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Acting Head Teacher
Mr Brian McDermott

Wednesday, 11th November, 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope that you and yours are well and that you are able to enjoy a modicum of 'normality' in these very challenging times. I am writing with an update on some key issues around school life at present; whilst not all of this will be applicable to all parents, I felt it important to share this information with you all at this time.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all of your support across the first part of the school session this year and particularly for your support in ensuring your child comes to school each day in full uniform, with their masks/face coverings and ready to learn; the young people have been outstanding and their response to the many extra 'asks' we've made of them under national guidance has been first class. These have been challenging times for all of us – but we have worked very effectively together as a community to make the best out of difficult times. I really appreciate your support, as does all of the staff in All Saints'.

Covid-19

Positive Cases and Test & Protect

As you will have noted across the past few weeks and months, in line with the situation nationally, we have seen an increase in the number of positive cases in our community, including young people who attend our school. On each occasion, we have followed Test & Protect protocols throughout to identify any known contacts of positive cases and to advise self-isolation in line with Scottish Government advice. In addition, we forward these details to the local Health Protection Team.

Can I take this opportunity to emphasise the importance of strict adherence – in school and out – to government advice around face coverings, hand and cough hygiene, physical distancing and social gatherings. We are working extremely hard in school each day to ensure these are followed and your support is essential.

Managing this as a community is a challenge and I appreciate that there will be anxieties around Covid-19 in general as well as some concerns about cases in a school context. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with your child's Head of Year or I should you wish to discuss any concerns you may have.

We have a robust Risk Assessment, supported by Glasgow City Council's Health & Safety Team, and a significant number of steps in place to help keep everyone as safe as possible.



Learning,
Motivation,
Success

We will continue to be vigilant and rigorous around this for as long as required and we will never become complacent about how we manage this pandemic in our school context.

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.

Learning during Isolation

We have a robust ‘Covid Contingency’ plan in order to ensure that any young person who is self-isolating as a result of Covid-19 is able to access learning resources via their iPad. In each case, the classroom teacher will update Microsoft TEAMS on a regular basis and will also, as appropriate, update the child via Glow. In each case, the isolating child’s Pupil Support Teacher manages the learning provision throughout the period of isolation. Please don’t hesitate to get in touch should you have any queries about this or if there are any issues with resources or your child’s iPad.

SQA Updates

Changes to Exam Diet

You will know from my end of term message pre-October week and subsequent press coverage around this issue that the National 5 examination diet, in the traditional sense, has been cancelled for session 2020-2021. Higher and Advanced Higher examinations remain planned as normal but the exam diet starts slightly later than normal.

The SQA have published this year’s Higher/Advanced Higher exam timetable on their website:

https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/exam-timetable-2021.pdf

Your child (if in the Senior Phase), will also be updated on all things SQA by their Head of Year (S4 – Mr Houston, S5 – Mr Gallagher and S6 – Ms Hewitt). Mr Houston is also our school’s SQA Coordinator and acts as a point of contact between All Saints’ and the SQA.

Prelims, Estimates and Evidence Gathering

National 5 Certification will be decided instead this session via a combination of evidence generated across learning with associated quality assurance and teacher estimated grades; the SQA are updating schools across the next couple of weeks with specific information about the types of evidence they will be seeking.

In addition, whilst Higher and Advanced Higher examinations **are** scheduled to be taking place in May/June 2021, there are contingencies in place for Higher and Advanced Higher evidence gathering too, both in terms of estimate generation and in case for any reason the Higher/Advanced Higher diet is unable to proceed.

Prelims

To provide experience in an examination context and to support strong evidence gathering across this school year, young people studying National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher subjects will undertake assessments/prelim exams across a **three week period**, starting on **Monday, 30th November**:

- **Week 1** (30th November) - will consist of 'in class' assessments during the timetabled class time, where departments have requested these.
- **Week 2** (7th December) - National 5 assessments timetabled in our exam halls;
- **Week 3** (14th December) - Higher and Advanced Higher assessments timetabled in our exam halls.

Candidates will continue to follow their normal timetables other than when timetabled for examinations during this time; our intention is to maximise the available time young people have with their teachers, mindful of the time missed by many to date via self-isolation and lockdown earlier in the year.

To support our young people in their learning and to facilitate opportunities to evidence progress, there will also be a second prelim diet, lasting two weeks, in late February/early March 2021. This will be another formal opportunity for evidence to be gathered to support assessment and estimate decisions; this evidence and others accrued across learning will be used to inform estimate decisions later in the session.

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.

There are expectations under Covid-19 guidance that classrooms are well ventilated via partial opening of windows and classroom doors being left open; the key thing here is to get a balance between this and maintaining an environment which is conducive to learning. The most recent advice helps to ensure that we are sensible and measured around the way we ventilate our rooms and this should not be an issue for us; if your child wishes to keep their blazer on or keep a uniform jumper on in class, this is perfectly acceptable. We will continue to review across the winter time and in line with government advice.

Parents' Evenings

Currently, schools are unable to facilitate parents' evenings in the normal way. This will be reviewed in March 2021. In our school, we are piloting a 'progress call' model following the distribution of tracking reports, to coincide with scheduled parents' evenings. We are just about to commence a series of 'progress calls' to parents of young people in S2 – those who requested a call-back using the form issued in recent weeks. Our intention is to learn from and develop this in time for the scheduled S4 parents' evening later this month. Heads of Year will be in touch over the coming weeks and months with updates as they apply throughout the session.

Can I emphasise though that there is absolutely no need to wait for a scheduled tracking time or parents' evening to discuss your child's progress in learning; their Pupil Support Teacher or Head of Year will be more than happy to update you at any time – please get in touch.

Physical Education

The Scottish Government instruction up until now has been that all Physical Education should be undertaken outdoors. Clearly, our Scottish weather can, at times, make this a challenge. Our P.E. department has been first class in making significant adaptations to their curriculum to ensure young people get a positive experience of learning in P.E., despite the conditions. Updated advice has very recently been released and our P.E. department are working very hard to make the requisite adjustments across the coming weeks and months. I have been delighted with the response from our young people to the additional challenge of engaging in P.E. in the wind and rain on most days; their attitude and engagement has been brilliant.

Thank you again for all of your support across the school year to date. Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you wish to discuss any of the above or any issue pertaining to your child's education and wellbeing.

Yours Sincerely,

Brian McDermott

Acting Head Teacher