

Question & Answer Series generated for the Inverurie Academy Skype Parent Council Meeting on 20th January 2021.

** The answers contained in this document have a relatively short shelf-life. With the ever-changing landscape of a COVID-19 affected academic session, many answers will be updated or overtaken by guidance within just a few short days of publication. **

Virtual Learning	
1.	<p>Why are there no live lessons?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inverurie Academy have adopted a programme of mixed live lessons, recorded lessons and uploaded work to reflect the learning styles and home-circumstances of our community. So there <u>are</u> live lessons being delivered regularly, particularly for Senior Phase classes. • Feedback from parents & carers in the last virtual learning phase suggested that our community has a range of access to technology: some parents are working from home during lockdown and there are not sufficient devices to guarantee access to a live lesson at a particular time in the day. We believe if all of our lessons were to be given over to live lessons, this would threaten to widen rather than close the attainment gap. • Interim feedback from parents & carers has been positive around the variety – some live lessons take the form of mini-tutorials to check on learning, and some are full live-lessons. • Currently, Education Scotland do not permit the recording of live lessons via Glow for Google Meets or Microsoft Teams.
2.	<p>Could the school Union Reps comment on the lack of face-to-face contact with teachers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the above information, the range of approaches taken by teaching staff, and the need for delivering to groups of students of key workers and vulnerable students, we firmly believe that we have a very good coverage of contact between teachers and students. • School Union Reps represent their membership and are answerable to them rather than to parents & carers. However, the following is accurate regarding face to face contact with students. • <i>ES/CERG state (p3) “children and young people are entitled to... a balance of live learning and independent activity” but the SSTA state “There is no requirement for teachers employed in schools to provide live teaching” and the EIS state “No teacher should be expected to carry out any online teaching...with which they feel uncomfortable”.</i> https://education.gov.scot/media/hblh4yy0/cerg-remote-learning-080121.pdf
3.	<p>Why have you moved away from scheduling lessons at different times during the week?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the last period of virtual learning, parents and carers now have universal access to Google Guardian, a tool to provide information on what tasks students have set for the week. Google also has a ‘to do’ function to permit students to plan out their work. • Also since the last period, Inverurie Academy has created a new section of the School Website. This new section has areas for families to know what to expect in terms of workload from each subject and faculty, and support for parents & carers on how to support young people in their learning. • For this reason, we determined that there was a better package of support for students and therefore that scheduling was less helpful. As with all aspects of what we are trying to do, we would appreciate feedback from parents & carers to ensure we continue to get this right. https://sites.google.com/as.glow.scot/inverurie-academy-learning/
4.	<p>How are you checking people are logging in?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of establishing positive routines, another new feature of virtual learning in January, has been the requirement for students to use a google form via the Year Group Google Classroom to ‘check-in’ to confirm they are working. • This forms just a portion of our monitoring process. Each classroom can monitor who is submitting assignments and will flag up concerns with students who are not. • Early indications suggest that the daily ‘check-in’ process is becoming a positive part of establishing routines during this challenging time.

5.	Is delivering online learning more or less time-consuming?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impression we have is that delivery of live lessons and partially recorded lessons <u>is</u> more time consuming for teaching staff. The planning and preparation is universally required whether for physical or virtual learning, with an added layer of setting up of the technology / recording in advance and uploading to youtube/video platform. Finally, feedback becomes a multi-layered approach with staff fielding queries during the week about how to complete the tasks (which would usually happen during the lesson itself) and then providing quality feedback is required in both virtual and physical learning. • However, teaching staff are committed to providing this variety and this response is purely for the purposes of supporting community understanding.
6.	Where can we get more information about the virtual learning offer?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The link provided in the answer to Question 3 provides access to our Virtual Learning Google Site. There is a direct link to this on the front page of the school website and this is a useful port of call. • If you don't find what you need, please use the 'contact us' function on the website to communicate with the relevant Guidance Teacher and we will do our best to help you. <p>https://sites.google.com/as.glow.scot/inverurie-academy-learning/</p>
REMEMBER		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Our school is required to provide a physical service to our students of key workers and also vulnerable young people. This is at a ratio of at least 1:10. In addition to this, we have a group of staff who have volunteered, over and above their class commitments, to regularly check-in by telephone or email with other vulnerable students to check on their wellbeing.</i> • <i>Inverurie Academy has a teaching staff at around 75 – almost 50 of these teachers are parents of young people and so will be experiencing the challenge of delivering online learning (including live and recorded lessons) at the same time as supporting their own young people at home.</i>
Reporting		
7.	Remind me why we aren't getting Parent Evenings?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A discussion took place at the Parent Council on 24.11.20. You can find notes on this meeting using the link below. • Clearly the Scottish Government advice on large gatherings of groups of people has been consistent since the first lockdown in March 2020. This has meant that Parent Evenings as we would understand them cannot proceed. • No schools in Scotland are operating Parent Evenings due to COVID-19 restrictions. <p>https://inverurie.aberdeenshire.sch.uk/minutes-notice/</p>
8.	So why can't we have phone appointment Parent Evenings?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each year, a school staff team agrees a Working Time Agreement (WTA) to cover all aspects of schedules of work across the forthcoming academic session. The Inverurie Academy WTA was agreed in principle in August and signed on behalf of the staff team later in Term 1 2020, based on the best available information we had. • Parent Evenings were discussed with the Parent Council during Term 1 with options suggested, although phone appointments were not one of the offered options. • Part of this WTA then was a commitment to replace each Parent Evening with an <u>additional</u> tracking report to continue the dialogue with parents & carers. Through discussion with Parent Council, it is absolutely accepted that this is a distant second-best to the meetings that would have been in place in usual circumstances. However, given the lack of knowledge in August and September about the duration of the pandemic, the potential relaxing or tightening of rules, this seemed the most sensible and deliverable outcome. • As an addition, it is worth underlining that all schools now use Skype telephony. Staff do not universally have access to an external phone line and there is a cost for the addition of each external line. For a school of the size of Inverurie Academy, simply adding an external

