



Dear Parent/Carer,

A somewhat unusual welcome to the new term as almost all pupils and staff are currently working remotely. We hope that you and your family are well and making the best of these challenging circumstances.

The information below is focused on how we will be taking learning forwards in the coming weeks. I hope you find it useful.

I hope too that you enjoyed reading the latest edition of the [Journal](#) in its new format.

Kindest regards  
Paul Thomson

### COVID-19 Information

All information is now accessible via a single page which can be accessed via the main menu (green boxes) on our home page.

Key workers seeking schooling for their children in the week ahead can access the weekly booking form [here](#). Forms have to be submitted by 11.00am on the Thursday preceding. The form for next week is live now.

### Remote Learning

As indicated last term, we will now be moving towards more formal modes of working which will entail pupils submitting work via their **Class Teams** in Office 365.

To this end we are **requiring** all pupils in S1-S5 to complete 3 training tasks on how to submit assignments as a **Word** document, **Notebook** entry and in a hand written format using **Office Lens**. It is important that all pupils are confident in undertaking such tasks and these 3 assignments take priority over other work set. A number of pupils have already started or even completed the tasks.

Pupils in P4-P7 will shortly be **required** to complete the same 3 assignments via **Teams**.

The tasks were trialled with S1 pupils last term and we know they are relatively straightforward. There is a feedback **Form** associated with the tasks. We anticipate that some pupils may experience difficulties for a variety of reasons including IT challenges at home. We can only help if we understand what these are. We cannot, of course, do anything about problems caused by the sheer number of online users nationally. All of us working from home are experiencing difficulties at times.

**Forms** will also become a common feature in pupils' works as they are a vehicle to deliver homework, tests and assignments of various types as well as surveys.

We will shortly be integrating the **TurnItIn** software with our O365 platform. TurnItIn is the standard package used in FE and HE to check for plagiarism.

### Pupil Support

The above form includes a question on general well-being. Through **Teams** video calls, Support for Learning and Pastoral Care staff are providing support to the young people they work closely with on a regular basis.

Our school counsellor continues to support young people through remote counselling. If any young person would like to speak to someone including the counsellor, they should e-mail their Head of House using the link on O365. (Pupil Support/Pastoral Care/Heads of House).

## Can the School Offer IT Support?

A limited amount of guidance is offered on our [Remote Learning](#) page. Please check this in the first instance.

While we have substantial numbers of laptops etc. these are not configured for home use. We have a limited supply which we can lend for pupils with specific needs and where a family has some significant challenge. You are able to download up to 5 free copies of the Microsoft Office suite to your home devices. Our IT team cannot offer you advice on configuring the technology you may have at home.

We have had very few reports of significant challenges for our families in providing some reasonable level of online access to pupils. However, if your child does have an issue, they can report it as part of their response on the Form described above. You are also welcome to contact us directly via the web site.

## [Pupil Absence Log](#)

Just as on a normal in-school day, we need to understand if a pupil is unable to complete scheduled work for any reason whether ill-health or some other factor. Office 365 automatically flags any work which is late or not handed in.

We have therefore created a [Pupil Absence Log](#) accessible via the Pupils home page in O365 to allow pupils from P4 to S6 to log all absences. The functionality of O365 offers a much more efficient method than, for example, using our web site. Pupils can go in and update an entry at any time or add a new entry. As with any other form of 'absence note', the submission of false information will lead to serious consequences. Parents of pupils in P1-P3 can continue to e-mail in any absences. Please understand that we have a skeleton staff in school.

## Be Realistic

[Parentzone Scotand](#) offers advice on the role of parents at this time. There is no expectation that pupils will be working 5 or 5.5 hours per day plus homework or that parents seek to take on the role of the teacher. I.e. that you try to replicate a normal working week.

Neither is there an expectation that pupils will have continuous access to IT throughout the day. Pupils may have to share resources with parents working from home and with siblings. 60-90 minutes per day of online access should suffice. Much work can be done offline.

Two periods of highly focused work per day is likely to be much more productive. To this end, all social media access and other distractions should be removed. Research shows that pupils take 1.8 times as long to complete homework simply by having their phone in front of them even if they do not look at it. The only reason to have a phone is if this is their mode of access to Office 365.

There is no evidence at all that playing music aids concentration. Indeed, the opposite is true for most pupils and adults. TVs should be off.

A nice quiet location with no distractions including other people is best. Rotate your children and yourselves around your home as required and as best you can.

Reading, including in digital, format is always a good thing to be doing almost regardless of the nature of the content.

## S4-S6 National Qualifications

SQA published further guidance yesterday. We will be writing separately to parents of pupils in S4-S6 about this. Please note that we will not receive the statistical information required to moderate the estimate setting process until the week beginning 4 May. At present, therefore, we cannot answer any questions about individual pupils.

