



IRVINE ROYAL ACADEMY

Ambition • Respect • Responsibility

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Dear Parent/Carer,

Firstly, I would like to thank those of you who have taken the time to complete the survey issued this week – I have been analysing the results and actions will be taken as a result of your feedback. Our aim is to continue to improve our provision and thus ensure that we are all working together as a school community in order to offer the best support possible.

As you will be aware, there are no plans to re-open schools at the moment. We will re-open as and when the Scottish Government, and in turn, North Ayrshire Council deem it safe to do so. Until such times, remote learning and remote provision will continue. Education delivered online cannot replicate the classroom, and our collective immediate priority is the health of every member of our school community. While staff are working extremely hard to support families and to action school business, we cannot lose sight of the fact that any expectation of service provision being in line with that during normal business is unrealistic and counterproductive. Similarly, school staff recognise that at different times during school closure, it may not be possible for all young people and families to engage with work set. We trust that when it is possible, young people will engage with work but fully understand that this situation is challenging for everyone.

As will be the case for families, school staff are not immune to the challenges of home learning or COVID-19 more broadly. Many staff are caring for school age children of their own, and/or dependents or relatives in high risk groups. Some are experiencing technical issues akin to those experienced by pupils and are sharing devices at home. Sadly, some staff have experienced significant loss during school closure. The same is true of young people attending our school and their families. Notwithstanding the above, we are confident that in the circumstances, we are well placed to provide education for as long as the school closure period continues, less the teething problems that are inevitable with such a sudden move to online delivery.

It is also important to consider that for different families and young people, different education priorities currently exist. For example, families of those in S4-S6 would expect as much immediate guidance as possible around SQA certification. At the same time, families of P7 or S6 leavers would expect immediate clarity on transition arrangements, while parents/carers of those in S1, S2 or S3 will wish the school to prioritise immediate timetable change and online learning provision. While all of the above are shared priorities, the simultaneous pressure to deal with them is placing strain on an already tested system during this unprecedented period of school closure. Staff cannot access all IT systems we would usually access, and almost all matters out with provision of online learning content are being handled by a very small group of staff working in isolation. For very good reason, it is not possible for us to access the school building or secure as frequent or widespread access to our IT systems as would be the case if we were open. This presents challenges when addressing the aforementioned priorities.



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SQA Certification 2020

SQA released a number of statements prior to the Easter break, and have now settled on a submission date of May 29th for all estimated bands for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses. No exams or coursework components will be marked.

Extract from SQA guidance released to parents/carers and available online at:

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/93825.html>

Step 1 – Estimates

Your child's results will be based on estimate grades, which their teacher or lecturer will send to us by Friday 29 May. Schools and colleges have information on how to do this. An estimate grade is what teachers or lecturers would expect your child to achieve. They will use their professional knowledge and experience of how your child has performed through the year. An estimate grade is not just the result of one prelim or one project. It's an overall judgement based on all activity across the year.

Step 2 – Awarding

- We check and validate the information sent to us and adjust it, if necessary, to ensure consistency across all schools and colleges and with results from previous years.*
- We use the estimated information, as well as previous results your child may have achieved, to produce their 2020 results.*
- We will produce your child's results, using our national grades for each subject and level.*

Step 3 - Results and Certification

- We process your child's results and issue them by 4 August. Please encourage your child to sign-up to MySQA, so they receive their results by text and/or email.*

Step 4 – Appeals

- If your child disagrees with their result, they should contact their school or college who will be able to use a free appeals service. This will enable the school or college to question your child's result. The school or college must have evidence to support their estimate.*
- The evidence will be reviewed by senior examiners. We will provide schools and colleges with further details on this service as soon as we can.*

Further extract from the FAQ on the SQA website:

Experienced teachers and lecturers will review all the evidence that is available to them to assess whether you have met the course aims. They have a strong understanding of your performance and know how you compare to other learners in each department, and in previous years.

Your teachers and/or lecturers will take account of any available work that you have completed throughout the course. Using their professional judgement, and their knowledge of your work and your progress so far, they will make an estimate of the grade and band you would have achieved under normal circumstances.

Estimate grades will be based on your demonstrated and inferred attainment of the required skills, knowledge and understanding for each course at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher.

We will then have the information we need to adjust estimates where necessary, and to ensure consistency — both across the country and in comparison, with previous years.

Key dates for school staff

The following arrangements are in place to assist school staff in both understanding the process and in submitting estimates.

Week beginning 27 April 2020

- *We are designing an online course, which we hope will be helpful to you, to take you through the process of determining estimated grades, bands and rank order. This will be available on SQA Academy and we will let you know how to access it.*

Week beginning 4 May 2020

- *Centre Tables, which will provide information on the estimates that you have made, as well as the attainment achieved by your learners each August, for the past three years. The information will be provided for each subject and level.*

Week beginning 11 May 2020

- *We are working hard to ensure that a new service on our centre portal, SQA Connect, will be available to you. This will provide a list of all your learners for whom we have an accepted entry and is where you will input the required estimate information.*

As you can see, the school level training was released this week and staff have been engaging in the professional learning offered. Various meetings across North Ayrshire Council and within each school are ongoing as staff come to a shared understanding of the guidance. Ultimately, staff will follow the guidance issued by the SQA to determine an estimate grade for each N5, Higher and Advanced Higher pupil in each subject area. Estimates will not be released to young people prior to certification. SQA have clearly stated that they will 'check and validate the information sent and adjust where necessary'. As the certifying body, we will respect their role in determining an overall award. It is important to stress that estimates are not final gradings, and as such, sharing estimates serves no direct benefit to young people or families prior to certification.

