quarter (June – August), as well as the report from the previous year. The departure of Mrs Maureen Tuddenham from the Parent Voice group was acknowledged and she was thanked for her long service and contribution to the group and to the school. The Secretary, Mrs Elaine McDade was also thanked for her work over the years, as she steps down from her role. The chair thanked all staff, whatever their role, for their support during the last school session. Mr Smith thanked Mr McLeish for his truly outstanding work over the previous two and a half years but looked forward to his continued contribution to the group in relation to the road / traffic improvements around the school. Mr Smith also thanked Mrs Tuddenham and Mrs McDade for their significant contribution to the group and their support for the school.

## **Election of New Office Bearers to the Parent Council**

New members were, nominated, seconded and voted to the positions of Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary.

- Chairperson – Mrs Sharon Boyle
- Vice Chair – Mr Stephen Walsh
- Secretary – Mrs Vicky Kinney

We wish the new office bearers every success in their new posts.

## **Newman Week (5-9 October)**

This week is Newman Week. Whilst we have not been able to do everything we would like to do to celebrate our patron's feast day we have been able to mark the occasion appropriately:

- Patronal Feast Day on Friday 9 October. Mass celebrated by His Lordship Bishop Toal and Fr. Denney. 50 S6 pupils will represent the school and wider community at our annual Feast Day Mass in the school theatre.
- Sponsored walk in school to raise funds for St. Andrew's Hospice on Wednesday 7 October for S1-S3.
- Activities afternoon on Friday 9 October – staff will be sharing their talents with young people in a range of practical and fun activities.
- Friday 9 October will be a non-uniform day – cost £2. £1 will go to St. Andrew's Hospice the other £1 to school fund to cover costs of the activities afternoon.

## **School Chaplain – Fr Paul Denney**

I would like to thank Fr Denney for all his hard work and commitment to the school since we returned in August. He has been carrying out a series of class visits and class masses over the last weeks. In addition, he celebrates mass for staff every Tuesday morning before classes begin. Father also led a beautiful commissioning service for our newly commissioned S6 Caritas candidates in the school oratory. All of this in addition to his full time work as newly appointed parish priest in St James Parish Coatbridge. Thank you.

## **Fr McGoldrick – St. Patrick's Coatbridge**

I would also like to wish Fr Kevin McGoldrick every best wish as he leaves St. Gerard's and Sacred Heart Parishes to become parish priest in St. Patrick's Coatbridge. Fr. McGoldrick has been a great support to the school and our prayers and best wishes go with him.

## **Breakfast Club**

Breakfast clubs are up and running once again. We have three separate breakfast clubs (S1/2/3) every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Breakfast available from 8.30am.

## **Virtual Awards Ceremonies**

It has been my absolute pleasure to be able to speak to pupils in S1-S6 over the last few days to recognise their achievements and their hard work in academic year 2019/20 and to present them with their certificates of achievement. Although we were unable to hold our normal ceremonies we feel it is important, perhaps even more so this year, to recognise their success.

I was able to congratulate the young people for achieving the highest standards of excellence – despite the challenges they faced – challenges not faced by any generation of young Scots in modern times. This makes their achievements even more worthy of recognition.

The coming academic year will also present our young people with challenges but I have no doubt they will rise to meet those challenges.

A brief word of thanks to your our parents and carers too. You will be justifiably proud of your child's achievements and I would like to thank you for your hard work and support for the school.

The virtual award ceremonies will be available to view online from tomorrow (9 October) on the school website.

#### **School meals – price increase**

I have been asked by the local authority to send you this letter. (Attached)

#### **Head teacher**

Mr Ross is continuing to recover at home and we hope to have him back with us when his recovery is complete. In the meantime, it is my pleasure to continue acting as head teacher.

With every best wish

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Smith', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Mr Robert Smith

Acting Head Teacher