



Together Growing Succeeding



The Gordon Schools Newsletter (3) Session 2021-22

22nd December 2021

Hello & Festive Greetings to all our Parents & Carers,
Families and Pupils!

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Greetings!

Hello and thank you for reading our Christmas Newsletter. Also being passed on to you today is a letter from Laurence Findlay, our Director of Education & Children's Services.

As with the rest of society, TGS is continuing to adapt what we can and are unable to do to suit the ever-changing health situation and accompanying guidance. We received very favourable feedback in November from both pupils and business colleagues around our scaled-down Careers event. We have made great use of the

new outdoor John Swan Atrium to hold our Prince's Trust Christmas Fair and PiP Christmas Wreath-making event. Sadly, our Christmas Dances and Theme Day are now in the postponed category. IF and when there is a change that allows us to proceed with these, we will certainly look for a window of opportunity.

We will find out during this two week break if there is to be any updated advice from Scottish Government over what schools will look like post-Christmas break. We will communicate this out to you as soon as we are able to. On behalf of all colleagues and pupils at TGS, I wish everyone a happy and healthy festive time 😊. Enjoy!

Promoting Positive Behaviour update

TGS introduced a new Promoting Positive Behaviour policy after the November In-Service days. We are happy to now be communicating more regularly with families around celebrating success and flagging up concerns earlier. So far, we are very happy with the feedback received and pupils are noticing the difference too in a positive way. Thank you for your support and partnership around this!

Parents Meetings online

Current Covid-19 guidance does not allow us to have face-to-face parents' meetings this session. However, TGS has purchased an on-line facility that does at least allow for short online appointments. We have trialled this with S4/5/6 families and feedback has been relatively positive from both families and School colleagues. We apologise that your appointments may seem shorter and are on a timer that cuts-off on the exact second an appointment is finished. This is simply to keep the evening on track for all and out-with our control.

You will receive information to help you make your bookings in advance of the Parents' Meeting. If you are unable to make use of this facility, please do contact TGS and we will make alternative arrangements with you. Thank you for your patience and understanding with this as we adapt to changed times!

SQA

As I write this, the planned SQA full exam diet is still scheduled for next year for all National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher pupils.

(see TGS calendar dates for the start and end dates + timetable link below):

https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/nq-2022-exam-timetable.pdf

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/41615.html> (Personal exam timetable builder)

N.B. TGS **can and will change the start and end times of SQA exams** to suit our own requirements. These will be intimated nearer the time. The above SQA links will give you the correct **day, but not necessarily the time.**

To give our pupils the experience of what an exam diet is like and to support us with gathering evidence of learning, there will be a 'Prelim' diet for S4/5/6 pupils in exam subjects, beginning on January 12th. Pupils will attend TGS as normal during this time.

Session 2021-22 key calendar dates

Please see below for our planned calendar dates for the remainder of this session 2021-22.

5 January 2022	Pupils and Staff return to TGS for Term 3 (Wednesday)
12 January	S4/5/6 Prelim Diet begins for SQA exam subjects All pupils attend School normally during this time
13 January	S1 Parents Meeting On-line (Thursday)
18 January	TGS Parents in Partnership meeting (3)
31 January	Danish Primary colleagues in School & Cluster this week tbc
2 February	S3 Full Report to families
3 February	Final day of S4/5/6 Prelims
9 February	Primary 7 Parents Information Evening (1): On-line
10 February	Occasional Day holiday (1) (Thursday) &
11 February	Occasional Day holiday (2) (Friday)
14 February	Aberdeenshire Mid-Term holiday (Monday)
15 February	In-Service days (4) & (5): no pupil attendance –
16 February	staff colleagues only (Tuesday & Wednesday)
17 February	Pupils and Staff return (Thursday)
23 February	S3 Parents Meeting On-line (Wednesday)
3 March	Theme Day (re-arranged date – restriction dependent)
10 March	S4/5/6 Senior Phase Full Report to families
29 March	Final recommended SQA Levels to S4/5/6 families
1 April	Last pupil day of Term 3 in School (Friday)
2 April – 17 April	Easter Holidays tbc S4/5/6 'Easter Revision' during these holidays
18 April	Pupils and Staff return to TGS for Term 4 (Monday)
25 April	Last day in TGS for S4/5/6 pupils
26 April	SQA National Exam diet begins S4/5/6 pupils begin Study Leave and Course Completion Time TGS Parents in Partnership meeting (4)