We do fully appreciate that this is an incredibly anxious time for our families and young people and wish to reassure you of the fact that staff are working hard to determine an estimate in keeping with course performance and in line with emerging SQA guidance.

P7 Transition to S1

Our P7 transition events can no longer take place. However, Ms Bethell and our Integrated Support staff are currently making plans for transition activities. We are also in the process of updating our website for our incoming P7 cohort and new transition booklets are currently being developed.

S6 Leavers

We are acutely aware of the fact that our S6 did not have the opportunity to conclude the year as they may have liked. We have managed to reschedule our Prom for the 6th August 2020 and are hopeful that all going well, it will go ahead. Our pupil yearbook team have been working hard with the support of Mrs Gibson and we are at the proof reading stage – a hard copy will follow in due course. S6 students remain enrolled until the summer and we encourage them to make contact with school staff should they need assistance or support.

Communication

School staff have offered regular and at times comprehensive updates via letter, Twitter, the Xpressions app, Groupcall and the website since school closure. We hope that the information shared has been helpful to you. We encourage all parents/carers to download the Xpressions app and to follow us on Twitter - please contact the school email address if you need support to download the app. I have shared my email on numerous occasions: linziesloan@north-ayrshire.gov.uk – all emails received have been filtered and sent on to the appropriate Head of Year and or PT Guidance. In addition, class teachers will continue to respond to pupil requests during the school day and indeed at their earliest convenience, depending on their own individual circumstances

Pastoral Care and supporting families

North Ayrshire Council have implemented a range of measures to ensure that families requiring free school meals and direct support from social services and school staff are able to do so. Our Integrated Support staff are checking in with some families on a regular basis and will continue to do so. Team Around the Child meetings are also still taking place remotely and in collaboration with colleagues from social work.

Our counselling service is ongoing for those young people who need this type of wellbeing support. PTs Guidance should be contacted if you feel that your son/daughter would benefit from this type of intervention. The volume of ongoing Pastoral/Wellbeing work brings into sharp focus the extent to which we are at the heart of the community for many of our families. We fully appreciate the fact that for some families, online learning is currently of secondary importance given uncertainty around employment and access to services. This closure period acutely highlights the extent to which Irvine Royal Academy is more than a school in the traditional sense. I would like to thank all our partner agencies, SLT and Integrated Support team for the wider work that we are maintaining despite school closure.

Staying Active During Lockdown

PE staff continue to share examples of activities young people and families can engage with via online learning platforms. In addition, we have a virtual inter-house competition running and Cumbrae house is currently in the lead with 243 points.

Timetable Change and Options

We are aiming to change our whole school timetable on 14th May 2020. Ms Bethell has been working hard to have the timetable ready three weeks earlier than planned and we are very

appreciative of this. It should be noted that our current S4 and S5 would not normally begin their new SQA courses until early June, and as such any formal timetable change before this date will provide the opportunity to engage in new courses earlier than would otherwise have been possible. I should now say that as of today, senior pupils are no longer required to submit any further work to their class teachers at their current level of study. As of the 5th May 2020, S3/4/5 pupils will be invited into new Google Classrooms (based on the new options selected) in order to access work at the higher level or indeed work issued for new courses elected – current S1/2 pupils should continue following the advice of staff in their existing Google Classrooms .

Options

Many thanks to the many parents/carers who met with us during the options interview process to help ensure that our young people are coursed appropriately. As is the case every year, some pupils will need to re-opt and Guidance staff will be in touch with identified pupils where this is the case.

It should be noted that in some cases, while subjects selected could be delivered, re-interview may still take place if we are concerned about the suitability of options made. Similarly, we acknowledge that after SQA certification, it is normal for some pupils to change their mind about options for next session.

Online Learning

We have created a database and are in the process of finalising which pupils do not have access to IT/Wifi – once we are clear and have an accurate picture on pupil need, we will make a return to North Ayrshire who will then distribute IT and data access accordingly. This will go a long way to ensuring that all pupils are able to access our learning provision in an equitable manner.

S1 Reports

S1 reports were due to be issued during May. Unfortunately, we have had to postpone the completion of S1 Reports for the following reasons:

- Staff cannot access the system used to submit reports
- Staff cannot access the school server, where assessment information is retained
- Concerns around the potential to breach GDPR regulations if not using SEEMIS to generate and share reports

In light of this, we will look to ensure that we host an S2 Parents' evening in term 1 of the new session.

Finally, you will be aware that Monday 4th May and Friday 8th May are holidays and thus teaching staff will not be available on these dates. I will continue to be accessible on the email previously provided – please do not hesitate to get in touch if you require any support or assistance.

Best wishes,
Lizzie Sloan
Head Teacher