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Head Teacher
Mr Brian McDermott

Thursday, 17th December, 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope you and yours are well and the preparations for Christmas and the festive period are in hand. Whilst things will be very different this year, I hope that you are able to enjoy some relaxation and take as many positives as possible from the joy this time of year can bring.

I am writing to update on some key areas of school business, as follows:

Head Teacher Appointment

I am delighted to inform you that following the final stages of the recruitment process yesterday, I was appointed as the permanent Head Teacher of our school with immediate effect.

I have been privileged to lead our school community as Acting Head Teacher for the past nine months, through an incredibly challenging time for us all; I am delighted to be offered the opportunity to do this in a substantive capacity and I am confident that our school can go from strength to strength.

I am very grateful for the support offered by so many of you throughout this time and I very much look forward to working with you over the years to come.

Covid-19

We have seen small spikes in positive Covid-19 cases involving young people in our school community between August and now, largely in line with the picture nationally. Our role is to continue to be vigilant and to ensure that we continue to make our school as safe as possible for young people to learn and staff to come to work. I would ask that you retain your vigilance around all the advice from the Scottish and National Governments across this period. It is my hope that in so doing the risk of a spike in our school, where large numbers of young people will have to self-isolate, is minimised. Your support is essential and very much appreciated.

Remember that if any young person (or anyone in their household) presents with **either** of the three widely recognised Covid-19 symptoms, **they should not attend school.** Please follow national guidance – arrange a test, and your child should remain at home until it is deemed safe to return.

SQA Updates

National 5 only

On 7 October, the Deputy First Minister announced that for 2020–21, National 5 results will be based on teacher and lecturer judgement supported by a robust set of checks — or quality assurance — which will be carried out by your child’s school or college, local authority and SQA.

The National Qualifications 2021 Group has overseen the development of the quality assurance process which will support teachers and lecturers in providing your child’s provisional results for session 2020–21. Provisional results will be based on teacher’s and/or lecturer’s professional judgement of your child’s evidence. The results will be finalised following various layers of quality assurance, including sampling by SQA senior subject specialists.

Here is how the National 5 quality assurance model will work in session 2020–21:

Stage 1: November 2020 to March 2021 — *Teachers and lecturers use guidance and assessment materials to help gather learner evidence.*

Stage 2: end of January to beginning of April — *SQA ask for samples of assessment evidence from each school and college, then review and provide feedback.*

Stage 3: end of March to 28 May — *Schools, colleges and local authorities will work through SQA feedback and carry out their own quality assurance of the provisional results.*

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

Stage 5: June 2021 — *SQA carries out national check of provisional results and may follow up on any issues with schools, colleges and local authorities.*

These processes are in place to ensure 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 before the school or college submit your child’s provisional results to SQA. This should reduce the need for schools and colleges to resubmit provisional results following SQA review in June. If your child’s provisional results need to be adjusted to reflect their evidence, this will follow discussion between their school or college and SQA.

Fairness for your child

SQA is developing 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 are discussing 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.

The National Qualifications 2021 Group*

*Represented by the National Parent Forum of Scotland, Scottish Government, Education Scotland, SQA, Local Authorities, School Leaders Scotland, Colleges Scotland, Scottish Council of Independent Schools, the EIS teaching union and, from this week, the Scottish Youth Parliament.

Higher/Advanced Higher

The Deputy First Minister very recently announced that there would no longer be a Higher and Advanced Higher examination diet this spring. We await similar timelines and guidance to that above for these levels of study and I will share these with you as soon as I am able.

Uniform

The standard of uniform in our school has improved significantly since August. More young people than ever are attending school wearing their blazers, plain black shoes and with their school shirt, tie and plain jumpers. I can't thank you enough for supporting this. As the weather takes a turn for the worst, of course children should attend school wearing heavier/warmer jackets and outer-layers; uniform should be worn in school on arrival.

I would ask that if you intend to purchase new school shoes for your child over Christmas, that you make these plain black shoes or trainers.

To support our uniform standards and to ensure that all young people are warm in the winter months (with classroom windows remaining open as a Covid-19 mitigation), we have ordered brand new black sweatshirts and a stock of new blazers. We will have a black sweatshirt available for each and every young person and a blazer for anyone who needs one; this will be at no cost to you. It is my hope that we will be in a position to distribute these in January. If you have any questions about this, please contact our school.

Faith in Action

As always in All Saints', there has been a huge amount of work on-going to support local charities and good causes, especially in the lead-up to Christmas. Our young people, our staff and our wider community have really rallied once again and I have been absolutely delighted with the way everyone has come together.

There are so many reasons to be proud of our school community; thank you to everyone who played their part.

End of Term

School finishes for this term on Tuesday, 22nd December at 2:30pm, returning on Wednesday, 6th January 2021 at 8:50am.

I wish you and yours a safe, happy and holy Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year. Thank you again for all of your support throughout these unusual times. Take care and don't hesitate to get in touch.

Yours Sincerely,

Brian McDermott

Head Teacher