



Rector: Dr J Vance
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Hello,

Term 2 is well under way and I am pleased to see high attendance and good engagement in learning from our young people. I understand that this is a worrying time for parents and pupils with so much uncertainty about school, education and society in general. Below you will find information about what we have been doing and will do in the coming months to provide your young person with the best possible educational experience. I hope you find the information helpful.

1) School Calendar

In previous years the school calendar has been agreed with Unions and published prior to the summer holidays but for this session across Highland schools, discussions only took place last term once staff were back in the building. The calendar was agreed and submitted to HQ in the final week of term. A copy in 2 formats can be found on the school website and both are attached to the email sharing this letter with parents and guardians. Particularly in the senior phase (S4-6) for reasons that I will explain in Point 4 below, there is a possibility of some of the dates changing as more information comes from SQA. If that happens I will email out updates and update the website.

2) Parents' Evenings and reports

It seems most likely that there can be no Parents' Evenings in the building this session. I have left this open as a possibility in the school calendar for S1 and S2 in the summer term but we have been working on an alternative approach for other year groups and in case these two events could not proceed. As a staff group and then in discussion with senior pupils and the Parent Council we have come up with an alternative proposal to ensure that you have the information you need to support your child or young person's learning. It is explained below:

- S1: You will receive a report on your child's progress just before the Christmas holidays. There will either be a Parents' Evening on 12th May or you will receive a follow up report around that time summarising your child's S1 performance.
- S2: You will receive a report on your child's progress later this month. There will either be a Parents' Evening on Wednesday 28th April or you will receive a follow up report in early May summarising your child's S2 performance.
- S3: You will receive a report in late January and at the same time your child's S4 Choice of Course form will be issued. Since we cannot hold Parents' Evenings to support this process, we are working to produce videos explaining the process and each course to parents and pupils. These will be made available in Google classrooms and I would urge you to watch these with your child/young person. If you still have questions after this, Guidance will liaise with departments

to get you the information you need. Currently we are not planning a second report but will prioritise an early S4 report next session.

The remaining section explains the arrangements as they stand. However, as explained in section 4 below some of these deadlines may change as we work through the implications of SQA's planned assessment system for this year. Any updates will be shared through the website and parental email.

- S4: You will receive a report in early December outlining your young person's progress to date. By then you should also have received information about key assessment deadlines for each course. You will receive another report in mid-February and at the same time, your young person's Choice of Course form will be issued. Since we cannot hold Parents' Evenings to support this process, we are working to produce videos explaining the process and each course to parents and pupils. These will be made available in Google classrooms and I would urge you to watch these with your child/young person. If you still have questions after this, Guidance will liaise with departments to get you the information you need. Given that there will be no exams for S4, we may issue a final report in the summer term confirming what our assessment estimates are for their courses. We need to await local and national advice on this which is why it is not currently in the school calendar.
- S5: You will receive a report in early December outlining your young person's progress to date. By then you should also have received information about key assessment deadlines for each course. You will receive another report in mid-February and at the same time, your young person's Choice of Course form will be issued. Since we cannot hold Parents' Evenings to support this process, we are working to produce videos explaining the process and each course to parents and pupils. These will be made available in Google classrooms and I would urge you to watch these with your child/young person. If you still have questions after this, Guidance will liaise with departments to get you the information you need.
- S6: You will receive a report in early December outlining your young person's progress to date. By then you should also have received information about key assessment deadlines for each course. You will receive another report in mid-February outlining progress.

I can only apologise for the amount of unknown and provisional elements in this- very little about this school year is confidently predictable.

3) Covid-19- term 2 changes (Ventilation and indoor sports)

Two documents were issued last week which impact on how we run the school and what activities young people can engage with.

Firstly, updated PE Guidance (version 7 since August) has been issued which states that so long as we are in Tier 0-3 (as I write, Highland is in Tier 1), secondary pupils can participate in contact and non-contact sport both indoors and outdoors. We are slowly beginning to introduce activities in light of this advice- beginning with badminton, basketball and volleyball. There are a series of practical considerations outlined in the document to make this as safe as possible which we are working to implement and which you can see in section 4 of the document by clicking on [this link](#). Changing rooms remain a concern and we are working to make these as safe as possible by reducing numbers in the changing rooms, ensuring pupil access is very brief and by ensuring touch points are regularly cleaned.

