



20 September 2019

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Dear Parent / Carer,

Removal of Recognising Positive Achievement

In October 2018, the Deputy First Minister, John Swinney announced that the interim measure of 'Recognising Positive Achievement' – the automatic fallback to National 4 – would end from session 2019/2020.

From session 2019/2020, candidates who are unsuccessful in their National 5 course assessment but who have passed a combination of SCQF level 5 freestanding units, and the National 4 added value unit, will no longer achieve the National 4 course award.

As a result it is very important that we present our young people for qualifications at the most appropriate level for their needs.

On a date early in November 2019 I will be expected to confirm with the SQA what our entries will be for session 2019/2020. In essence this is what level a young person is presented at. This decision will be made separately for each subject they are studying.

To arrive at this decision, faculties will consider information on each young person gathered throughout their time in each individual subject throughout the Broad General Education as well as the progress they have made throughout the course between the start of the new timetable in June and the October holidays.

A further review of progress will be made after the prelim examinations in January 2020 where any further recommended changes will be made if required.

As a school we would like to be as aspirational as possible and aim to give our young people every opportunity to be successful at the highest possible level whilst being as realistic as possible.

Nationally, across the whole of Scotland, in session 2017/18 40.4% of the S4 cohort of pupils achieved an A, B or C in National 5 Mathematics, while 65.6% were successful at the same level in English. Figures for this year will not be available until late September but are unlikely to be dramatically different. While we are proud that we managed to get a higher percentage of pupils through both of these subjects, it does highlight that there are number of pupils who are likely to fall short at that level and for whom studying these courses at another level may be more appropriate to their needs. It may also be the case that the young person may still progress to National 5 but after completion of National 4. We use our evidence to identify the level that a pupil is most likely to be successful at and will advise you of this and the most appropriate level or pathway for them.

It should be noted that the threshold for Grade D at National 5 was extended to a notional 40-49% from session 2017-18 onwards. This is designed to recognise the achievement of a wider group of candidates at SCQF level 5. This threshold was extended for Higher qualifications during the last academic session and will now be extended for Advanced Higher courses from this session onwards. In all these cases the young person receives a D which is considered to be an award rather than a pass. With the removal of Recognising Positive Achievement any pupil who sits an examination at any of these levels next session and falls short of the notional 40% required to achieve a grade D would not receive any credit for the work they have completed throughout the session.

In light of all of the above information and with the need to make recommendations on levels in November we cannot stress enough just how important it is for young people to be applying themselves now with steady work, completion of homework, revision, exam question practice and checking of understanding. The SQA state *"For National Units at these levels (N5 and H), it is expected that learners require an additional half of the time required for programmed learning (classroom based) in order to prepare them to undertake a successful learning experience."* Depending on the level of course, we provide just under 4 or 5 hours a week of classroom input. On that basis our pupils should be committing nearly 2 to 2.5 hrs of home-based learning per subject across the full academic year if they are to meet the SQA's suggested amount.

Often we find many young people don't really get into good study habits early enough in the session and end up cramming work in after the prelims in January. This adds to their stress and can mean earlier, and crucial, elements of the course have been neglected with a knock on to their grades. You will know your child and just how much support they will need from you to manage their work and to ensure they have good study habits throughout the year.

We appreciate there is a lot of key information above and please do not hesitate to contact the school if you wish further clarification.

Yours sincerely

Craig Cowie
Depute Head Teacher