		phone access for every class teacher, the cost would be likely to exceed £1,000.
9.	The tracking reports seem to show that there are different approaches to completing these by different teachers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The following wording is given as advice for staff completing tracking reports. It is worth noting that the learning conversations with students would usually form a key part of understanding of next steps in learning. We are working hard to ensure that the definitions below are a consistently applied set of definitions to support parent/carer and student understanding. <p>Working Grade (WG) – represents the level that the student is currently working at, in the areas of the course covered so far. This should be informed by <i>robust</i> class work, faculty tracking, assessment results, learner conversations and professional judgement.</p> <p>Target Grade (TG) - Indicates the next target grade the student could achieve. This should be a realistic 'progression' from their performance to date.</p>
10.	Are there going to be further changes to reporting in light of this latest period of virtual learning and Senior Phase Assessments?	<p>Yes...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our curriculum structure has allowed us to deliver more curriculum content to our current S4 students than otherwise might have been the case. Additionally, our first period of in-class assessments for National 5 has taken place in November and December. However, a period of virtual learning at this time of the session is more problematic for all secondary schools in supporting and assessing Higher and Advanced Higher. To try to support students in this difficult situation, we are turning the planned Full Report for Higher / Advanced Higher into a Tracking Report with the intention that a Full Report will be completed once we have returned to physical learning and assessment processes have been completed. The impact of adding a further Higher / Advanced Higher reporting instance is that we will remove a tracking instance from S3. This is to ensure a balanced Working Time Agreement but also justifiable given that S3 is the first of two years in the same subjects leading to certification in S4.
	REMEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no part of the changing landscape that is easy for students, parents and carers. However, this uncertainty is also very challenging for teachers and those planning school structures as we seek to ensure that our young people have the best possible chance of success. Removing a tracking report instance for S3 is not ideal, but on balance we feel that this is the best option to ensure work balance for staff and ensure effective communication with our Higher / Advanced Higher students at such a pivotal yet challenging time.
	Choice Processes	
11.	What is happening for supporting S2 into S3 choices? Can we as parents/carers be involved in choice discussions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information was posted onto Google Classroom on 11.01.21 and then emailed to parents/carers on 15.01.21 setting out support and next steps for S2 into S3 Course Choices. Wording of email to parents/carers copied below... <p><i>The Subject Choice window for S2 students moving into S3 has now opened. As part of the process, students have been asked to book an appointment slot with their Guidance Teacher through the link sent out in the PSE google classroom. This appointment will be carried out over a live Google Meet. Parents/Carers are encouraged to join this meet to discuss the subjects being taken. Appointments slots are strictly a maximum of 15 minutes and will not be able to run overtime.</i></p> <p><i>Can you please ensure that your young person has made an appointment that is convenient with you so you are able to attend the meeting. A how to guide of how to make an appointment is included here</i></p> <p>https://youtu.be/ELpFC-YbR4Q</p>

