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Dear S4

I hope that this letter finds you and your loved ones well. We may not have seen one another for several weeks, but we are thinking of you and your families, and look forward to a time when we are together again.

Firstly I want to reassure you that we are focused on a number of key priorities, all with the intention of providing the best possible outcomes for all of you.

I understand that not having final coursework to complete and exams to prepare for has been incredibly difficult for you. As your Year Head I understand the concern felt by everyone regarding the SQA estimates, which will be used by the SQA as a guide in determining the final awarded grade this session. Unfortunately, we are unable to discuss these estimates at this time. Please be assured that we will use all of the SQA guidelines to ensure that each pupil has the best opportunity of attaining the grade that they deserve.

Another key priority that staff are working on is the early launch of courses which will be delivered, in the early weeks at least, against the backdrop of unprecedented circumstances which bring a unique set of challenges. We are determined to ensure that we maintain our high standards, but are aware of the effects that a loss of momentum can have upon learners.

We will therefore begin courses significantly earlier than normal, making good use of what would ordinarily be 'study leave' time, but must ensure that teaching and learning is adapted to meet the needs of our learners in this temporary 'new normal'. This means that you will move forward to the next year group in a virtual capacity, further details will be communicated to you in due course. Please do not underestimate the absolute importance to continue to engage in your learning.

I have had many questions asked over the past few weeks therefore I thought it would be helpful to collate answers to the most common questions I have been asked recently, which I hope that you will find useful. Full details on the launch of S5 courses will be communicated soon.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or queries.

Yours Sincerely,

Ruth Higgin

Acting Depute Head Teacher

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need to do any further work for S4 courses?

No. The SQA have stated clearly that there is no requirement for you to complete any more prelims or mock exams, or homework tasks for the purpose of determining an estimate grade.

Will my S4 grades be based solely on my prelim performance?

No. Your teachers will review all the evidence that is available to them to assess whether you have met the course aims. They have a strong understanding of your performance and know how you compare to other learners in each department, and in previous years.

Your teachers will take account of any available work that you have completed throughout the course. Using their professional judgement, and their knowledge of your work and your progress so far, they will make an estimate of the grade and band you would have achieved under normal circumstances. Estimate grades will be based on your demonstrated and inferred attainment of the required skills, knowledge and understanding for each course at National 4 and National 5.

The SQA will examine the data provided to ensure consistency — both across the country and in comparison with previous years, before making a decision on the qualifications you are to be awarded.

Why can't I come in to school to collect work or to hand work in?

Social distancing rules, designed to protect all of us and society as a whole, mean that this is not possible at present. We will, therefore, maintain contact with each other online and work hard to support anyone who is having difficulties.

When will I get my results?

Everyone at Bearsden Academy and our SQA colleagues are working to ensure that you will receive your results no later than Tuesday 4 August. SQA strongly recommend that you sign-up to MySQA to receive your results by text and/or email. If you have already received your results through MySQA previously, you will continue to do so, and we recommend that you review your profile to make sure your contact details are up to date.

When will my S5 courses start?

Very soon indeed! Look out for further updates in the coming days, and we will make really good use of the time leading up to the summer holidays to make the best possible progress on your S5 courses.

I'm revisiting subjects that are unfamiliar to me, what if I find the new work difficult?

Further information will follow on how and when you can continue to maintain contact with your teachers. They are working hard to prepare tasks with full awareness of the fact that you are not together in the classroom, so tasks will be designed with this in mind.

I have a concern or question and would like to someone to talk to; what can I do?

Your Year Head and Guidance teachers are very much still here for you. We have continued to support pupils throughout this time and would be happy to hear from you, especially if you have concerns, queries or just want to catch up. We miss our interactions with you more than any other aspect of our working lives. Send us an email and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

I am feeling low and would like to speak to someone about it, what help is available?

We would encourage you to talk to family and loved ones about any issues or concerns that arise. Keep in touch with friends through social platforms, have a daily video call or chat through WhatsApp – there are many ways to keep in touch. Staying active and exercising regularly can have a really positive impact upon our mood, as can relaxation or even thinking of creative (socially distanced) ways to help others in your community.

As mentioned above, your Year Head and Guidance teacher are still here for you, and would be more than happy to hear from you. In addition to this, East Dunbartonshire Council can now provide a telephone based counselling service available to pupils aged ten and above. Young people can call Lifelink on 0808 196 3700 between 09.00 to 16.00 from Monday to Friday. The service can support young people with a wide range of difficulties including grief and loss, anxiety, low mood, anger and relationship and family issues.

We hope that you find this information useful, and very much look forward to hearing from anyone who requires clarification, support or advice.