



## Head Teacher Response to Questions raised by the Parent Council (September 2020)

1 If the children are unwell with Covid symptoms {or indeed being off just to be sick through their immune systems being low} and they have to isolate, then what plans or measures do Strathaven Academy have in place to ensure that these children do not miss out on vital learning time. Will the teacher video the lesson and send it to the child perhaps as the parents that I spoke to mentioned that google class room just isn't enough. This is vital that the parents have an answer to this to relieve some anxiousness out there.

***For pupil absence the first point of contact for parents/carers remains the child's PT Pupil Support (Guidance). Guidance teachers will liaise with class teachers and faculties to support learning and minimise the impact of the absence. Mrs James and faculty link DHTs have met with all Faculty Heads to ensure appropriate materials and resources are available in Google Classrooms. We have further developed our approaches to blended learning and remote learning to ensure a more consistent experience for all young people. In partnership with SLC schools, we are continuing to develop processes to support Covid-19 related absences. If young people are absent for other reasons they should rest and recuperate, returning to school at the earliest opportunity.***

***Teachers will not video class lessons as the norm however we do now have access to Google Meet which provides an online platform to support learning from home. The priority for staff professional learning this term is to improve IT skills and share good practice. This follows a whole school staff IT skills audit at the start of the session. Upskilling and training teachers will be a focus for all staff in the upcoming in-service day on 29 September. Some colleagues are keen to pilot Google Meet and they will share their expertise across the school. We will also utilise Google Meet to deliver and support Advanced Higher courses through consortium arrangements. In some cases, pre-recorded materials/presentations are considered more helpful to support learning.***

2           What does the exam diet look like for Strathaven Academy. It is my understanding from other parents that some teachers are flying through the units / topics & not enough time understanding it therefore the feeling is that assessments that have been carried out already children are feeling deflated because they have studied but not understood the assessment questions. Are these early assessments taken into consideration or are they testers for another assessment on the same units?

***I am unable to comment on the references made to individual pupil experiences as alluded to in the question. Parents/ carers should contact Guidance teachers in the usual way if they have any individual questions or concerns in relation to their child. The SQA exam diet is yet to be published for 2021 and we await an update on this.***

***SQAs most recent update on assessment of National Courses for session 2020-21 (7<sup>th</sup> September) stated that:***

***“SQA is grateful to everyone who took the time to participate in our technical consultation on proposed modifications to National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher course assessments for session 2020–21, as well as our consultation on contingency planning for the 2021 exam timetable. By the time the consultations closed on 24 August, we had received over 23,000 responses from teachers and lecturers, from learners, parents and carers, and from national bodies.***

***We fully appreciate that schools and colleges are seeking clarity, but we need more time to work through the responses, and engage with the Scottish Government and other national bodies. We are doing this as quickly as we can.”***

***In addition, Education Secretary John Swinney has said that SQA exams are set to be held again next year. Mr Swinney also said that the SQA was currently considering its response.***

***No young person should place too much emphasis on early assessments and the most important aspect of any assessment is the feedback provided that informs next steps in learning.***

3           This question always comes up on uniforms. Strathaven Academy pride themselves on the children wearing the correct uniform to represent the school. There are children walking around with skirts that can hardly be seen underneath their blazers though when it is out of uniform day they aren't allowed to wear a mid- drift top. Loads of parents on other group chats have brought this up! Surely a simple rule of the skirt has to be a certain length would fix this and ensure that the rule is adhered to.

***Strathaven Academy does pride itself on our young people wearing appropriate school uniform. School uniform contributes to our positive ethos and helps to address issues such as equity and security. The senior team and other colleagues check dress code when young people enter the school building each morning. Any issues identified are followed up by the relevant DHT and/or PT Pupil Support. We have no plans to identify a certain length of skirt but please be assured that conversations with young people and their families do take place around this type of matter.***

4 When will PE curriculum resume – is it possible for a phased return back in to the hall?

***The PE curriculum resumed when young people returned to the school building at the start of the session. Education Scotland published PE guidance on 7 September that gave permission for the use on indoor facilities from 14 September. However, after the announcement on the 10 September by the First Minister that the plans for the re-introduction of indoor contact sports for over 12s is delayed, there will be no change to the physical education guidelines published on 7 September until further scientific advice is available. The new indicative date for this is 5 October 2020. In the meantime, PE will continue to be outdoors.***

***The future use of indoor PE facilities will be subject to appropriate risk assessment and control measures being in place. We will also take into consideration local Covid-19 restrictions in an ever-changing situation. We await the SQA publishing guidance for this year's national courses and examinations. This guidance will inform approaches to assessing young people's practical skills in PE.***

5 What plans have do you have in place for those being asked to isolate? (Similar point to Question 1 above).

***See response to question 1. In addition, SLC are supporting all schools with this issue. We are currently developing documentation to support this issue and will share information with the Parent Council and the wider school community. This will likely be in the form of a parent/carer information leaflet containing helpful hints to support readiness to learn from home.***

6 What work is being sent home?

***A wide variety of work is being sent home. Google Classroom is the main online resource alongside existing resources such as workbooks, homework, study guides etc. Show My Homework is used to post updates and task deadlines, supporting communication with parents/carers.***

7 What virtual work is on offer?

***Google Classrooms are used as virtual learning environments. Year heads have been working hard recently to ensure that all young people have signed up for the appropriate Google Classrooms. We have also introduced individual Google Classrooms for each year group to support communication. We will also continue to develop our use of Google Meet for live virtual interaction. For example, Mrs James will meet virtually with all S3 pupils this week to share information in relation to S3 Electives.***

8 With reference to the arrangements in England - is the Scottish government considering delaying the SQA exams next year. My concern is particularly for the Higher course as it is such a short course and also is there a need for study leave for prelims this year in light of the time out of school already?

***As mentioned previously, the SQA examination diet for 2021 has yet to be announced. Last week, Mr Swinney told the National Parent Forum of Scotland:***

***"Our objective is to run a full 2021 exam diet. SQA have consulted on what steps they could take to reduce the burden of assessments before the exam diet - what elements could be removed.***

***We've also looked at the timetable of exams. Do they need to start in late April? Could they start at the end of May, giving them an extra month for learning and teaching."***

***This suggests that all possibilities are currently being considered nationally, including a delay to the start of the 2021 SQA exam diet.***

9 When can we expect adequate adaptations/Perspex screens etc to be in place in school to allow exam year pupils studying Music to sing, play instruments, Drama pupils to be able to act, and Home Economic/practical cookery pupils to cook?

50% of these assessed courses are currently not being taught, yet John Swinney has announced that a full exam diet is going ahead.

Other courses may be affected too, but these are the ones that I'm aware of.

***A number of weeks ago I asked colleagues in our Technical Department to create a 'prototype' Perspex screen. Following this, we have placed an order to purchase clear Perspex to make our own screens in-house. We will use these in a variety of settings within the school eg. Guidance offices.***

***On 14 September Education Scotland launched Home Economics guidelines nationally. We have implemented this guidance along with revised control measures which are detailed in our HE specific risk assessment. This guidance, the mitigations put in place and our professional expertise and judgement ensure the safe delivery of practical cooking.***

***Similar guidance from Education Scotland is imminent for both Music and Drama. Once received we will implement this guidance alongside the assessment of risk. We have completed a risk assessment for all Instrumental Music Teachers in order to restart 1-2-1 Music instruction. To deliver this we are using a few dedicated spaces for our Music instructors to work safely with our young people. Some instruction (dependent on the musical instrument) is supported online through the use of Google Classroom and Google Meet.***