		<p>For details about the Subject Choice process, please find the information video that all students have been required to watch below. https://youtu.be/NP825afo49Q The subject choice booklet is also included here https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yetbFoXNcm2OH8BEh-FgAHjL3TazQfu1/view?usp=drivesdk The deadline for online subject choice forms to be submitted is the 5 February 2021. Please note that the online form should <u>not</u> be completed until an appointment with the Guidance Teacher has been had. Important information will be given out at that meeting that will allow completion of the form.</p>
12.	What will the approach be for S4 into S5 and S5 into S6 choices?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A similar approach will be taken for supporting choice processes for S4 into S5 students, and S5 into S6 students.
	REMEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These processes have been designed to allow parents/carers to join students for Google Meets appointments. Choice processes must be completed to allow the timetabling process (which is very complex) to be finished to allow us to be ready for a change of timetable at the optimal time.
	Assessments / Presentations	
13.	When will the S5/6 Prelims be?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is really easy to slip into familiar language but to be clear we have not used the term 'prelim' to describe assessments for S4, S5 or S6. Prelims or Estimates suggest an examination outwith the classroom setting and with a feel and timing set to match a final examination. Our assessments this session will take place in class and will not replicate the timing of a final examination. It is also worth saying that there are likely to be more than one assessment period, depending on timing of virtual learning etc. So in saying all of this, we have committed that Higher / Advanced Higher assessments will <u>not</u> commence immediately on return to physical learning. We will have at least a week of physical learning before we would propose to run the advertised schedule of assessments already shared with students, parents and carers.
14.	What kind of communication can parents/carers expect about presentation levels in S4, S5 and S6?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The section on reporting (Questions 9 & 10) dealt with the kind of communication parents/carers can expect from us on presentation levels. A major part of our communication with young people is in face-to-face <i>learning conversations</i> as part of learning and teaching. Whilst teaching staff will make every effort to replicate these in Google Classroom (and Microsoft Teams for Technical & Vocational Education), there will be less of a chance for this to take place without a swift return to physical learning. In these times of changed arrangements announced by the SQA, it is even more important for students, parents and carers to listen carefully to the advice given by class teachers. Without the option of taking a 'chance' with a final examination, the evidence we have will have a huge bearing on overall grades awarded by the SQA.
15.	When will all the evidence have to be collected by school for judgements to be made?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools have been and will continue to gather evidence on student progress during the session, in line with guidance from the SQA. The current date we have for final submission of evidence for National 5 is 28th May 2021. To enable us to ensure this is all in place, an internal school deadline is likely to be as early as 14th May. There is no date set yet by the SQA for Higher / Advanced Higher courses. It would be highly problematic for schools if there was not harmony between the dates for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher, so it may be that the N5 date may change to fall in line with any later date for Higher / Advanced Higher.

16.	When will the timetable change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the above information about deadlines for the gathering of evidence, and the clarification still to be received, we cannot yet confirm when the timetable will change. In a 'usual' year, this would be the beginning of June, however, depending on evidence gathering, there may be either an argument for delaying timetable change or bringing it forward to allow students to commence learning for 2021-22.
17.	What about practical subjects – how will students sitting practical subjects be supported?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The issue of practical subjects is one that SQA, Education Scotland and Scottish Government are fully aware of. Separate communication has been sent to students sitting Foundation Apprenticeships – with a commitment that with the appropriate effort students will be able to achieve these. Practical Subjects, along with other subjects, carry a commitment from the Scottish Government that students will not be disadvantaged. We will closely follow guidance to support students sitting practical subjects and as soon as we can support them physically, we will do so.
REMEMBER		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Scottish Government have committed that students will not be disadvantaged as a result of COVID-19 in relation to their academic attainment. We fully support this and will implement all possible advice. There is, however, a sense in which every person across Scotland has been impacted negatively and this would be true of our entire school community. Students have lost access to physical learning, had changes in certification and assessment, lost access to extra-curricular activities, trips and excursions that provide such a memorable setting to a school career. Parents/Carers have required to provide increased amount of support for young people in their families, have lost out on opportunities to discuss progress with class teachers through Parent Evenings, and have had their own work and life situations negatively impacted. Finally our school staff have required to cope with a working landscape that simply has not stopped changing, whilst also coping with their own family circumstances.
Return to Physical Learning		
18.	When will students return to school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As clear demonstration of the shelf-life of this series of answers to questions, since putting together these answers, the First Minister has confirmed what we all thought may well happen, that there will be an extension to the current restrictions in the country and for schools until mid-February with a review on 2nd February. As mentioned by the First Minister, it is possible that the early stages of physical return may involve a phased or blended approach. A phased return might involve a return for a particular set of year groups (e.g. Senior Phase) and a blended return might turn to the kind of model we were exploring for a one in three week rotation for all students. This will not be a decision made by the school, but will be driven by national or local authority advice.
19.	What will the expectations be about face coverings / phased return be?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is difficult to make any judgements on the expectations / requirements for staff or students for any physical return. Ultimately this will be determined by advice from Scottish Government and our own school risk assessment (which follows a local authority template). It would be reasonable, however, to suggest that initial requirements may err on the side of caution – this may well mean face coverings for all (apart from exempted students) in classes, social areas and corridors for example. Indeed, this was implied by the First Minister in her statement earlier on 19th January. Further links to the Scottish Government advice and to our own school COVID-19 page on our website are included below. https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-school-re-opening-arrangements-for-january-2021/

		https://inverurie.aberdeenshire.sch.uk/covid/
	REMEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A large portion of what is happening for students in this COVID-19 affected session has not been through the decisions made locally by schools, and at the time of writing, this remains true. As a school we commit that we will react swiftly and appropriately as further guidance and requirement is released and communicate as simply and clearly with you as we can.