

Our Ref:
Your Ref:
Contact: JM
Tel: 01236 794890
E-mail: enquiries@chrystonhigh.n-lanark.sch.uk
Date: 9th December 2020



Education and Families
Jonny Mitchell
Head Teacher
Chryston High School
Lindsaybeg Road
Chryston
G69 9DL
www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk

Dear Parent/Carer,

First and foremost, I hope this letter finds you safe and well. I also hope that you are looking forward to spending some precious time with family and loved ones over the Christmas break and that you find opportunities to rest and recharge, whilst keeping informed of the continuing national updates that impact on all of our lives.

Under normal circumstances a letter issued in December would highlight all of the exciting dates and events associated with our school community at this time of year. Although somewhat different this year, throughout the next week, we look forward to releasing our virtual 2020 School Awards Ceremony and Christmas Concert, in addition to celebrating lots of other traditional events such as our Christmas Jumper Day (funds raised going to St. Andrew's Hospice), Christmas lunch and Christmas Reflection Assembly. The Chryston High School December Family Newsletter will be published before the holidays as usual to highlight recent successes and provide updates on other relevant school business. The updated CHS Family Calendar will also be issued alongside the newsletter prior to the end of term.

The main reason for writing this letter is an acknowledgement to the recent Scottish Government announcement regarding the cancellation of 2021 SQA exams (National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher). I have attached Scottish Government correspondence to schools to this letter (below) for your information. I am aware that there is often a perception across communities that schools and Head Teachers are kept fully informed of discussions taking place at national level – I can assure you that this is most usually not the case (as in this instance) and that announcements made to the general public are often the first we are made aware.

January Assessment Fortnight (Mid Term Assessments)

I feel it necessary to remind you and all of our young people affected, that they are soon to engage in January (mid-term assessments, 18th Jan – 1st Feb). I must take this opportunity to stress to you that no young person in Chryston High School will be judged/graded on one assessment. They are designed to provide one assessment opportunity as part of a suite and range of assessments over the course of the session. These are in place as a checkpoint to measure progress to date. They are not 'prelim examinations', nor are they intended to be the definitive piece of evidence which would inform teacher estimates and judgement. Instead they will form part of the final portfolio of evidence which teachers will use for estimates. Final awarding of grades will require to be confirmed towards the end of May 2021, therefore, providing the potential of a further 5-6 months of learning, teaching, preparation and assessment. It goes without saying that as a school we actively encourage all of our young people to give the very best account of themselves in everything they do including assessments and they will be re-assured to be reminded that a 'prelim' (as they are formerly known) is another assessment for learning opportunity and another step along the way during the course. Thank you in advance for your patience and understanding and for working in partnership with us to ensure that young people are fully aware of this. I realise that there will potentially be some further anxieties fuelled through views/comments/opinions heard or read in the media (radio, television, news, social media etc.). We have spoken to all S5 & S6 pupils and almost all S4 pupils following the announcement to support them and I'd like to thank you in advance for your continued support in working in partnership with us to re-assure young people. You will understand that we now eagerly await further clarification, guidance and correspondence from SQA and we will communicate our next steps and programmes with you at the earliest opportunities as we move into the New Year.



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Finally, with reference to the recent announcement – I am more than confident that our young people will excel and deal with these challenges admirably as they have done with so many things throughout the past 10 months. Recent times have confirmed again just how inspiring they are, how resilient they are and how well they can persevere to succeed – important life skills that will stand them in such good stead throughout their futures. I take great comfort also from the fact that they are supported by outstanding families and school staff – after all, many of them are already record breakers with reference to last years' SQA results, many of which were the very best our school has ever recorded. That proves that if anyone can, they can. If anywhere can, we can – We are Chryston High School and I can assure you we will continue to support all young people to reach their potential. Whilst remaining realistic, together we will be ambitious. Thank you once again for your patience and understanding as the school staff team continues to work hard behind the scenes to interpret and implement all SQA guidance, protocol and expectations over the coming weeks/months ahead.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact us at school if you require any information/support.

I look forward to communicating with you again about 2021 SQA matters, in due course.

SQA Correspondence attached (below).

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonny Mitchell', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jonny Mitchell
Head Teacher

Appendix 1

SQA comments on Deputy First Minister's decision to cancel Higher and Advanced Higher exams – Tuesday 8th December, 2020:

The DFM has today announced further changes to the awarding of national courses in 2020-21, with now no external assessments of Higher or Advanced Higher courses. On this basis, the 2021 National Qualifications examination diet has been cancelled.

This announcement follows the statement made by the DFM on 7 October, confirming that there would be no external assessment, or examinations for National 5 courses.

