



Together Growing Succeeding



**The Gordon Schools Newsletter (9)
Session 2020-21
31st March 2021**



Hello to all our Parents & Carers, Families and Pupils,

As we head towards the Easter holidays, this Newsletter lets you know about, amongst other things, our next phase of return to School for our pupils on 19 April and, information about our plans for supporting pupils gaining their SQA qualifications next term. Please also be aware of new and changed calendar dates.

Information for you:

- **Full return to School (!) Monday 19 April**
- **SQA update**
- **Key Worker and other supported pupils**
- **COVID-19 asymptomatic testing programme**
- **Course choice and personalisation for session 21-22**
- **Changes to our Canteen food due to new Scottish legislation**
- **Free school meals entitlement**
- **Session 2020-21 key calendar dates**
- **Staffing update**
- **Contacting TGS & Accessing Aberdeenshire Council Services**

Full return to School (!) Monday 19 April

On Monday 19 April, assuming national health advice support this, there will be a full return for all pupils S1, S2, S3, S4, S5 & S6 to The Gordon Schools, following their normal full timetables each day Monday to Friday.

Health and safety will continue to be very important, as we are still in a Level 4 situation with regards to Covid-19 Government restrictions. Therefore, the wearing of face masks will still be a requirement for all known non-exempt pupils when we return. Pupils must also be regularly washing and/or sanitising their hands during the day and follow our one-way system around TGS.

At social times, morning interval and lunchtime, we continue to strongly encourage pupils to be outside as much as possible, weather permitting.

At interval and lunch times, we again strongly encourage pupils to purchase their food and drink from our School canteen and not venture out into the community. IF anyone does, they must adhere to social distancing and obey restrictions in our local shops.

For ordering lunch, it would really help our Canteen colleagues and also reduce food waste if pupils could use the **Fusion app** to order their meals in advance. There will be pick-up points around the School for collecting their lunches. Many thanks for considering this option!

SQA Update

As previously communicated, we have identified an Assessment Window, (Monday 26th April – Friday 21st May), during Term 4, which will be used to gather the high- quality assessment evidence required to certificate SQA pupils this academic session. We are only allowed to make evidence-based decisions this session (last session we combined evidence together with inferred judgement – see accompanying letter for our Director of Education & Children’s Services for more detailed information).

At present, for the majority of subjects and/or levels, pupils will be assessed during class time and a timetable is being produced for this. This will be communicated with pupils on their return to school after the Easter Break. We are working to ensure that pupils are supported during this time and any additional assessment arrangements will be being discussed with pupils.

Our teaching colleagues have also been working hard to ensure that they are fully aware of the updated SQA guidance regarding the setting, marking standards and moderation of assessment materials. As part of this process, we have been working with colleagues within the school, across Aberdeenshire, and on a National level in some cases. We will continue to do this to ensure that we can be confident in the validity of our assessment evidence.

Once pupils have completed their assessments, our teaching colleagues will mark these to the standards shared by the SQA, and they will work collegiately with others to ensure that this standard is being applied consistently (the moderation process). As I am sure you can appreciate, this process will rightly take time and, our faculties will be unable to confirm assessment results with pupils until after this process has been completed.

I am aware that there will be a high level of anxiety around assessments this year but please try to be re-assured by the fact that we are all working together to ensure that we are able to give our pupils the best opportunity to successfully evidence the learning that they have achieved this year in the most manageable way we can.

Key Worker and other supported pupils' scheme

With the return to full-time schooling after Easter, this facility will no longer be available. I'd like to extend my thanks to all of the School and Library colleagues who have been a fantastic support, going all the way back to last April 2020 😊

We've been very impressed at the way our young people have engaged with this support too and formed a very positive learning community together!

COVID-19 asymptomatic testing programme

Thank you to those pupils who have opted into the asymptomatic testing programme. A reminder that testing is not required during the Easter break. Pupils should next test on Sunday 18th April, prior to their return to TGS the next day. Testing should then be twice weekly on a Sunday and Wednesday.

Any pupil who still wishes to take part, can pick up a consent form after Easter, and following its return, collect a supply of test kits and step-by-step guide from our School Office. If you would like to see what the test involves (two times each week), see the online video at: www.gov.uk/covid19-self-test-help

N.B. This regular testing is **only** for individuals without symptoms. Those with symptoms must continue to follow national guidance. They **must** self-isolate and book a PCR test at a test centre or via a home test kit at the earliest opportunity. People with symptoms **must not** rely on a negative LFD result to continue to attend school.

Course choice and personalisation for session 21-22

Thank you to all parents/carers for your support with this process. Pupils have now completed their initial choices using Microsoft Forms, which has been shared with Principal Teachers of subjects and Guidance to ensure pupils have courses suitable for their future pathways and learning needs.

The final stage of the process is for pupils to have their final TOOLS submission completed by the end of Friday 23rd of April. We are anticipating that timetables will change in either the last or second last week of term.

Changes to our Canteen food due to new Scottish legislation

The Nutritional Requirements for Food and Drink in Schools (Scotland) Regulations 2020 are due to be implemented in schools on 8 April 2021.

