



Together Growing Succeeding

The Gordon Schools Newsletter 7
Session 2020-21
11th March 2021



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

This Newsletter is mainly focussed on our next phase of return to School for our pupils next week until the Easter break. This is being communicated out to you today by e-mail, following the announcement from The First Minister this afternoon that the Government plans for re-opening are in line with health advice.

It has been extremely challenging to put together a timetable for all pupils but you'll see below our rationale and constraints together with a snapshot of what will be happening. Many thanks for your understanding and patience with this!

Information for you:

- **Partial return to School (!) 15 March – 01 April (inclusive)**
- **Key Worker and other supported pupils**
- **COVID-19 asymptomatic testing programme**
- **Course choice and personalisation for session 21-22**
- **SQA update**
- **Active Schools: Stay Home, Stay Active with Active Schools Week 8**
- **Contacting TGS & Accessing Aberdeenshire Council Services**

Partial return to School (!) 15 March – 01 April (inclusive)

We were tasked by Scottish Government and in turn by Aberdeenshire ECS leaders to balance together 4 priorities in making-up the timetable until Easter:

- 1** prioritise opportunities for senior phase pupils with SQA coursework
- 2** maintain our current keyworker and vulnerable pupil provision
- 3** provide S1, S2 & S3 pupils with a school experience each week to support their health & wellbeing, literacy and numeracy
- 4** support 2 metre social distancing through reduced class sizes (classes are required to be around 1/3 to 1/2 of our usual capacity)

Taking these priorities together, the broad brush picture around the return for what is possible at TGS is:

- S1 & S2 in ½ year groups, 1a and 1b; 2a and 2b.
- S3 in as a year group – see below for how groups/days are organised.
- All S1, S2 & S3 provision (except Keyworker and Vulnerable) is ½ day. Buses have been organised to come in at 13:30 to take pupils home. This allows us to have a greater priority for our Senior pupils in the afternoons.
- S1, S2 & S3 pupils will be taught in ‘Home Rooms’. This means that our teachers will rotate around the different classes to reduce the flow of pupils and contact in the building.
- Timetabled classes for S4, S5 & S6 pupils are full-day between Monday and Thursday, except any pupils with Study periods and/or College periods in the afternoon, who will go home.
- We have invited in some pupils on Fridays to support their learning with practical subjects.
- S4, S5 & S6 pupils will be taught in two ½’s, with a different half coming in each day. A day consists of three double periods per day, again reducing pupils flow around the building. Each double period will cover one of the columns from which pupils have chosen their subjects. During each week, S4, S5 & S6 pupils will experience each of their subjects for one double period.
- There will be no Study classes in the afternoon - pupils timetabled for study in columns which are timetabled for after lunch will go home at lunch time (1.30pm pick-up for those on a bus).

How our week is organised:

Monday: S1a (1.30pm pick up) = (1/2 of S1) + 1/2 of Snr Phase

Tuesday: S1b (1.30pm pick up) = (second 1/2 of S1) + 1/2 of Snr Phase

Wednesday: S2a (1.30pm pick up) = (1/2 of S2) + 1/2 of Snr Phase

Thursday: S2b (1.30pm pick up) = (second 1/2 of S2) + 1/2 of Snr Phase

Friday: S3 (1.30pm pick up) = (all of S3) + Invited Practical Snr Phase

When you receive the timetable for your child, please ensure that they take note (or a photo on their mobile) of the rooms and classes they have been assigned to. This will ensure that we can maximise productive time in School for both pupils as well as my colleagues. Unfortunately, we will not be able to swap groups or classes around.

Our previous Covid-19 mitigations will remain and be enhanced with masks for S1 – S3 pupils as well as Senior Phase pupils, lateral flow testing available for colleagues and Senior Phase pupils (see below), two metre social distancing for all inside, reduced canteen seated capacity and reduced class sizes. S1-S3 pupil will also have the opportunity to opt into lateral flow testing after Easter. We will issue further information to S1-S3 families at the end of next week.

If your child is in S1, S2 & S3, please ensure that they have their own mask where appropriate, regularly wash and/or sanitise their hands during the day, maintain a two metre social distance from their peers as well as other adults in the School and follow our one-way system around TGS.

At social times, morning interval and lunchtime, we strongly encourage pupils to be outside as much as possible and 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 three pick-up points around the School for collecting their lunches. Many thanks for considering this option!

