

Graeme High School

Parent Council Update

SQA Q+A Session

Wednesday 19th May 2021



PRESENT AT OUR MEETING:

Sian Balfour (Chairperson), Karren Morrison (Vice Chairperson), Lesley Carroll (Headteacher), Margo Marshall (Business Education Teacher), Andrew Buchannan (Depute Headteacher), Nicola Jenkins, Anne Louise Hayden, Hazel Beattie, Mhairi Smith, Councillor Binnie

APOLOGIES

Zoe Hamilton

WELCOME

Sian Balfour welcomed all attendees and thanked Ms Carroll and Mr Buchanan for attending the meeting to answer questions put forward by Parent Council members.

DISCUSSION REGARDING SQA AND CURRENT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

What will happen when pupils are scheduled to sit more than one assessment per day?

We will make every effort to ensure that no pupil sits more than one assessment activity in a day. Due to the flexibility we have this year, if a pupil has more than one assessment activity in a day then one of these will be rearranged to another day.

Are all pupils in Scotland sitting the same assessments at the same time?

This year schools have the flexibility to run assessments on different days within the date window given by SQA. Schools have been given a recommended assessment from the SQA but they can amend make adjustments to the assessments as long as they still meets the SQA standards.

Since schools have flexibility to use their own paper rather than SQA's paper, what if Graeme High has a harder paper than other schools, leading to our pupils receiving a lower grade than another school's pupils?

There has been a high level of communication between schools and each school's paper has to meet the SQA standards. School based moderations, cross school moderations, local authority moderation and a national moderation have all taken place to ensure that each paper meets the SQA standards. Graeme High School is either using the SQA's assessment paper in its entirety or with some adjustments to the SQA standards. Any school that has put together their own paper entirely would be given feedback on their paper and any adjustments that need to be made to it. If found that a school's paper does not meet the SQA standards then action, including further assessments, may be taken by SQA.

Will the end of year assessments be the sole evidence used for grades?

The end of year assessments will provide the main key piece of evidence since this assessment covers the whole of the course. If a pupil performs better in their end of year assessment they will receive the overall grade they have achieved in this assessment. If a pupil underperforms in their end of year assessment, evidence will be taken from the other key pieces of evidence to make a decision on their overall grade. The evidence used must be able to cover all aspects of the course, which the final assessments do, so very important that pupils put in their best work and effort.

Will there be any flexibility for pupils that have been sick and missed key assessments?

Unlike other years, the school has a bit more flexibility with the running of the assessments. If a pupil is absent from school due to sickness, arrangements can be made for them to sit the assessment when they return to school as long as this is done within the timescale set by the SQA.

When will pupils find out their provisional grades?

Once an assessment has been sat, marked and quality assured, teachers will be able to tell pupils how they have performed in that assessment. Only after meetings between the Senior Management Team and local authorities have taken place would we be able to decide on thresholds for each grade. For each subject the school will be given guidelines on what each grade should look like so that these can be judged fairly.

Teachers are hoping to be able to start discussions with pupils between 14-18th June to explain to them their provisional grades and discuss how they performed in the key pieces of evidence. We hope to e-mail the provisional grades on 18th June firstly to pupils due to new legislation and then to parents/carers.

Final grades will be confirmed by the SQA in August.

In anticipation of my son/daughter not performing as well as he/she would have done in a normal academic year, what is the appeals process?

The school is currently awaiting confirmation from the SQA of the final appeals process this year in terms of dates and who pupils will be appealing to and this will be communicated to pupils and parents/carers. Appeals will have to be demonstrated on both evidence and attainment. A huge part of the evidence will be the end of year assessments. The school expects that the SQA will stick to normal procedures where a pupil must lodge the appeal and not the parent/carer. It is also expected that a pupil's grade could go up or down after appealing if the evidence is remarked. The final appeals process will be communicated to pupils and parents/carers.

Will pupils have to wait until their results are confirmed by the SQA or can the appeal process start before they are submitted?

Pupils will be able to query their marks prior to their results being submitted to the SQA. A clarification conversation will be possible for the pupil to have with their teachers to further discuss their grade and key pieces of evidence.

Exams would normally be marked by people that have been trained to mark to ensure fairness. Since teachers are doing the marking this year, how will these be marked to ensure fairness over the whole of Scotland?

All teachers have undertaken SQA Understanding Standards training from marking specialists in their subject area in addition to SQA Academy training on how to determine Provisional Grades to ensure a consistent understanding of marking to SQA standards. Teachers will mark assessment activities and moderate their judgements in line with SQA guidelines and Falkirk Council's Moderation Policy.

Local authority subject moderation teams will provide additional support and guidance to teachers. The Senior Leadership Team will also verify results with Principal Teachers and ensure processes have been followed correctly.

Local authority and the SQA will provide additional checks to ensure assessment evidence is marked accurately, meaning a number of assessment pieces will be marked/graded by a second person external to the school. These assessments will be picked at random.

I'm keen to understand more about the recent SQA announcement regarding an extended September deadline for those that are unable to meet the June deadline <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/97701.html>. Is this extension for all pupils in all subjects or only certain subjects and does this apply to pupils where they've performed lower than expected?

The school is awaiting further guidance regarding this. The extension will not apply where a pupil wishes to attempt to improve on existing evidence or take advantage of an extended period of preparation. The extension will be for pupils who have been unable to complete their assessment evidence in time for the 25th June submission date due to exceptional circumstances such as pupils who have been shielding, have had multiply periods of self-isolation or have been on long term absence. It is anticipated that the number of learners needing to utilise this contingency will be very small across the nation.

If a pupil does not achieve the grade they require to sit their subject choice level next year, will this be able to be changed prior to the summer break or will they need to wait until they have received confirmation of their grade from SQA?

The school is currently looking into the possibility of this and will notify pupils once a decision has been made.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Date to be confirmed – June 2021



Sian Balfour
Chairperson



Karren Morrison
Vice Chairperson



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Please forward any queries, feedback or issues you would like raised by the Parent Council to
GHSParentCouncil@falkirk.gov.uk