

Notes of Parent Council meeting, 14th January 2021

John Wilson, HT

Numbers of key workers' children/vulnerable young people in school are fluctuating but low. In-school staff numbers are being matched to number of young people. They are in groups of max. 10 to allow for distancing and following all hygiene recommendations.

Shona Wallace – DHT Pupil Support

Taking all vulnerable student criteria into account, Broughton would have around 300 qualifying students. In order to target in-school support to those most in need, guidance staff have spoken to all relevant families, leading to around 50-70 pupils with some in-school provision.

Some young people are in school full-time, accessing the same online learning as pupils at home. There is a nurture group of S1s and S2s who are coming in for extra literacy/numeracy and 1:1 support Mondays – Wednesdays. A third group of particularly vulnerable young people, who would normally be on a reduced timetable or accessing out-of-school provision, are coming in for a regular hour-long health and wellbeing check-in.

As well as this in-school support, there is ongoing support from Pupil Support Leaders through PSE sessions and calling families where required. Counselling and U-Evolve support is continuing.

Pupil Support Assistants are helping pupils with specific identified needs online.

Pupil Support Officers are carrying on their usual work of supporting families with access to free school meals, heating and housing issues etc.

Pauline Cumming – DHT Curriculum

Broughton's teachers are doing a brilliant job in challenging circumstances. We are lucky to have such fantastic, committed, staff.

Learner engagement has improved while following a timetable – feedback so far is that learning is more manageable.

Nonetheless, it's a lot for young people to cope with and we are hearing of some pupils feeling overwhelmed. We need to make things simpler and get the message to young people–

- be kind to yourself
- do what you can – don't worry if you can't post everything

Teachers are using a variety of approaches for online learning:

- Online in Teams
- Live teaching followed by a work period
- You tube videos
- Powerpoints with recordings

All of these are good, and teachers need to do what works for them. They will continue to refine their techniques as time goes on.

Parent question re. son in S1 who is spending 6.5 hours/day online trying to keep up with the volume of work

- **Pauline:** please encourage your children to take breaks. We need to get the message out that young people do not need to do everything if it is too much for them.
- **Cath Stewart** (maths teacher): Maths dept have decided that for S1-S3, there will be 3 periods per week of set work and the 4th period will be left free for pupils to catch up.

Susan Bennett – DHT – SQA

There's a lot we don't know yet about SQA qualifications. Highers and Advanced Highers were cancelled just before the Christmas break.

We were planning formal assessments to take place in January but these will obviously not go ahead now. We are awaiting clarification and guidance from SQA re. when they will require predicted grades and what assessment evidence they want. This is unsettling for both young people and teachers.

The emphasis for January will be on learning and teaching and covering courses. Formal assessment will come later.

Senior students are showing a much higher level of engagement than they did before the summer. We are going to monitor and track senior phase engagement weekly starting end of WC 18/1/21. The parents of young people who don't engage will be contacted.

Parents can keep up to date on the SQA's website: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/96381.html

Parent question – my child is worrying that absolutely everything they submit will count this year. This is causing a lot of stress as they can't work at 100% all the time.

Susan: SQA have said that assessments done later in the year will have greater weighting as they are a better predictor of results. There won't be any assessments right now as the school can't ensure the validity of work done at home.

Formal assessments in school will form the basis of predicted grades. Teachers are continually monitoring performance – if formal assessment isn't in line with the young

person's ability, they could use earlier work. Students will have opportunities to show improvement.

We can't say when formal assessments will take place. It depends on when the SQA require grades. They are currently requesting predicted grades for Nat 5 at the end of May. The school need time for quality assurance before submitting these. We hope that this time will be extended.

Question from parent re. assessment of practical subjects.

John: as the lockdown continues, we have less and less time for practical elements. We saw this with music where some instruments could not be practised in school, although we managed to encourage Education Scotland to change this.

We don't know yet how we will manage practical assessments. We will have to be creative and maximise the opportunities available. Teachers are used to using their professional judgement and making adjustments when required to ensure fair and accurate grade estimates. We will need to meet the SQA's requirements re. grading and validity.

Question from parent – do I understand that you would use term 1 assessments as evidence where this is advantageous to the pupil but not if it would disadvantage them?

Susan: Yes. We want to give young people the opportunity to improve, so we wouldn't let early assessments disadvantage them.

Question from parent – what about students who are doing qualifications in their native language, which are not taught in school?

John: we are still unsure of this but, as with everything, we will try to give them every opportunity to achieve.

There are rumours within the education community that SQA will extend their deadline. Once we know for sure we can make plans. We will adjust and adapt as always, but time needs to be built in for marking, internal moderation and verification. Last year Broughton HS surpassed SQA's expectations for predicted grading. There is uncertainty over timelines and expectations, but we can have confidence in the school.

Question from PC: Is there anything we can be doing as a PC to support the school in a pressure group capacity? For example, in making sure young people have devices for home learning?

John: The parent council and wider parental community have influenced decisions in the past. One area could be to put pressure on the SQA re. definitive timelines.

Re. devices – CEC are on their sixth audit of who needs a device. Shona Wallace is involved in this process. Initially we were asked to identify young people who had no access to a device or data. Expectations have increased now – with more structured learning, every

child in a household needs their own device. In a meeting on Friday 8th January, John Swinney said the Scottish Govt had given 17,000 devices to local authorities. This was to cover one device per household, not one per child.

We expect to know by Monday 25th January what gaps need to be filled, and we will then ask the PC to help.

Don't forget that parents are voters and this is an election year! Parents can influence their local and national politicians to support online provision.

Rozi Thomson, PC Vice Chair requested parents' views- are you happy for us to concentrate on these lockdown issues or do we need to maintain focus on wider areas?

Consensus was that it's good to focus on the current situation, and there was a lot of positive feedback about the meeting and the school's response to parents' questions.

Some S1 parents are finding it particularly difficult to get an understanding of the school this year. It was agreed that without the option of social activities through the Broughton Association, and with everything being online, it is harder than usual to get a feel for the school.

A reminder of the **FAQs** page on the PC website: <https://broughtonhighpc.org/frequently-asked-questions-for-new-parents-carers-at-broughton-high/>

We also have the **Ask A Parent** email for general queries: askaparent@broughtonhighpc.org

PC members are happy to arrange an informal Q&A for parents who are new to the school, along the lines of those offered to new S1 parents before the summer.

Keep in touch with the Parent Council:

Email us at: clerk.bhspc@broughtonhighpc.org

Website: broughtonhighpc.org

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