

Grantown Grammar School

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THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE NA GAIDHEALTACHD

Mr Tom Magowan, Acting Head Teacher

17 March 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian,

COVID 19 school update

In line with current guidance, we have cancelled all school trips for this term and next. We have also cancelled all visitors, including music tuition services.

To reassure our pupils, we will hold a session on viruses in tutor time, today. At present, our staffing ratios allow us to remain open and we will keep you updated if this changes.

If your child is displaying any of these symptoms:

- **New cough, high temperature (flu like symptoms)**
- **Shortness of breath**

Please do not send them to school. Any young person in school with such symptoms will be asked to report to reception so that parents can collect them and take them home along with any siblings. The government advises a period of self-isolation (currently for a minimum of 14 days) for the whole household.

If you have any concerns about your child; they are vulnerable or have low immunity please call 111 or check NHS24 online for further advice, or contact your GP by telephone. Please do not visit your GP surgery in the first instance.

In the meantime, all staff and pupils will be directed to ensure frequent hand washing, and designated staff in school will be cleaning key areas on a regular basis during the day. Please ensure that your child is aware of the importance of regular hand washing, not putting hands near eyes, mouth, etc, whenever possible. Please also ensure that they understand the importance of looking after soap/soap dispensers in the school building. Any further information relating to COVID 19 will be shared as and when we receive it from Highland Council and/or Scottish Government.

Senior phase pupils and SQA exams

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is continuing to monitor the situation in close contact with the Scottish Government, other regulators and awarding bodies across the UK.

At present there is no change to the published National Qualifications examination timetable. Our advice therefore is to continue to prepare as normal. All current deadlines for coursework and other assessments remain in place and the exam timetable is currently scheduled to run from 27 April until 4 June 2020. Study leave for all senior pupils is to begin on Tuesday 21 April 2020, as per Highland Council guidelines.

Schools and Colleges across the country are also gathering Exceptional Circumstances evidence on candidate performance as they would do every year. This system is designed to help pupils gain an overall grade if they are unable to attend an exam. Every year, GGS staff collate a selection of materials (usually the prelim paper from January with one or two other pieces of evidence if required) for just such a scenario and we submit these every year for a handful of pupils who are ill or who have had a disruptive influence in their life, during exam time. It has been very successful over the years.

This year, staff are collecting a bit more evidence for some pupils, if they feel the prelim paper was not a true reflection of their level of work. This could be an exam style paper, examples of quality written pieces, etc. Many schools across the country would normally have an "Exit Prelim" like this, as it serves as a sound example of current level of work rather than the level of work produced in January. For many pupils, the prelim they produced is a good reflection of their overall work so these papers are being used simply as exam practise.

This has undoubtedly led to an element of stress for some pupils but much of what we are doing would be the norm at this time of year. Every year, Higher and Advanced Higher pupils need to submit the coursework element of their work by early April and many departments submit this early so that is completed before Easter. Teachers would normally be giving pupils, practice exam papers at this time of year to hone their skills for the exams which are scheduled for just after Easter but this year, with an element of doubt over the exams, these pieces would count towards Exceptional Circumstances rather than good old fashioned exam practise.

Invigilators play a critical role in the delivery of qualifications and with current government advice on "social distancing", we may need some extra invigilators to help come exam time. Our current team is prepared and ready for the exams but having a few people who could step in and help would be useful. If you feel you could help with this paid work, please contact the school and we can start processing new applicants.

The SQA is also strongly encouraging all candidates to sign up to MySQA, the online and text service, as a direct way for pupils to receive their results.

This is an unknown and stressful time for all involved. We fully understand that pupils and parents/guardians have a lot of questions, Highland Council will be updating schools at 3pm each day, as and when this comes in we will issue to parents/guardians. We will try to respond to any questions, however we are currently receiving a high volume of enquiries and will not be able to respond immediately.

Yours faithfully

Tom Magowan, Ruairidh Ross, Jared Simpson
Senior Management Team