

Secondary PC Chair Meeting

31st March 2021

1. Lorna French	Schools and Lifelong Learning Manager
2. Darren McKinnon	Quality Improvement Manager (Secondary)
3. Jack Simpson	Senior Education Officer
4. Arran Finlay	Senior Education Officer
5. Martin Bennett	Queensferry
6. Suzanne McIntosh	Holyrood
7. Lynn Sinclair	Gracemount
8. Colin Brown	Leith Academy
9. Chris Davison	Royal High
10. Alison Robertson	Balerno
11. Sarah Scott	James Gillespie
12. Naomi Barton	Currie
13. Mike Nicholson	Trinity Academy
14. Alex Boyack	Portobello
15. Deirdre Henderson	Drummond
16. Lindsay Law	Broughton
17. Kay Douglas	

- Lorna French welcomed people to the meeting
- Darren McKinnon shared a PPT (attached) with the information regarding Assessments/SQA/Quality Assurance/Supports for Pupils

Questions

will the assessments that have already been done, count towards the final grade, or is it all on these final assessments?	<i>DM replied that it would be important that it was made clear at the time that any such assessment would count. Schools that had 'quasi-prelims' often held them as an experiential opportunity as much as anything else.</i>
Young people who had been ill (Covid. Anxiety etc) during the year – what special arrangements have been made?	<i>Exceptional circumstances have been removed by the SQA this year. Any usual supports a young person uses will be put in place – e.g. a young person who uses a laptop will be allowed to use that. Schools will use available evidence.</i>

	<p>ASL service already support some young people remotely.</p> <p>If a young person cannot come into school, then schools will work with the young person to collect the evidence.</p> <p>Darren will double check with the SQA and update us.</p>
<p>Concerns for some young people attending school during assessments – is there enough space in the school buildings</p>	<p>Sarah Scott (JGHS) raised the issue of space for formal assessments where this is at a premium (a particular JGHS issue) and which will be exacerbated by there being no exam leave. (She also noted that parents had differences of opinion re exam leave.) LS replied that the guiding principle was that young people who've been out of education for much of the year can't be off another six weeks for assessments. It will be important to look at individual needs and the logistics of having everyone in school will be looked at flexibly but the default position is that there will be no exam leave this year. The national/CEC position is for in-school support for revision and assessments. There will be have to be specific decisions on a school-by-school basis.</p>
<p>Also will there be/should there be exam leave?</p>	<p>Given the situation this school year, we did not wish young people to have more time off school. Each case can be looked at individually if some parents wish their child to study at home.</p> <p>Lorna to look at this and give guidance to schools.</p>
<p>Marking – is there a stipulation about how work will be marked?</p>	<p>Lynn Sinclair (Gracemount) asked about whether blind marking would be employed. LS replied that some schools are doing this but it is not a CEC/SQA stipulation. DM stated that there is some evidence to suggest that it is a fairer way of marking, especially for more subjective subjects. There was discussion on the issue of equity across the city. LS said it would be useful to get wider parent views on this issue and to see if it was supported.</p> <p>Martin Bennett (Queensferry) commented on the tie-in between DM's presentation and the experience at Queensferry. Re blind marking he thought that teachers should be trusted to do their jobs if there were logistical issues that prevented this particular approach. He asked how the SQA was going to visit schools in April if assessments were not taking place until May. What would they be looking at? DM replied</p>

	<p><i>that if schools responded that they had no evidence in April that SQA would not visit then. (Some pre-Christmas assessments could be considered, taking into account the caveats above.) Martin also asked about the rights of appeal where the projected and final grades were different. DM replied that there was an absolute right of appeal. The issue under discussion at the moment is who 'owns' the appeal: the SQA?/the school?/a mixed approach? The issues aren't simply operational as the discussion on blind marking illustrated. Consideration may have to be given as to whether a grade has been affected by prejudice.</i></p>
<p>If SQA seeking info late April, but assessments are being done on May, how will that work? Right of appeal?</p>	<p><i>If there is a difference between provisional and final grades - There will be a right of appeal. The SQA are consulting over who owns the appeal. Normally the SQA own it and ask the school for evidence. It may be a mixed method this year.</i></p>
<p>Short notice of meeting a concern and why have Parent Councils not been involved in the design of the process?</p> <p>Impact on subject areas? Futures?</p> <p>Concerns around the process – home learning then part time, to full time in classroom with assessments in the classroom</p>	<p><i>Suzanne McIntosh (Holy Rood) raised the short notice of the meeting and why PCs had not been involved earlier in the design stage. Why was there a move from inferred grades to demonstrated attainment. Parents have concerns re subject areas in that home learning is not school learning and that pupils whose large experience has been learning in the home environment are taking assessment based solely in a school environment. DM replied that it was an SQA decision to move from inferred grades to demonstrated attainment in which no outside opinion was sought or given. Schools will be trying to mitigate the situation. The SQA view is that the best instrument of assessment is one which reflects their own, abridged or adapted. Alex ??? (Portobello) commented that the situation was very different in the private sector where a lot of pupils had full-time online learning during lockdown. LS described this meeting as a "belt and braces" approach beyond individual PC meetings. We are trying to make sense of sometimes contradictory advice. DM informed the meeting that there had been close working with DHTs and CLs to provide a clear understanding of what the SWA is suggesting/stipulating and to produce guidance which came out last week. He was confident that all schools had had discussions with their communities to hear concerns.</i></p>

	<p><i>Suzanne informed the meeting that the Holy Rood PC was writing to the SQA and cc'ing the DFM.</i></p>
<p>can young people and parents put in a request to repeat the year if they feel there is no way they'll be able to achieve their potential this year?</p>	<p><i>Lindsay Law (Broughton) took the discussion back to bias in marking. Some demographics will have less ability to challenge matters than the more 'privileged'.</i></p> <p><i>She also asked about the ability for pupils to repeat a year, which produces the same issues re bias in terms of people's feeling comfortable to challenge.</i></p> <p><i>LS replied that the process to repeat a year is there. It is however more of an SfL issue/GIRFEC issue based on wellbeing indicators not being met rather than someone's being unhappy with their grades. It would involve a collaborative decision (educational psychologists/school/young person/parents) and if the only way was deemed to repeat a year then the process could be sanctioned.</i></p> <p><i>It may be possible for young people to resit a course though whilst remaining in the correct year group (for current S4 and S5)</i></p> <p><i>DM felt that it was likely to be more of an issue in S6 as S4 and S5 pupils have the opportunity for further certification later in the Senior Phase.</i></p>