Secondly, the overall Guidance to schools has been updated (version 4 since August) and retitled as *Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance on reducing the risks from COVID-19 in schools*. A summary of the changes can be accessed via [this link](#). The key points for us are a confirmation of our position on face masks and confirmation that documents and jotters don't need to be quarantined for 72 hours if appropriate hand hygiene measures are in place.

4) SQA- next steps

Alongside these changes, SQA are also in the process of clarifying arrangements for exam diet May/June 2021. They have confirmed that N5 exams are cancelled and qualifications will be awarded on the basis of centre estimates, supported by assessment resources and quality assurance. They have started to issue information about what their assessment expectations are for all National 5 courses but we will not have all this information until 19th November.

The 2021 Higher and Advanced Higher exam diet will run with a slightly later start date of 13th May. If the public health situation deteriorates and exams at Higher and Advanced Higher are cancelled, then estimates will be used with appropriate quality assurance to award qualifications at Higher and Advanced Higher levels, as well as at National 5.

As a school we are looking at the implications of this and over the course of this month will be producing clear plans about how we gather assessment evidence for N5 pupils, how and when we hold Prelims (given that the usual venue would not be suitable to host 120 pupils and we lack alternative spaces) and how we communicate key assessment dates to pupils and parents. As soon as this is clear, information will be shared with parents via email and the school website.

5) Building works/extension

Over the holidays and still ongoing, contractors are on site installing solar panels on most of our roof area. This has meant that there is extensive scaffolding and fencing around the school building and I am pleased with the conduct of our young people in these areas. I am cautiously optimistic that the works may be completed this weekend and the scaffolding removed in time for the start of next week.

I am also in weekly meetings about the planned extension for the school. It is intended that the architect shares some of this detail at the next Parent Council meeting and as soon as I have firm details of timescales and the stages in the extension build, these will be communicated to parents.

6) Staffing.

As many of you will be aware, Mr Johnstone retired as Depute Head Teacher at the October holidays. His replacement is Mr Ian Weafer (who worked here several years ago in the English department) who started with us yesterday (Thursday 5th).

You may also be aware that Ms Lomas is going to be off school for this whole term at least and that Miss Forrester is now Acting Depute Head Teacher with the same responsibilities as Ms Lomas had. Mr McKnight is covering for Miss Forrester as Acting Principal Teacher of Guidance for Drumossie Vikings. Mr Morrison is covering for Mr McKnight as Acting Principal Teacher of ASN and Mrs Horsburgh is covering for Mr Morrison for the foreseeable future.

In addition, on the first day back after the recent holidays we welcomed a new Principal Teacher of English- Miss Machin.

7) Drop-ins/communication. Monthly letter.

With physical meetings very difficult and often impossible I know that it is really important parents know how to communicate with the school and how the school will communicate with them. Your first and main contact point is your child's Guidance Teacher and that remains unchanged- ring or email the school if you wish to discuss some aspect of your child's education. In certain circumstances (to do with discipline and concerns about teaching) it may be better to contact your child's Year Head. As a reminder:

Miss Forrester is Year Head for S1 and S5

Mr Weafer is Year Head for S2 and S6

Mrs Urquhart is Year Head for S3

Mr O'Neill is Year Head for S4

In terms of how we communicate with you, I have followed the same approach since the start of lockdown and will continue to do so. The two ways in which all important information will be communicated with Parents are the school website and via an email to parents. If you believe you are not on the email list, please contact culloden.academy@highland.gov.uk with your child's name and class and we will add you. Although the school has a Facebook account this will only be used for the sharing of examples of school life and- unlike one occasion last term- not for official communication. I know that individuals and departments within the school have a presence on Twitter and Instagram but these are not used for sharing official communications and information.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Best wishes,

J Vance

Head Teacher