

Braes High School

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Dear Parent/Carer

Please find information with regards to our approach to the SQA diet, estimate collation for this year and further information on prelims and assessments. We are conscious that the experience of last session, recent decisions made nationally and the currently evolving environment could result in uncertainty for families. As a school we are all incredibly proud of how our young people have dealt with the challenges posed by the Covid pandemic and how they are continuing to work well with staff to achieve their individual goals. This communication will hopefully provide clear and relevant information for all pupils in S4-S6 involved in National, Higher and Advanced Higher courses.

Please see an overview below of each level with the main points to note and any relevant changes

National 3-4 – No major changes to previous years. These courses have always been assessed in the school by Braes High School staff and moderated externally by the SQA.

National 5 – As per SQA guidance, plans have been adapted to account for changes in course content for this year.

As stated in previous communications there **will be no** external SQA examinations this year.

Whilst we still await final updates from the SQA with regards to individual subject details and moderation processes, the broad SQA instruction is that certification will be awarded on teacher estimates, with evidence verified by SQA. In terms of evidence this will vary slightly from subject to subject but will follow the SQA expectations of having between two and four quality pieces of evidence which can include on-going assessment but also more substantial evidence pieces that cover at least 70% of the course.

Higher/Advanced Higher - As per SQA guidance, plans have been adapted to account for changes in course content for this year.

There **will be** external SQA examinations this year – Start date - Monday the 10th of May to Friday the 4th of June.

Due to the current circumstances it is worth noting that whilst we are planning for the outlined exam diet at Higher and Advanced Higher, pupils will continue to gather relevant pieces of quality evidence so that staff can make accurate, evidence based estimates, if required.

To ensure pupils are fully supported during this time, we have put in place a clear approach to assessment within each department which manages the spread of formal assessments throughout the year whilst still providing maximum teaching time. We plan to have a more formal prelim diet from January the 11th to the 28th. We also plan to have another window similar to this from the 1st of March to approximately the 15th. This second window will be more subject dependant but both provide further opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding and at the same time support the collection of a body of detailed quality evidence.

Whilst we hope that the above plans are followed exactly as stated, as we move forward it is important to state that all these arrangements will be subject to change based on national guidance

as the COVID situation continues to develop. Any changes will be communicated clearly and quickly to pupils and parents.

Attached to this letter is a timetable of our first prelim diet for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher pupils. Also below this letter is an overview of strategies pupils can use to ensure they manage their health and well-being throughout this time and an outline of the vast array of supports that are on offer for our pupils.

To finish, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all pupils that it is more important now than ever before that all our young people are trying their very best in every assessment and piece of work set by their teacher. They should also be actively using all the school supports and working as hard as they can to improve their understanding at school and at home.

If you have any concerns about the information in this letter please do not hesitate to contact the appropriate staff member listed in our support section.

Kind Regards

Kevin Smith

Depute for Ochil house and SQA Coordinator

For more specific SQA guidance and to remain fully informed of SQA processes - Please visit www.sqa.org.uk and click on the yellow banner at the top of the home page entitled National Qualifications 2020/21.

A Guide to Wellbeing support during exams

Coping with exam based stress

Stress is real and plays an important part in all of our lives, often in a very positive way; motivating us and keeping us focussed and alert which can help us to perform to the best of our ability in many ways, including exams and assessments.



We recognise that not all stress is positive and can have a negative impact on our young people emotionally, mentally and physically, especially in these uncertain and challenging times. It is important to acknowledge the stress than study, course assessments, preliminary examinations and final examinations can have and we wanted to recommend some things that we know can help.

- Take time to breath, relax and...put down your phone!
- Look after yourself and your health with good food, exercise and sleep
- Adopt a positive mindset
- Create a plan which includes small practical tasks/steps towards success
- Form “your team”, people who can help you including family, friends and school staff.

