**Parent - Learning and Teaching Update 4 May 2020**

Thank you on your feedback on our new timetable for S1-S3 and senior phase pupils. It has been very helpful to receive your comments and we will continue to refine our approaches to on-line learning.

At this time of the year we are developing the timetable for next session which is now going to officially start on 1June 2020. This is the same date for all Midlothian Secondary schools. The task of constructing a Timetable and coursing students at all levels is a challenging one at the best of times and having to work remotely to construct next session’s timetable makes the task even more difficult. We are still looking at staffing and the subjects offered and this may mean some courses may be subject to change or not run on the new Timetable. Staff will communicate with parents and students if we need to recourse particular areas. In order to allow a sensible progression into new courses for all students we are taking a phased approach as outlined in the timeline further below.

**There are two key dates to note:**

**Monday 18 May 2020**– Senior phase Google classrooms will change so students will be able to enter new Google classrooms at the level of study they aspire to continue onto in Session 2020-21 for National, Higher and Advanced Higher level courses. Principal Teachers will need to decide how these are staffed and supported, based on current staffing. Staff will invite students to enter the classrooms based on their current subject choices. Guidance staff / key contact staff will follow up if students do not engage: full engagement with new courses and programmes is an absolute expectation. I would ask all parents/carers to emphasise this change with your young person at home. Please contact their Guidance Teacher if you feel there are any issues during this phase.

**For Broad General Education (BGE) classes at S1-S2**. From 18 May 2020, teaching staff will in most cases be using the existing class rooms as they already know the young person’s progress and have been supporting them. In this case they will start to put up work at the next level to ensure students are accessing work representative of the next stage in learning e.g. S1 into S2. Staff will continue to differentiate work to assist students at all levels but we do expect challenge and progression. In some cases at S1-S2, teaching staff may decide that they will set up new classrooms and they will communicate this to students and invite them to join.

**At BGE S3** we are asking staff to create new Google classrooms by 18 May 2020 and students will be asked to join based on their student choice information we currently have available. Guidance staff have been following up on students who are yet to finalise their choices. We will follow up by the end of May on any student who fails to engage or participate in the new Google classrooms. We would ask all parents/carers to monitor this aspect of distance learning.

**1 June 2020** – **on this date the new Timetable for Session 2020-21 will start**. At this stage we expect all Senior Phase students and S3 will join a class staffed by their new Teacher but in some cases recruitment to vacancies that begin in August or staff absence may mean that is not a possible for all classes. In that case classes will operate supported by another teacher until August 2020. Classes at S1-S2 will start moving into new Google classrooms over this period where resources allow. We would want all S1-S2 students to be in correct class groups by August 2020. Again it should be stressed that for S1-S2 they will be progressing in their learning into the next stage on the Google platform from 18 May.

**Details of Phased Action**

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| **Week of** | **Activity** |
| 20 April | Principal Teachers/ Class Teachers were asked to ensure students were focussing on course completion work normally undertaken this term and this information was also sent to parents/carers. All senior phase classes have Google classrooms to access the course work.Information on the Distance Learning page on our website gives information on access to *Google Classroom, Scholar and BBC Bitesize –* all of which will actively support student learningThe SQA statement on the process of calculating estimates for students in all National 5, Higher and Advanced Highers was sent to Parents/carers. *It is available on our school website via the news stream* |
| 27 April  | Details of our pupil support plan for all students via a contact team of guidance and key contact staff was sent to all parents this week. We aim to regularly contact all parents to get feedback and support all learners.●For all GLOW password resets please email penicuik\_hs@midlothian.gov.uk***Please do not try and call the school as the Office is closed and your call is unlikely to be answered*** |
| 4 May  | We aim to ensure all course choice information is checked and followed up for Senior phase. We accept that further changes may be requested by students or be required later based on how they experience new courses or due to their exam results. |
| 11May | Staff will be preparing for Senior phase and BGE class changes in Google classrooms as outlined above.***Any further course change needs should be signalled with Guidance staff by students / parents / Carers*** |
| 18 May | As outlined above the Timetable levels change for BGE- S1-S3/ Senior phase.All students should be engaging with these changes in order to allow appropriate progression. |
| From 25 May | On–going issues with senior or BGE Courses will be monitored and dealt with through Guidance/SMT or other key contact staff. |
| I June | New Timetable 2020-21 starts as described earlier in this information |

**SQA Estimates**

As communicated earlier Teaching staff across the school are also currently involved in discussions and moderation activities to support the completion of estimates for SQA candidates. I would refer parent/carers to our earlier communication with regard to the SQA process which was posted on our website on 24 April 2020 and sent out by email. This work is well underway and all staff are working hard to ensure all senior students’ work and progress are fully and professionally considered via the SQA process.

The SQA have also outlined answers to a number of [Frequently Asked Questions](https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/93797.9752.html).

The SQA recommends that all learners sign-up to **MySQA** to receive their results by text and/or email. Any learner who has previously signed up to receive their results through MySQA will continue to do so, and the SQA are asking those learners to review their profile to make sure their contact details are up to date.

**Reports**

Reports were due for S1 and S3 this term. We are currently looking at the technical demands of staff writing reports remotely. Not all staff have direct access to the student management system that generates the reports at home and this requires a work around solution. We will bring out a report for both levels based on a modified timeline this term and we will communicate on this aspect of our work once we have finalised our plans. If you have any issues in relation to your child’s progress please contact their guidance teacher through the school email.

**Distance Learning**

We have received positive feedback from a number of parents/carers but a number have also reported connectivity or password issues or are struggling to engage their child. We are here to help and I would encourage you to email us with any queries so we can help sort them out.

The challenge for the school is to try and avoid a merely passive process so that students receive some evaluation and feedback about their work. The use of interactive platforms is proposed for development by the Digital Learning team over coming weeks and as you can appreciate not all staff have the same level of skills and knowledge but are very willing to develop their practice. The extended management team will continue to discuss the ongoing development of distance learning as we seek to offer the most stimulating and challenging learning experience our resources and technology are able to currently offer.

A number of parents have queried why we are not using virtual platforms such as Zoom or webinex which offers a webinar platform. As you may be aware there are security issues with these platforms and due to the potential risks these platforms are not able to be used in virtual meetings or for more direct contact with young people within class or other student groups. There are virtual platforms within GLOW that can be used but frustratingly for us there are currently technical issue with the reliability of these on our hardware due to Corporate IT security settings. Work in this area will be ongoing this term with the education team and Digital Learning staff leading change and we hope to be able to be more interactive as time goes on including more active interaction with young people.

**Access to IT**

It is worth reiterating that if your child does not have a device or access to internet, please let us know as soon as possible by emailing: penicuik\_hs@midlothian.gov.uk. There is a facility to support homes through the loan of hardware via the Digital Learning team and we can help support that process. It may also be the case that you experience connectivity or equipment failure. If this causes your child or you stress please get in touch and we will try and help.

Finally, we would like to thank you for you on-going support and the positive messages many of you have sent. This really raises morale as our staff, like all the public, are often juggling family commitments, the anxiety and stress of lockdown and learning new digital learning systems as they go. A number of staff have suffered from Covid 19 but have all recovered and we have had some recent family bereavements.

We trust as we start our seventh week of lockdown that you and your family remain safe, especially where you have vulnerable family members who require shielding. For those of you who are unwell or supporting unwell family members, we send our very best wishes for a speedy recovery. We know also that a number of families in the community have experienced the loss of a loved one at this time and we as a school community extend our sincere condolences on your loss.

Best Wishes

The Senior Management Team