Key Worker and other supported pupils

All of our pupils who have been attending TGS since January as Keyworker pupils or being supported in-School with their on-line learning, can continue this right through until we break for Easter. We would ask that all of our Key Worker and other supported pupils join-in with their timetabled classes in the morning, unless advised otherwise, and then join in with other Keyworker and supported pupils in the afternoon in our designated rooms: A12, The Flat and D10 (change from our usual D8).

COVID-19 asymptomatic testing programme

The asymptomatic testing programme will be expanded to include all S1, S2 and S3 pupils after Easter. Pupils can pick up a consent form when they return to the building and, following it's return, collect a supply of test kits and step-by-step guide from our School Office so they are ready to begin testing after the Easter break.

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

The purpose of the testing is to contribute to the reduction of COVID-19-related risks in schools, and in so doing to enhance the confidence of our school communities. It will do this by helping to identify asymptomatic individuals in school environments at the earliest possible opportunity and asking them and their close contacts to self-isolate, thus minimising the likelihood of them passing on the virus.

This programme is voluntary – nobody will be required to undergo testing without consent, and nobody will be excluded from school if they do not wish to test. However, we are asking that all pupils be strongly encouraged to participate, in order to contribute to the wellbeing of their school communities.

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

You will have received a notification that information to support this process is now up on our TGS website. There is a short introductory video, PowerPoints with voice overs to guide you through the key questions and supports and, the first stage Form to be returned indicating your choices, priorities and reserves. There is separate information for S2 into S3; S3 into S4 and; S4 & S5 into S5 & S6.

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 (15 March 2021 to 4 April 2021)

- Payment for primary school pupils will cease with effect from 15 March 2021
- Secondary pupils entitled to statutory free school meals will continue to receive payment for a three-week period from 15 March 2021 to 4 April 2021. The payment of £52.50 per pupil, is comprised by 3 weeks free school meals entitlement at £12.50 per week and £5 per week breakfast money.
- Payment will be made on or around 15 March 2021.
- There will be provision of meals for any pupils in attendance and these meals will be provided for in the normal way.

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 and 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](#).

SQA Update

The SQA have, this week, finalised their submission dates for schools to provide their provisional grades at all levels. As well as the assessments/exams that pupils will be undertaking, we are also putting in place systems for moderation to ensure that our assessments and evidence have been constructed, marked and graded in a consistent and fair manner across our School and wider in most cases.

Between now and Easter the focus in class will be course completion, revision and checking that pupils are where they need to be for post-Easter assessments. We will share our timings for these once we have had the chance to re-connect with pupils in the building. I'll also let you know whether we are able to offer Easter Revision during the second week of the break.

Active Schools: Stay Home, Stay Active with Active Schools Week 8

This week promises to a bumper week of activity in our #StayActive series. We're bringing you lots of fantastic activities and challenges to take part in.

First up is our second "By Kids for Kids" challenge and this week it is 'Burpees'.

- How many can you complete in 60 seconds?
- Can you or your pupils reach the Gold standard?

A video giving an example of the challenge is available on the Live Life Aberdeenshire YouTube channel but check out the attachment for full instructions. By Kids for Kids Challenge 2 – <https://youtu.be/Q0PMMWx79cl>

If that wasn't enough, on social media we also have Seated Exercise with Fiona on Wednesday at 2pm, Football Skills with Andy on Thursday at 2pm and Fun Fitness with Ashleigh on Friday at 2pm this week so there's lots of great activities to get pupils moving:

Seated Exercises with Fiona 2 - <https://youtu.be/fLK60Yduavo>
Football Skills with Andy 4 - <https://youtu.be/RabKRMRHwBo>
Fun Fitness with Ashleigh Session 5 - <https://youtu.be/b5tEWgc6coQ>

These videos are available now on the Live Life Aberdeenshire YouTube channel within the Active Schools Join In Playlist:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLf9SJJOlgiNL5zD4xvzj9nYXJkTvqOue6>

Archie's Quizzes

Archie's back this week with a general sports quiz for everyone to take part in. Each quiz is designed for a specific age group however why not give them all a go and see what you know about sport.

S1+ - <http://bit.ly/ArchiesQuiz2S1>

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...

A year ago today, the World Health Organisation declared that Covid-19 was a pandemic...today, we have the first real signs that we are heading towards some degree of normality in our School and hopefully beyond! 😊

From 19th April, the Scottish Government intend that all pupils return to School, following their 5-day usual timetables – subject to health advice and mitigations. Let's hope that this is the reality!

In the meantime, thank you for your patience and everything you have been doing at home to support and promote health & wellbeing and learning over the past year – maybe soon, everyday will not be a home-school day!!!

Best wishes to all,

Phil

Phil Gaiter

Rector

The Gordon Schools



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