Since the DFM's announcement on 7 October, I (Fiona Robertson) have chaired the 2021 National Qualifications Group with membership drawn from a broad range of stakeholders across Scottish education. This group, and its supporting working group, has co-created the alternative certification model that will be used to award National 5 courses this year. The details of this model have been announced by the group today (see below).

Based on the existing work of these groups on the contingency arrangements for Higher and Advanced Higher, we anticipate that the approach for Highers and Advanced Highers can now follow broadly the same model and timeline set for National 5 courses, but with more flexibility around the nature of the learner evidence needed to inform awards.

Following the announcement today, and at the request of the DFM, we will now work through the finer details of this approach at pace, to provide clarity and certainty to the system.

Fiona Robertson
Chief Executive and Scotland's Chief Examining Officer

Delivering National 5 results in 2020-21

8 December 2020

On 7 October, the Deputy First Minister announced that for 2020-21, National 5 will be based on teacher and lecturer judgement supported by quality assurance. Key educational stakeholders recognise the difficult times that everyone is experiencing and are working together to develop contingencies that support the delivery of National Qualifications in 2020-21.

The National Qualifications 2021 Group has overseen development of the quality assurance model which will support teachers and lecturers in providing provisional results for National 5 candidates in session 2020-21. Provisional results will be based on teacher and lecturer professional judgement of learner evidence. The model also confirms how provisional results will become final results.

Combined support from SQA, local authorities, colleges, independent schools and Education Scotland aims to enhance teachers' and lecturers' understanding of the consistent application of the national standard and in making accurate judgements. Schools and colleges can also ask SQA for further support and advice regarding the national standard should they find it helpful.

These processes should ensure trust and consistency across the country so that a National 5 awarded in the north of Scotland is of the same standard as one which is awarded in the south of Scotland and everywhere in between.

Most of the support will be provided in advance of schools and colleges submitting their provisional results by 28 May 2021. The model has five key stages:

Stage 1: November 2020 to March 2021 - *Teachers and lecturers can access subject specific guidance, assessment resources and Understanding Standards materials*

- Learning and teaching ongoing.
- Schools and colleges are supported by local and national subject networks.
- SQA provides ongoing Understanding Standards support for schools and colleges.
- Schools and colleges gather evidence and support learners, providing feedback.
- School, college and local authority quality assurance takes place.

Stage 2: end-January to beginning of April – *SQA requests, reviews and provides feedback on samples of assessment evidence from each school and college*

- Learning and teaching ongoing.
- Schools and colleges continue to gather evidence and support learners, providing feedback on progress as supported by existing evidence.
- School, college and local authority quality assurance continues.
- SQA samples candidate evidence from all schools and colleges, and provides feedback.
- Schools and colleges start to develop provisional results based on the available evidence and feedback from SQA sampling.
- Schools, colleges or local authorities can engage in dialogue with SQA where further support is required.

Stage 3: end March to 28 May - *Schools, colleges and local authorities will work through feedback and implement their own quality assurance of the provisional results*

- Learning and teaching ongoing.
- Schools and colleges continue to gather evidence and support learners, providing feedback on progress as supported by available evidence.
- Schools and colleges take actions in relation to SQA feedback.
- Schools and colleges carry out quality assurance checks. Heads of centre endorse the process and outcomes per subject.
- Local authorities (where applicable) engage with schools to carry out quality assurance checks.
- Schools, colleges or local authorities can speak with SQA where further support is required.

Stage 4: by 28 May 2021 - *Schools and colleges submit quality assured provisional results*

Further information on how to submit the provisional results to SQA will be issued to schools and colleges.

Stage 5: June 2021 - *SQA carries out national check of provisional results and discusses any issues with schools, colleges and local authorities*

- SQA undertakes post-submission data checks.
- If SQA identifies any issues with the provisional results, these will be checked with schools and colleges and, if appropriate, local authorities. This should be by exception.

- Following this check, SQA subject specialists may sample learner evidence for final quality assurance.
- In instances where SQA subject specialists determine that assessment evidence is found not to meet the standard, schools and colleges will be asked to resubmit provisional results that reflect the standard of the evidence so that certification can proceed.

The above model requires all stakeholders, at all stages, to be fully involved and work in partnership. By doing so, learners will have the best chance of securing the outcomes that their efforts deserve.

Fairness for learners

SQA is co-ordinating the development of an equality impact assessment as part of this quality assurance model which aims to ensure fair and credible results for all National 5 learners. Schools, colleges, local authorities and SQA are committed to working together to support teachers and lecturers in providing their provisional results in 2020-21.

We will continue to discuss the appeals process for 2020-21 and will keep you informed of progress. To stay up to date on 2021 National Qualifications visit www.sqa.org.uk/NQ2021.