The regulations apply to all food and drink served anywhere in our School across the school day, including breakfast clubs, lunch service, tuckshops, social enterprise activities, classes where food is being used and vending machines. The regulations have been introduced to ensure that schools continue to provide healthy and nutritious food and drink options that meet the standards set out.

The amount of sugar served in snacks and puddings in particular is being greatly reduced. Our canteen is working hard to offer alternatives which meet the new regulations. Please find below the link to the statutory guidance supporting the implementation of the regulations:

[Healthy eating in schools: guidance 2020 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/healthy-eating-in-schools-guidance-2020/pages/introduction.aspx)

Free school meals entitlement &

Funding available to support families eligible for free school meals

Please see below the future arrangements for direct payments of free school meals:

Primary and secondary pupils (Easter break 5 April 2021 – 18 April 2021)

- All pupils entitled to statutory free school meals will receive a payment of £135.00 for the period 5 April 2021 to 18 April 2021. The payment is comprised by 2 weeks free school meals entitled at £12.50 per week, £5 per week breakfast money and the inclusion of the Spring Hardship payment of £100 announced by the Scottish Government.
- Payment will be made on or around 31 March 2021.

Arrangements from 5 April 2021

- As all pupils will have returned to school after the Easter break, statutory free school meal payments will only be made to those pupils entitled to statutory free school meals if the absence is as a result of non-attendance due to Covid-19 isolation or closure.

- Will I qualify for Free School Meals / School Clothing Grant & how do I apply?

Please use you the following link to make an application for the above. This application process will advise you if you meet the eligibility criteria: [Apply here](#)

A school clothing grant is currently £100 per eligible child, per year. More information about Free School Meals and School Clothing Grants can be found [here](#).

To view information on the School's uniform policy & dress code, together with where you can purchase uniform please visit our website:

www.gordonschools.aberdeenshire.sch.uk/uniform-purchase/

Session 2020-21 key calendar dates

We will add to this during the Term. Currently, the key dates are below.

Please note that we are now unable to confirm assessment & reporting deadlines and Easter Revision until we have received finalised SQA deadlines.

April 1	S4/5/6 Progress Update issued to families
April 1	Thursday: Last day of learning in Term 3
April 2	Good Friday Holiday
13 – 15 April inclusive	Easter Revision for S4/5/6 pupils in the TGS building. Thank you to those who have signed up for this.
April 19	First day back for all in Term 4
Monday 26 April – Friday 21 May	Final SQA Assessment Evidence gathering window for S4/5/6 pupils opens and closes
April 27	Parents in Partnership Meeting (4) on Microsoft Teams
May 3	May Day Monday holiday
June 3	Additional Scottish Government In-Service days to support our SQA moderation processes. No TGS pupil attendance.
June 4	
June 7	Local Holiday
June 8	Parents in Partnership A.G.M. (5) on Microsoft Teams
June 14	Start of 5-day visit for new Primary 7s moving into S1 tbc
June 22	S1, S2 and S3 Merit Ceremonies Recorded for on-line
June 23	Prize Giving Ceremony Recorded for on-line
June 25	Last day of Term 4 and session 2020-21
August 10	SQA Results Certificates issued to pupils
August 16	Staff return to TGS for session 2021-22

Staffing Update

Congratulations to Mrs Robertson who has been appointed to the post of full-time permanent Guidance Teacher for Badenoch House. We wish her every success in post 😊

Mrs Barraclough, who has been with us in the Additional Support for Learning Department, has secured a new post outside of education – best wishes for the next stage in your journey.

Next term we will be welcoming Postgraduate Student teachers from Aberdeen University and Edinburgh University supporting our delivery of Science and P.E.

Contacting TGS & Accessing Aberdeenshire Council Services

Please either download the 'MyAberdeenshire' app for your phone / device or register on-line at 'MyAberdeenshire' to access services provided by Aberdeenshire Council.

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/my>

Services include iPay payments ('School payments' including paying for school meals, services and activities); 'Parents Portal'; School Closures and Term dates, for example.

Please use the following to contact The Gordon Schools:

The Gordon Schools

Huntly

AB54 4SE

Phone (available 08:00 – 17:00): 01466 **405990** (note: **new number**)

You will be given two options:

Option 1: To report an absence (only between 08:00 – 17:00)

Option 2: All other enquiries

From 17:00-08:00 there is a voicemail service for you to leave a message (absence or otherwise) and we will respond to this as soon as we can.

Web: <http://www.gordonschools.aberdeenshire.sch.uk>

E-mail: gordonschools.aca@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Finally...

As always, thank you parents and carers for your support and understanding during the past year of lockdown. Together, our community has really shown what we can do positively when we're faced with a challenge. We have undoubtedly grown from it, learned from it, & in so many ways, supported each other when things got tough.

There have been many successes, both individual and collective – we must remember and celebrate these, as well as supporting those who have suffered and been placed in really difficult circumstances by the pandemic.

It is now Spring, a time of renewal and renewed hope for a healthier and happier future for all our community members. We look forwards to welcoming all of our young people back on the 19th to continue their learning journey with us.

Best wishes to all for a happy and healthy break – take care everyone 😊!

Phil



Phil Gaiter
Rector
The Gordon Schools



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