Where to go for help

You can always ask for help and support in school from classroom teachers, Faculty Heads and Pastoral Heads (we have included their contact information below) but you may also want to speak to someone at home, your doctor or Samaritans (call 116 123)

Pastoral heads – Can support with any subject, course, HWB or personal matters please contact your pastoral head:

Lomond house – Michael.burns@falkirk.gov.uk
Pentland House – Laura.eckles@falkirk.gov.uk
Ochil House – George.burnett@falkirk.gov.uk
Campsie House – Linda.Dempsey@falkirk.gov.uk



For Subject Specific advice/information please contact relevant faculty Head:

English and Media – mark.rooney@falkirk.gov.uk
Mathematics - Leanne.simpson@falkirk.gov.uk
Science – John.mclean@falkirk.gov.uk
Creativity (Art, Drama and Music) – brian.morris@falkirk.gov.uk
Humanities (Geography, History, Modern Studies and RMPS) - fiona.malcolm@falkirk.gov.uk
Technologies (DET, Graphic Com, Bus Man, Admin, Computing) – lan.vosser@falkirk.gov.uk
Modern Languages – Susan.dunn@falkirk.gov.uk
Health and well Being (PE, Practical cookery, HFT and Dance) – Darren.yeates@falkirk.gov.uk

For pupil support – please contact Janine.white@falkirk.gov.uk and/or relevant key teachers

The following websites provide further strategies and support

www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk
<http://breathingspace.scot>

<https://www.seemescotland.org/>

You can also download apps which can help

<http://safespot.org.uk/the-app/> **SafeSpot** is an app designed to help young people improve their coping skills

<https://apps.beta.nhs.uk/chill-panda/> Learn to relax, manage your worries and improve your wellbeing with **Chill Panda**.

<http://sam-app.org.uk/> **SAM App** provides anxiety management advice and strategies on your mobile

<https://apps.beta.nhs.uk/catch-it/> Learn how to manage feelings like anxiety and depression with **Catch It**.

Prepare to Pass *@Braes*



Helping your child prepare for exams

It is important that young people are supported at home and school to prepare them well for prelim exams and other internal assessments as well as external exams.

The type of support required may depend upon the way the course is assessed, for example, assignments; case study; practical activity; performance; portfolio; project; question paper/test.

Regular attendance throughout the year will help to ensure that your child keeps up with course work and homework. We understand that due to the current circumstances that this might not always be possible, so pupils must ensure they can access their class team's pages and glow email accounts. As work missed will be placed and sent via this system. If your child is unsure how to do this please contact pastoral head immediately. If pupils do fall behind, through illness perhaps, do speak to the school about any further support which we can offer which will help them catch up.

Talking to your child to reassure and encourage them and taking an interest in what they are doing will help them get through what can be a stressful time and will help them to do their best.

What support is on offer in school?

➤ **Supported Study**

An extensive programme of supported study classes across a range of subjects has been running since August. Staff have been running classes both in person at the end of the school day and online. Information regarding these sessions are on our school website and are updated termly.

➤ **Braes Brains – Peer Tutoring**

Our Braes Brains Peer Tutors will be attending to offer support with coursework and homework tasks as well as tips, tricks and advice to help with studying. All our Braes Brains have been recommended by subject teachers having achieved success in SQA qualifications and demonstrated a positive work ethic in their subjects. Watch out for the students sporting “Braes Brain” badges and pop over to say hello and get some help!

You can also request one to one support sessions from a Braes Brains by speaking to your class teacher, Pastoral Head or Ms Taylor in the Drama Department.

➤ **Mentoring**

We will continue to offer our staff mentoring programme to give one-to-one support to pupils who would benefit from the additional support. In addition, we have a small group of S6 pupils who have offered to work with younger pupils to support their preparation for assessments and assist pupils keep on track in the current circumstances.

➤ **Easter School**

We hope to offer our usual, intensive subject specific exam preparation in the lead up to the SQA exam diet and will provide more information nearer the time. At present, the proposed dates for Easter School are **Tuesday 6th** and **Wednesday 7th April**.

There will be three sessions running each day:

Session 1 : 0855 – 1035

Session 2 : 1050 – 1230

Session 3 : 1315 – 1455

Pupils will be asked to sign up to sessions in advance so that staff can plan for the groups attending.

➤ **S5/6 Core Subjects (P.E., RMPS, PSE)**

In the lead up to the exams, pupils will be able to use most of this time to study for the upcoming exams. Pupils in S5 and S6 can select the dedicated study pathway within PE and will be given time where appropriate in PSE and RMPS. In addition, where appropriate, teachers from a range of departments may ask to work with individual pupils during this time, to support them to complete coursework or prepare for the final exam.

➤ **Stress Workshops**

Our Pastoral team work closely with pupils and are aware some find it very stressful in the lead up to exams. We will be running workshops in March to help pupils develop strategies to minimise their stress/anxiety levels in the lead up to the exam diet.

