



Updates for parents; November 2020

13th November 2020

Dear Parents,

In times when government advice seems to be changing almost daily, I hesitate to write to you with news from the school perspective as information can go out of date quickly. However, there are some key updates I wanted to give you, which you can find below, organised by year group.

We have not published a school calendar for parents this year, as it is hard to predict what we will be able to do very far ahead. However, having focused last term on getting the core functions of teaching and learning up and running, this term we are now looking to reinstate some of the wider activities which are usually such a major part of school life. We are very much looking for what we can do, rather than what we can't. S6 put on a spooky dress-up day which raised money and food donations for Orkney Food Bank and our thanks go to all of you who contributed. We are now turning our minds towards Christmas and working out how we can celebrate in covid-safe ways; news of upcoming events will go to parents shortly and we would advise you to keep the evening of Monday 14th December free in your diary.

We give notices to pupils on a daily bulletin, and these are available for parents to see on the school website [here](#). Looking at these, and following us on [Facebook](#), are great ways for parents to keep up with what is happening in school.

If you have any questions regarding information in this newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact the school office on 850660 or admin.sa@glow.orkneyschools.org.uk and they will direct you to someone who can help.

Kind regards

Jane Partridge

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 <https://www.facebook.com/stromnessacademy/> website: www.stromnessacademy.org.uk

S1-6: Scottish Government provision of digital devices

The Scottish Government has provided Orkney Islands Council with a limited number of Chromebooks, iPads and MiFi devices that will be allocated to families on a basis of need. That need might be educational, financial or related to data access, or a mixture of all three. I would be grateful if you could complete this short online survey which will assist us in our allocation of devices. <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/DigitalSurveyforParents/> **Closing date 13th November.**

S1-6: Covid Procedures

The Scottish Government published new guidance for schools on covid safety on October 30th. As a result, we have been able to reinstate indoor PE lessons, and are beginning to look at re-starting extra-curricular activities. Friday Activities will restart from 20th November and pupils have been making their choice of Activities this week. Other key points from the new guidance are:

- Eating and drinking are not allowed on school transport.
- Hand cleaning, face coverings and ventilation are still required; teachers have a procedure to follow to balance the need for ventilation with the need to keep room temperatures comfortable. Pupils are advised to bring an extra layer to school to wear if needed.
- Please can parents ensure that pupils have a face covering with them every day, and wear it on the school bus, as well as in communal areas around school.
- We are required to do distancing as much as possible and to keep pupils in stable groups where we can. In the Dining Room, Theatre, balcony and foyer pupils are asked to sit at a table, with no more than 6 people around any table. We are continuing to stagger break and lunchtimes and use separate areas of the school to keep S1-3 separate from S4-6.

Updates to our Covid procedures will be discussed at Pupil Council Meetings on 13th November and pupils have been asked to give any feedback to their class rep.

We have had some issues with pupils contacting their parents directly during the school day to ask to be taken home as they are not feeling well. The school has a duty of care for our pupils and for their safety we should always know where they are. For this reason, pupils who are unwell are required to come to the School Office. Any first aid needs will then be dealt with and parents contacted where necessary. If your child contacts you directly, please ask them to go to the Office for support.

S1-6: Reports and Parents' Evenings

Parents receive information on their children's progress from us once a term, whether in the form of a report or a Parents' Evening. This term, reports will be published as follows:

S1	Interim report	Tues 15 th Dec
S2	Parents' Evening	Weds 25 th November
S3	Interim report	Tues 1 st Dec
S4	Full written report	Weds 25 th Nov
S5	Full written report	Weds 25 th Nov
S6	Full written report	Weds 25 th Nov

The S2 Parents' Evening on Wednesday 25th November will be held online; a letter will be sent to relevant parents next week with information on how to book appointments. Next term's Parents' Evenings will also be virtual, and will be held on Tuesday 9th February for S3, and Thursday 18th February for S4-6.

S1-6: End of the School Year

A reminder that as a result of the national decision to start the school year earlier than planned in August, dates for the remainder of the year have changed, with the Summer Term ending on Friday 25th June. Full details of the school term dates are published on the OIC website [here](#).

S2-6: Careers Support

Skills Development Scotland staff normally attend our parents' evenings to allow parents and pupils to talk with a Careers Advisor about their future plans. As covid restrictions have made this difficult, SDS have arranged separate virtual consultation evenings. A letter was sent to relevant parents about this and can be found on the [school website](#).

S4-6: SQA qualifications

- Examinations

The current plan is for Higher and Advanced Higher examinations to go ahead, but for National 5 awards to be made on the basis of teacher judgement of evidence gathered in school. The examination timetable has been published and can be found [here](#).

Changes have been made to exam content/length for some Highers and Advanced Highers. Teachers will share this information with pupils, but it can also be found on the SQA subject pages [here](#) – choose your subject and the relevant qualification level, and then ensure you are looking at the section for 2020-21.

- Prelims

Prelims for Highers and Advanced Highers will be held from 18th January onwards for approximately 2 weeks; this includes courses studied at Orkney College and KGS. A timetable is being worked on at present and will be published asap.

Higher and Advanced Higher classes, and S5/6 PSE and PE are suspended during the prelim period. National 5 classes and college courses will continue, and we will endeavour to construct the timetable so that pupils can continue to attend these lessons during this time. S5 and S6 pupils are not required to be in school during the prelim period if they do not have a lesson or exam, but are welcome to use the school building for private study if they wish.

There will be no January prelims for S4 pupils. Individual agreements will be made with the small number of S4 pupils taking Highers to allow them appropriate time to prepare for their prelims.

- Could Highers/Advanced Highers still be cancelled?

The Scottish Government have said they will continue to review the decision to hold Higher and Advanced Higher examinations, with a final decision due in February. Whilst we hope that the exams will go ahead, the very real possibility exists that the coronavirus situation in the Spring will mean they are cancelled, and we are asked to provide evidence of pupils' performance to support estimated grades. If this happens, prelim results will be part of the evidence used. Please therefore reinforce to your children that it is important to study hard for their prelim exams, and indeed to give of their best in every class test and assessed piece of work throughout the year.

- Assessments for National 5

National 5 grades will be awarded based on teacher judgements. SQA require specific pieces of evidence which must be collected in school to support these judgements, and SQA will lead a moderation process looking at this evidence across the country to ensure the judgements are fair. For each subject, there are 2-4 specified pieces of evidence which must be gathered. We have details of what these will be for some N5 subjects, but not all; the rest are scheduled to be published by 20th November. For some subjects, the evidence required will come from formal exam-style assessments in school, whilst other pieces will be coursework or practical assignments. Once we have all the information on what is required, we will work out a schedule for gathering this evidence over the course of the school year, so that pupils do not find themselves with all of their assessments at the same time. We aim to publish this schedule by the beginning of December.

- End of the School Year/Summer exam leave

Until SQA publish the deadline for collection of evidence for National 5 qualifications, we are not able to finalise plans for the Summer Term, including study leave dates, the final day in school for those who are leaving us at the end of this session and the start of 2021-22 courses.