2 May	Normal School day (see 2 nd June instead for re-arranged May Day holiday)
19 May	S2 Tracking Report to families
1 June	Last day of SQA National Exam diet
2 nd & 3 rd June	Queens Diamond Jubilee holidays for all
6 June	Occasional Day holiday (3) (Monday)
7 June	Planned timetable change for 2022-23 S1 Full Report to families TGS Parents in Partnership Annual General Meeting
20 June	tbc Primary 7 transition day (½ of the year group)
21 June	tbc Primary 7 transition day (other ½ of the year group)
22 June – 24 June	tbc Primary 7 transition days: whole year group on the Wednesday, Thursday and Friday
23 June	Primary 7 Information Evening (2) online
28 June	BGE Celebration of Learning online
29 June	TGS Prize Giving online
1 July	Last pupil day of Term 4 in School (Friday)
2 July – 21 August	Summer break (seven weeks)
9 August	SQA Results Certificates issued to pupils
22 August	In-Service day: no pupil attendance – staff colleagues only
23 August	Term 1, Session 2022-23 begins for all pupils

Traffic, parking & road sense around TGS

During these darker winter days and afternoons, we want to continue to remind you about the dangers surrounding traffic congestion and parking in the mornings, lunchtimes and at going home time.



All pupils should remember to use the service of our Crossing Patrollers at all times on Castle Street in particular, when going to and from TGS. **Wait** until the Patroller has stopped all traffic and it is safe to cross. **Do not** cross yourself near or beside the junction as this causes danger and confusion with motorists.

IF you drop off/ pick-up your child near TGS, do find a safe setting-down place that is well away from our crossing patroller and does not obstruct anyone's vision and line of sight who may be crossing the road. Be very mindful also of the many minibuses and large coaches which need access to the School and take-up a substantial part of the road when entering and leaving the area around TGS.

We also do have pupils who cycle to TGS. Make sure you leave adequate room for them if you are overtaking and check your blind-spots when turning corners. Let's all work together to keep everyone safe!

COVID-19 asymptomatic testing programme: for everyone!

New Scottish Government guidance means that any pupil who wishes can now simply collect a supply of test kits and step-by-step guide from our School Office.

N.B. This regular testing is **only** for individuals without symptoms. Those with symptoms must continue to follow national guidance. People with symptoms **must not** rely on a negative LFD result to continue to attend School. Book a PCR test!

Reminder, if any member of a household has a positive + LFD, **the whole household must self-isolate**, until a PCR test is booked and the result is confirmed. If **any** member of a household has a positive PCR test, the **whole household** must self-isolate for 10 days.

Steps for a Sustainable Christmas

We know sustainability is probably not something you associate with the festive season, but here are a few simple things you can do that will make a collective impact:

1. Make your christmas dinner with locally grown/sourced meat and vegetables (e.g. Thorneybank Farm Shop near Forgue)
2. Make sure you use your food waste bins for any leftovers you don't eat
3. Get creative with your gift-wrapping and use recyclable paper (standard wrapping paper can't be recycled)
e.g. Newspaper, brown paper or even reusable fabric gift wrapping
4. Support local shops when buying gifts for loved ones (e.g. Huntly's Ethical Gift Shop)



Direct payment of Free School Meals for December 2021 holidays

All pupils currently entitled to statutory free school meals, will receive a payment of £25.00 for the period 22nd December 2021 to 4th January 2022. The payment is comprised by two weeks free school meals at £12.50 per week.

