

Parent Council Q&A – Impact of COVID-19 - 27th May 2020

Questions from members of the Parent Council.

Answers provided by Head teacher.

These are as accurate as possible but may be subject to change depending on evolving national and local guidelines.

Q: We've heard about academic subjects - what about teaching practical subjects and organising placements etc?

A: Technical subjects can still be delivered remotely next term, according to the teachers. SQA will announce expectations for practical subjects later. We are unable to answer the question about college and placements yet.

Q: What about using the existing school building?

A: Robertson's will take over the building when we get access to the new campus. It's unlikely we'll be able to use it - there are practical and staffing difficulties of managing across two campuses. Will need to use new spaces in the campus creatively.

Q: Will teachers get early access to set up classrooms before August?

A: The school is not finished so this isn't possible. To get access to the new school we need to complete risk assessments and check safety procedures after the building is finished. To get the building ready, we need to ensure sub-contractors are able to finish – we have been delayed by 4-6 weeks by illness, isolation and lockdown so finishing the campus will probably take up to the end of the summer holidays. We will therefore need some closure days – possibly two, rather than the four we should have had over Easter. So in first week (week 0 – 11th August), the school may just open for S1 pupils with the rotas starting the following week.

Q: When will information go out to parents about plans for re-starting school?

A: Approval will take some time so plans can't be confirmed yet. Will hopefully release videos explaining the plans next week.

Q: What about parents who are scared to send their children back to school next term?

A: Current engagement rate is 80-85% so there is already a worry about missing students. But next term parents and carers will have to make decisions based on their own situation – pupils can still access lessons remotely.

Q: Can anything be done about the issue of different levels of work being given out across year groups:

A: This is being raised with staff – they are aware of current variability.

Q: For transport, how will social distancing work?

A: This is still unknown. There are ideas for transport but this is potentially a big issue – buses will need to run far below capacity (e.g., 13 children on a 50-seater). We could survey parents to see who has the option of driving children to school but there is obviously concern about families where that can't happen. May need to prioritise transport children who can't otherwise get to school. We can't open the school to Inverurie pupils and not for those who are transported.

Q: What about staggered arrival times?

A: We might have separate senior and junior arrival times. We might also have reduced/staggered lunch and break times.

Q: Will the P7-S1 transition week go ahead?

A: Yes this will happen – full week of virtual learning, video messages from reg teacher, Google classes, etc.

Q: What about outside learning – is this applicable to the academy?

A: There is not much outside space because the old school demolition hasn't happened yet. We have some terraces and balconies but these are limited and outside learning is weather-dependent. We do have four large learning plazas inside which will be useful.

Q (From local councillor): Is there a good level of team support for organisation?

A: It's currently difficult to get consistency across secondary schools within the region because each is dealing with different issues (e.g., transported pupil levels) but there is a network of local HTs so lots of communication. Within the school, logistics are difficult and planning staffing levels will continue to be difficult, but the depute team is coping.

Q: After the parent survey has closed, how will information be shared?

A: Feedback has been really useful. We can either share it with PC or share a summary with PC or all parents?

Q (From local councillor): The campus not currently deemed 'essential construction' but the case needs to be made for bumping it up the priority list.

A: Currently working with staff from Queensferry Campus (which is in the same position), and their council are also lobbying for an increase in priority. Anything that raises the profile of the claim may be helpful, if it can be done appropriately.

Q: If there are closure days in Week 0, could S1s go to their primary school?

A: Don't think so, challenge is capacity because they will have new P1s

Q: What about uniform expectations for next term?

A: Pupils will be expected to be in uniform. Slight changes planned: it will be ok to wear a plain black or grey jumper without crest under the blazer. The uniform website currently affected by lockdown but the intention is to invite parents/pupils to view blazer sizes (although probably can't try on) as soon as possible. This is especially important for the new S1s.

Q: What about issues with accessing the current school building e.g., plant watering and emptying lockers?

A: Teachers should be able to access rooms in June so plants will be watered. For lockers there are two possibilities – get a list of people who have lockers and contact them, or staff may empty lockers and bag the contents to hand over to pupils when we can.

Q: Will a virtual video of the new school be available?

A: Yes Robertson's are creating a video tour that will be available in a week or two.

Q: Skills week was a real success – could this be rolled out to other years?

A: Yes there is an appetite to do this among the staff.

Q: What about safety plans for school opening – will there be temperature checking and sanitiser availability?

A: It's difficult to imagine how temperature checking would work in practice but we will take a lead from Aberdeenshire Council on that. Hand sanitiser will be at entrances. Not clear what mask advice will be by August – we are also asking questions about that. A 'Good practice' induction video will be produced to introduce pupils to the new hygiene and social distancing procedures.

Q: What about finding homes for furniture and fittings etc from old school?

A: Not much progress on that since lockdown so we will need to reconsider that at a later date.

Q: Will this year's prom go ahead?

A: It won't be happening on the planned date - no final decision with prom committee has been made yet. Will speak to Mrs Richardson and look for an update. Since the meeting the decision was taken to cancel this year's Prom and parents/carers have been informed by letter.