

Our Ref:
Your Ref:
Contact: JM
Tel: 01236 794890
E-mail: enquiries@chrystonhigh.n-lanark.sch.uk
Date: February 2021



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

Dear Parent/Carer,

As always, I hope this letter finds you, your family and your loved ones safe and well. I hope that you and your family are managing to navigate through lockdown, working from home, remote/digital learning and all other challenges as well as can possibly be expected. As many of you are aware, I am also a parent of two children currently engaging in digital learning at home and I am fully aware, through first-hand experience, of many of the challenges we are faced with on a daily basis at the moment. Thank you for continuing to do such a great job and thank you for your ongoing support.

As you know, the First Minister made her most recent announcement on Tuesday 2nd February providing a brief outline of the Scottish Government's plan for some children and young people to begin returning to school on a phased approach from Monday 22nd February. This date is subject to continued progress in suppressing the virus and will be confirmed on Tuesday 16th February in a further announcement. It is anticipated that initially, some S4, S5 and S6 pupils will be invited to return in some capacity (small numbers based on 5-8% of the school roll which is a maximum of around 70) to complete agreed/identified practical work. We will receive confirmation of what exactly this means in due course so that we can begin our preparations and communicate as appropriate. Senior pupils and staff will be expected to maintain 2 metre distancing whilst in the building as well as other mitigations we have had in place pre-lockdown. There was no mention of a change in provision for S1-3 pupils (Broad General Education) at this time.

As I have written previously, such statements/announcements are the first that we hear about plans for school returns and you will understand that we have no further information at this stage. We are expecting to begin receiving updated guidance from the Scottish Government later next week and we eagerly anticipate confirmed expectations/arrangements in due course. Guidance will come from the usual sources including Scottish Government, North Lanarkshire Council, Education Scotland and SQA. We will continue to communicate with you at the earliest opportunities about all next steps.

Additionally, it has been stated that all those who work in schools will be offered 'at-home testing' twice per week and that all Senior Phase pupils (S4-6) will be offered this also. This is to serve as an additional mitigation to help keep us all safe. We recently offered to be a Scottish Government 'pilot' school for regular 'at home' staff testing and this has been ongoing successfully for a number of weeks now and therefore, we have a good understanding of the process and indeed the benefits of it.

Half – Term Holidays & INSET 4

Our mid-term holiday is almost upon us and even though almost all have been working from home, I'm sure the short break next week will be welcomed by young people, staff and families. Monday 8th and Tuesday 9th February are holidays and Wednesday 10th is a staff INSET day and therefore also a holiday for all young people. I would like to take this opportunity to again thank all young people and families for their tremendous efforts with digital/remote learning and I encourage you all to take a well-earned break over these days.



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Half-Term Hub Support

To assist colleagues directly dealing with the health response to the pandemic, NLC is providing childcare support over the half-term holiday from Monday 8th to Wednesday 10th February at six school-based hubs across the local authority. This service is only for key workers who are assisting with the ongoing health response or who are directly involved with the vaccination programme.

Chryston High School will not be open due to the holiday but a local hub at Cumbernauld Academy, South Kildrum Ring Road, G67 2UF is available for urgent childcare but this must be communicated with NLC if required, in advance by accessing the following website link:

northlanarkshire.gov.uk/holidayhubs

SQA Update

The following information is an update direct from the SQA website:

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/96545.html>

The National Qualifications 2021 Group is overseeing changes to the alternative certification model and associated timeline that was announced in December. This includes moving the final date for schools and colleges to submit provisional grades from Friday 28 May 2021 to Friday 18 June 2021.

Learning and teaching

During the period of remote learning the Group is clear that maximising learning and teaching remains the current priority for schools and colleges.

Assessment

Assessment cannot be undertaken unless young people understand the foundations of their course content and have had time to consolidate their learning once they return to school. Overall assessment of learner attainment should therefore take place later in the 2020-21 session.

Demonstrated attainment remains a key principle for awarding in 2021. During January and February 2021, SQA is publishing subject-specific guidance and assessment resources for Higher and Advanced Higher courses. This will support teachers and lecturers with assessment planning for later in the 2020-21 session.

Understanding Standards

The Understanding Standards resources produced by SQA form an important part of quality assurance. The materials can also be used by Communities of Practice as a focus for professional dialogue in relation to national qualifications and their assessment.

SQA is therefore adding to the broad range of subject-specific materials that are already available. This includes a programme of new webinars as well as creation of other materials for subjects that have identified the need for additional support. Additional webinars and materials may be added depending on teacher and lecturer needs. Recordings are made available on SQA's website for anyone who is unable to attend the live webinar.