Scottish Child Bridging Payment – December 2021

All pupils currently entitled to statutory free school meals, will receive a Scottish Child Bridging Payment of £160.00.

- Do I need to apply for this funding and when will I receive payment?
Eligible families already in receipt of free school meals, do not have to apply for this funding. Payment will be made direct to your nominated bank account by 17 December 2021.
- I have recently applied for Free School Meals but I've not been notified of the outcome

If you have recently applied for income based free school meals, please be assured that Aberdeenshire Council are dealing with all applications as quickly as possible and will contact you directly when your application has been processed.

Families who are on a low income but not currently in receipt of free school meals can check entitlement by completing the following online form:

https://aberdeenshirecouncil.formstack.com/forms/free_school_meals_school_clothing_grant_application_form

Children are eligible for free school meals if their parents (or carers) are in receipt of a qualifying benefit. The current qualifying benefits and allowances are:

- Income Support (IS)
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance (JSA)
- Pension Credit (Guarantee Credit)
- Any income related element of Employment Support Allowance
- Child Tax Credit (CTC), but not Working Tax Credit (WTC), and have an income of less than £16,105
- Both Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit with an income of less than £7,500
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Universal Credit with a monthly take home pay of less than £625 (the qualifying benefits and allowances are subject to change)

If you are aged 16-18 years-old and receive any of the above qualifying benefits in your own right, you can apply for free school meals.

Future Payments 2022/2023

Four equal payments of £130 will be made at Easter, Summer, October and Christmas along with direct payment of free school meals. The payments will be made in line with the start of the school holidays. Further information will be provided in advance of the payment dates.

For more information please visit: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/school-info/assistance/free-school-meals/>

Adverse Weather

Just a reminder that in times of inclement weather schools may be closed or transport may not be able to run. There are a number of places where you can get information on your schools' status.

Twitter <http://twitter.com/aberdeenshire>

Aberdeenshire Council Website <https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/Apps/schools-closures/>

You also have the option to sign up to receive email alerts when your school(s) updates their closure status: <https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/myAberdeenshire/>

School Information Line Tel: 0370 054 4999 then 021130. If you cannot get through first time, please do not put this number on redial. This will only lead to the line being busier.

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 405 990

You will be given two options:

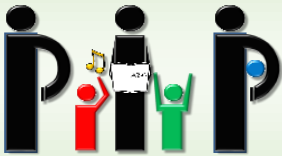
Option 1: To report an absence (only between 08:00 – 17:00)

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



If you would like to e-mail our Parents in Partnership body, please use the **new e-mail address**: pip4tgs@gmail.com
Joyce Reed (Chair); Laura Thomson (Secretary) & Mary Turner (Treasurer)

Finally...



Just when we thought we were on the way to getting back to something closer to our past lives...

I hope that all families get the chance to relax a little and enjoy some festive cheer over the break. Our thoughts are certainly with those who are or will have to self-isolate over the holidays...

If any young people need to reach out for help, do remember that both 'Kooth' and 'togetherall' are here to help:

kooth
For children and young people 10-18 years (up to 19th birthday)
Safe & Secure access to support from a team of qualified professionals & self help tools

Online 24/7
365 days
a year

free, safe and anonymous online counselling and support.

To access register at:
www.kooth.com

counselling & emotional support service

Struggling to cope? You don't have to do it alone ...
Togetherall offers a safe and anonymous community to connect with from anywhere at any time!
For young people and adults 16+

Input your postcode at:
www.togetherall.com

Trained accredited professionals

togetherall
Get support. Take control. Feel better.

If you need to talk, get advice or are lonely, you can also call the
Samaritans: 116 123

Take care & very best wishes.

A Happy New Year when it comes!

Phil

Phil Gaiter

Rector

The Gordon Schools

