



The Gordon Schools: Moving Learning Forwards during COVID-19

Dear Pupils and Families,

I hope that you are all as healthy as you can be at this time and managing to adjust to a new way of learning. Although it is not ideal, it is keeping us safe and supporting Government guidelines.

Regarding learning, my colleagues and I do understand that there are great variations across our community in terms of access to devices, IT know-how, broadband speeds and indeed, access to the internet at all. There will likely be a few of you at home too, all sharing devices and wi-fi. This situation is currently also mirrored across my teaching colleagues; many have families, child care and their own home learning to manage! Not all have good internet connections, fast devices and, globally, systems such as Microsoft Teams are not always allowing us to upload materials in the timescales we would like. Please be patient – this is one of the many new realities we are all having to re-adjust too!

It is important to note that teachers are currently engaged with submitting SQA Estimate Grades for certification in the current session, 2019-20 and this will lessen their ability to interact and contact pupils while this process is underway (it finishes on 29 May).

Scottish Government have clearly stated, “Our starting point is a clear understanding that schools are closed but learning continues; we all have a role to play in supporting learners. There is no expectation that the kind of learning approaches and experiences provided in schools will be replicated at home while schools are closed during Term 4. The primary focus of our education system...remains to ensure that pupils, teachers, practitioners, parents and carers are supported to cope with the challenging circumstances in which we all find ourselves in.” (Supporting Pupils, Parents And Teachers – Learning During Term 4, Scottish Government, April 2020).

We are, however, coming to that time of year in our School session when we would normally be looking ahead to starting a new timetable and new courses in June. That will almost certainly not happen in the traditional way, so we need to find a different way ahead for this year. A way that will move learning forwards but will also not create barriers upon our return. We are still collecting in course choice forms and there are classes which are over-subscribed where pupils will need to re-choose subjects. We would like to complete this process closer to the time when we have factual information on the future of school re-opening and the associated health implications around this, for example, social distancing, but the longer the current situation goes on, we may have to re-assess this

Scottish Government (who are fully in control of our education system) are clearly saying that any return to schooling will only happen when it is medically safe to do so and even then, it will happen in a phased or staged way that still allows for social distancing. (Please do not get confused with UK Government information about a possible June return – this is currently highly unlikely in Scotland.) Taken all together, we are planning for an unknown timescale towards the school session 2020-2021, that we do not yet know when it will actually get underway!

I am very deliberately not talking in terms of, “changing our timetable” here. We do not have the capability or capacity to begin to form and teach every new distinct class in June, with new session

teachers beginning to support class-based and individualised learning for all as they usually would in the same way as if we had fully completed the course choice process and we were back in the physical building teaching assigned classes.

“Moving learning forwards” instead means giving pupils opportunities to engage with the skills and theory that will support learning at the appropriate levels once more formal education begins. Teachers will post learning assignments, create new “Teams” where possible, and refer pupils to new resources that support the skills and content that will underpin their new courses. We will also upload as many resources to our TGS School website as we can for those families with more limited access to IT and devices and/or who have issues with Teams. Paper copies of resources is also possible but not a straight-forward or quick option in current circumstances.

Please note that for those pupils who are moving forwards into the new S5 and new S6, when it comes to their current subjects they are progressing from, all new learning will be based on the premise that pupils have consolidated the learning that would be necessary for the lower levels they had been engaging with; National 4 for National 5; National 5 for Higher and; Higher for Advanced Higher. This will also apply to learning within the Broad General Education for new S2 and S3 pupils as well as for those moving from S3 in the S4 Senior Phase.

Please see below our timeline for moving forwards with learning:

When	What & Who
From 20 April	Continue to engage with revising the learning that has been on-going this session, had there been an exam diet: S4, S5 & S6 pupils.
From 27 April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scheduled learning activities for S2 for the coming week posted up by a Monday lunch time • scheduled learning activities for National level pupils for the coming week posted up by a Monday at 1600 • scheduled learning activities for S1 for the coming week posted up by a Tuesday lunchtime • scheduled learning activities for S3 for the coming week posted up by a Tuesday 1600 • scheduled learning activities for Higher and Advanced Higher for the coming week posted up by a Wednesday lunchtime
<p>N.B. Teachers begin the process of collating evidence and moderating judgments around SQA Estimates for current S4, S5 & S6 pupils. These are due to be submitted to the SQA by 29 May. There is a considerable workload involved in this process. It means teachers will unable to spend as much time on setting, marking and feeding back to learners until this process is completed.</p>	
Between beginning 4 May and 11 May	<p>Faculties and subjects begin to open-up learning opportunities which will allow current S4 and S5 pupils to access learning at a higher level than they are currently accessing for the subjects they have chosen for session 2020/2021.</p> <p>As above for current S1 and S6 pupils. S2 & S3 pupils may wish to prioritise learning in those subjects which they are taking forwards in S3 and S4 next session.</p>

Friday 8 May	National May Day holiday: no School
From 11 May	Current S4 and S5 pupils engage with learning on their chosen subjects for session 2020/2021. As above for current S1, S2, S3 and S6 pupils .
31 May	Official Leaving Date for all S6 and other eligible leavers from S4 and S5
Monday 1 June	Local Huntly Holiday: no School
Tuesday 2 June onwards	S1 become S2; S2 become S3; S3 become S4 & S5 become S6. All pupils will now be engaging with new learning for session 2020-21. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scheduled learning activities for new S2 for the coming week posted up by a Monday lunchtime • scheduled learning activities for new National level pupils for the coming week posted up by a Tuesday lunchtime • scheduled learning activities for new S3 for the coming week posted up by a Tuesday 1600 • scheduled learning activities for new Higher and Advanced Higher for the coming week posted up by a Wednesday lunchtime
Monday 6 July	First day of the School 6-week summer holidays 😊

We have taken this decision based on what we believe is right for this community and School. There will be variations around Aberdeenshire and Scotland but we must implement a plan that works best for the colleagues, young people and families we are supporting here and now.

TGS is committed to supporting our young people moving forwards with their learning. If you have a young person at home who is contemplating leaving School for further/higher education or employment next session, please get in touch with us as soon as possible. Do make the most of the learning opportunities available in case that this situation changes and they return to School.

If you would like any support with moving learning forwards for our young people, please do get in touch. With very best wishes for health and happiness for everyone 😊

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