Understanding Standards materials are available from SQA's [NQ subject pages](#) and their [Understanding Standards](#) website.

Quality assurance

As the date for the submission of provisional grades is now Friday 18 June, some quality assurance activity will be delayed. A fully revised timetable of quality assurance activities will be published as soon as it is finalised.

Keeping you updated

The National Qualifications 2021 Group knows that the current health situation is proving to be extremely challenging and that teachers, lecturers, parents, carers and learners have questions they would like answered.

All partners are working as quickly as possible in an evolving situation and will continue to issue regular updates on the next steps. These will be dependent upon the length of time that remote learning is in place for public health reasons.

2021 CHS Options & Personalisation and Choice Update

I have enjoyed engaging in a number of Teams calls over the course of the last week to engage in discussion with groups of young people to gather their views and as always, young people have been incredibly articulate and insightful. One question that came up regularly from young people in S4-6 was in relation to our 2021 Options and Personalisation & Choice programme. Traditionally at this stage of the session, S2, S3, S4 and S5 pupils would be engaging in options interviews with their Pupil Support Teachers for next session. It is highly likely that our Timetable will not change until August (new session) and remember there is no study leave this year due to the cancellation of SQA exams, therefore we are now not in as much of a rush to complete these. We will delay the process until young people are back in school and that will still provide Mr. Kane and our Office Team time to begin our 2021-22 Timetable and Staffing preparations. Mr. Kane has been working behind the scenes with staff to create 'virtual' Parent Information Evenings and these presentations will be made available soon online. These presentations will talk pupils and families through our curriculum and options processes. We ask our young people not to worry about these as we will make arrangements in due course.

Staffing Update

Following Mr. Cooper's temporary move to fill the post of Digital Inclusion Lead for NLC, I am delighted to announce that Mrs. Muirhead has this week been appointed Acting Principal Teacher of our Learning Centre (Support for Learning). We know that Mrs. Muirhead will do a fantastic job and we wish her all the very best in her new role. We also wish Mr. Coventry all the very best as he has now joined our staff team in the role of our ICT Technician.

Reporting

It was announced previously that Parents Evening could not take place this session for obvious reasons and that a written report would instead be issued for each year group between now and the end of this session. Reports will be arranged to be sent to home addresses, the dates below are a reminder of our revised reporting calendar:

Year Group	Tracking Update	Report
S1	w/b 8th March	w/b 31 st May
S2	w/b 10 th May	w/b 8 th March
S3	w/b 8 th March	w/b 10 th May
S4	w/b 15 Feb	w/b 29 th March
S5/6	w/b 29 th March	w/b 15 th Feb

Digital Learning

I would like to thank all of our staff, young people and families for their tremendous efforts so far with digital learning. Our preference of course is to work in school with pupils as normal and we look forward to returning to that as soon as it is safe to do so. We are all learning and finding ways to overcome many challenges and I think as a community we should be justifiably proud. This being said, we are always looking at ways to improve our practice and strategies and staff are continuously engaging in continued professional development and reflecting on pupil and parent views. It is impossible to find a 'one size fits all' approach and although we are encouraging routines as set out in our digital learning guide (on the school website) we realise that a degree of flexibility is essential to support young people, families and to encourage good physical and mental well-being. With this in mind, please click the link below to complete a brief survey/form to help us continue to reflect upon what is working well and what we could consider going forward regards our digital/remote learning.

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=oyzTzM4Wj0KVQTctawUZKYc7mnOTIPtNuASg2Ba8kclUNjI3SU5NUOIPNVJMNUxXWVkwTk9ER0hFVi4u>

Like me, I am sure that you will continue to closely follow all Scottish Government updates and announcements and I will continue to communicate with you as appropriate throughout. I'd like to thank you for your ongoing support, patience and understanding – it is a continuing challenge for us all to plan in this climate of rapidly changing contexts. I'd also like to take this opportunity again to thank the staff in our school for their continued work and support. I am mindful and extremely appreciative of the ongoing challenges and constant changes directly affecting their lives and professional practice too as they grapple with the circumstances to plan, prepare and explore best ways to support young people in school, at home and soon enough the phased return of identified senior phase pupils – three highly complex scenarios to consider and plan for. Thank you for continuing to work in partnership with them to support the learning, well-being and progress of your children. Thank you as always for your continued efforts, support, patience and understanding – it is an inspiration for our staff team.

Stay safe and take care. I look forward to communicating further with you as appropriate in due course.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mr. Mitchell', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr. Mitchell