

Dear Parents & Carers

Two significant statements affecting education were issued yesterday. One by the Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, and the other by the Chief Executive of SQA & Scotland's Chief Examining Officer, Fiona Robertson.

Both statements have generated lots of questions, for us in Viewforth High School, for young people within the Senior Phase and their families.

The Deputy First Minister informed parliament that the SQA exam diet in 2020 cannot go ahead and he has requested that the SQA put in place an 'alternative certification model'.

Although there will be no formal exams young people are still required to complete outstanding course units and SQA coursework e.g. projects, assignments, portfolios and dissertations. These need to be completed to the SQA's existing deadlines, or earlier where possible. Therefore, in response to this, all senior phase pupils (S4 - S6) who still have units and coursework to finish will need to complete these. In some cases, work will be able to be completed at home, but for many the practical nature of the coursework will mean that they will need to physically attend school. Principal Teachers of Curriculum and class teachers will be in touch with individual pupils to invite them into school on Monday to complete outstanding work if necessary or they may be directed to complete this using online facilities.

Our understanding at this stage from the limited information available to us is that pupils' achievements will be recognised based on the completion of SQA coursework and the teacher estimate grade which is generated based on a range of evidence including prelims, formal assessments and also teacher professional judgement. Teachers will be generating estimate grades over the next couple of weeks. Some of these judgements are subject to SQA verification, which has still to take place. We have had a number of young people and families requesting estimates at this stage. We understand the anxiety and concern around this, but we are not in a position to generate these grades yet as we want to ensure the estimates are based on as much up-to-date evidence of pupil performance. This is essential for the integrity and reliability of the qualifications in these challenging circumstances.

The SQA has stated learners will receive their results no later than 4 August, as planned. All candidates are strongly encouraged to sign up to MySQA the online text service as a direct way to receive their results.

Where any young person is unable to attend school to complete coursework due to ill health, or if they are self-isolating, then they will be subject to the SQA exceptional circumstances service. Details of this service can be found on the SQA website.

Please be reassured that all staff at Viewforth High School are working very hard and I know will continue to do everything possible to support pupils through this. Staff have done an outstanding job this week in very difficult circumstances. It's exceptionally challenging for everyone. The national context is changing quite rapidly, and this could mean that further changes or modifications may still happen.

I hope that all families appreciate that over the next week teachers will be prioritising the Senior Phase pupils for the reasons outlined. We are in this for the long-haul, potentially months. Over the coming weeks teachers will build on the digital and paper learning resources provided and further activities and digital learning will be initiated.

Families, pupils and teachers have already raised moral and ethical concerns associated with the statements made today and what this means for them. We understand and appreciate the high level of concern. Our young people are under huge pressure and they must remain our priority. The senior pupil's commitment this week has been quite incredible, and it has really made the hard work worth it. What a wonderful group of young people!

We need to work together to get through this - which we will.

Thank you for your ongoing support.