

People Directorate

Depute Chief Executive and Director - People: Douglas Hutchison

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Our Ref: DH/LD Your Ref:

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Dear Parent / Carer

SQA Exam Diet

You will know by now that the 2020 exam diet has been cancelled. Inevitably, this means there will be some uncertainty for our young people who were preparing for exams. I want to reassure you and your children that teachers, who know your children best as learners, will be doing everything possible to ensure they get their best possible qualification. Part of the normal preparation for completing a course includes completing coursework, assignments and folios. The decision we have made is that schools are closed from Monday and from that point onwards, teachers will be collating all the necessary evidence to support their professional judgement. There is no need for your child to be in school to complete work. Teachers have worked with the majority of our pupils over a number of years and have a range of evidence to draw on and make a professional judgement. Everything they need is available to them in school at this stage. Certification will be based on both predicted attainment, coursework and assessment throughout the year. Certification will NOT be based solely on prelim performance.

I would ask you not to contact schools for information as professional judgement and estimates are not yet complete. Equally, there is no process for appealing the professional judgement on estimates, but the SQA have indicated that their post-results service will be free of charge this year.

The decision that has been made on not having senior phase pupils in school next week is based on the overarching priority of limiting the spread of the virus. It is taken in the best interest of young people and of staff. The situation is far from ideal, but it is equally unreasonable to expect pupils to complete coursework and assignments in a shorter period of time than would normally be available. On balance therefore, I have taken the decision to base judgments on what is available at present.

I understand that there will be different approaches across Scotland and different views among parents and young people. Please be assured that the decisions I have made are considered and discussed with all of our secondary head teachers. There will also be checks and balances in the system to ensure a fair outcome such as statistical checks on the normal pattern of attainment across a school, and across the local authority. There is no shortage of data relating to the SQA exams over a number of years. I am confident that when this is over and in calmer times we will be able to work with the SQA to ensure the hard work of our young people has been properly recognised and accredited.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Douglas Hutchison'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Douglas Hutchison
Depute Chief Executive and Director - People