



NBHS WEEKLY UPDATE

Friday 5 February 2021

Message from Mrs Rodger, Head Teacher

There is no doubt that this has been an emotional week for me. I knew I would find it difficult telling colleagues, pupils, parents and carers about my intention to retire in August; what I didn't realise, though, was just how difficult. I thought the tears would come at the end of term in June, but there have been tears this week, too. I love everything about being part of the NBHS community and this week has reminded me why – so many kind people have taken the time to send me lovely messages, messages which I've found really touching.

Ask a secondary teacher why they have gone into the profession and most will say it's because they want to share with young people their passion for their subject, and because they want to make a positive difference to young people's lives. I had many wonderful years as an English teacher, hopefully enthusing young people about literature and language. I've now had many years as a senior leader, nearly all of them at NBHS, and it's been a privilege (as well as a responsibility, of course) to help foster a positive culture, ethos and learning environment where our young people can thrive and flourish. I've made mistakes, but hopefully I've learnt from them and I've said sorry when I got it wrong. I think I will be able to leave NBHS this summer feeling hugely proud of the school as it is now, and of the part that I've played in getting it here.

But I'm not away yet! There are many uncertainties ahead in my remaining time as your head teacher, but what we do know is that the coming weeks and months will bring challenges for us all. I want to reassure you that, along with our amazing staff team, I will do all that I can to ensure our young people continue to have a very positive experience at NBHS, being well-supported with both their learning and their wellbeing – whether remotely or face-to-face in the school building.

This may have been a short half-term, with pupils back in lessons for only four weeks. However, we cannot underestimate how taxing remote learning is for pupils, teachers and parents alike. I would like to say a most sincere thank you to you all for the diligence, resilience, support, encouragement, determination and warmth that has been on display across the school community throughout these four weeks. And now it is time for us all to have a very well-deserved break. I wish you all a very happy, relaxing and contented half-term holiday.

Possible Limited Return to School on Monday 22 February

You will be aware from the First Minister's announcement on Tuesday this week that, while the majority of our pupils will continue with remote learning, some Senior Phase pupils may be returning to school for some specific lessons from Monday 22 February, as follows:

"...very limited numbers of pupils in S4-6 will also be able to complete in-school practical work that is essential for completing national qualifications on a part-time basis from the same date."

This is subject to review by the Scottish Government and there will be a further announcement from the First Minister on Tuesday 16 February on whether it will go ahead. If the plan for this phased

return is confirmed, final details on what it entails for Senior Phase pupils in East Lothian secondary schools will be shared with pupils and parents by Friday 19 February at the latest.

You can find the full text of the Scottish Government's Back to School announcement by following this link: <https://www.gov.scot/news/back-to-school-1/>

Higher and Advanced Higher Prelims/National Qualification Assessments

Following an ELC Secondary Head Teacher and SQA Coordinators' meeting on Thursday 4 February, it has been agreed that any formal diet of Higher/AH prelims that were planned for January/February will now be cancelled. The continued focus for the foreseeable future is learning and teaching and coverage of National Qualification course content with, of course, the natural feedback loop occurring throughout this period of time.

On 6 November, we communicated to parents that there would be no prelims for pupils being presented for National 5 qualifications; we took this decision given the Scottish Government communication in October that National 5 final exams were cancelled. Despite the announcement on 8 December that communicated the cancellation of Higher and Advanced Higher final exams, we were still pursuing a formal diet of Higher and Advanced prelims in January, given the fact that the planning and preparation had already been done. We appreciate the benefits of holding a formal diet of prelims: the capturing of evidence of pupils' attainment, and their use as a formative tool to guide pupils and their teachers about the knowledge and skills gaps. However, there are a complex blend of other factors which have led to the decision to cancel Higher and Advanced Higher prelims. Firstly, the health and wellbeing of pupils is of crucial importance. We do not feel that it would be in pupils' best interest to continue with a narrative that suggested there was still the possibility they would undertake prelims, as well as end of course assessments, when face-to-face teaching resumes. Secondly, the key message from the SQA is that learning and teaching of course content should not be unnecessarily disrupted by conducting a formal prelim diet. Lastly, when face to face teaching does resume, there needs to be a period of consolidation of the course content that has been covered remotely.

We obviously do not know when senior pupils will be back in school. As soon as we know this we will begin building our National Qualification Assessment Calendar. This will make clear to pupils and parents which assessments will be taking place when, and what course components are to be assessed. Although at this point we cannot stipulate with any detail the subject sequence of assessments and their timings, we anticipate that the bulk of National Qualification end of course assessments will be taking place after the Easter holiday. These assessments will, of course, be requiring pupils to retrieve and demonstrate their full breadth of knowledge and skills that have been covered across the National Qualification courses they are studying.

We do want to assure pupils and parents that our main priority is for pupils to feel well-supported and well-prepared before they sit any of the end of course assessments that will take place. Although some in-school teaching and learning is being made available to pupils pursuing particular practical-based National Qualifications, this is not to create space to conduct formal assessments; rather, it is simply to give opportunity to these pupils to continue with crucial coursework components that would otherwise be impossible to complete in a remote setting.

A full presentation about the assessment of National Qualifications will be sent out to pupils and parents shortly after the February holiday.

Asymptomatic Testing Programme

East Lothian secondary schools will be part of the Asymptomatic Testing Programme which is being put in place as part of the package of COVID-19 risk-reduction mitigations in schools across Scotland. This voluntary programme will be open to staff and **Senior Phase pupils** who are regularly in the school building. Please note that no-one who is otherwise permitted to come to school will be prevented from doing so, just because they do not wish to participate in this testing programme.

The Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test kits will be issued in school then taken home to be completed. You can find out more about these kits and how to complete the tests here:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvaBZskxS7tzQYIVg7lwH5uxAD9UrSzGJ>

Details on how this programme will operate will be issued after the February holiday.

S5/S6 Parents' Evening, Wednesday 24 February

Pupils have been busy making appointments this week. The appointment sheet will close this evening at 7 pm, then reopen on Monday 15 February for a final chance to make appointments.

Children and Young People's Mental Health Week

It's Children and Young People's Mental Health week and I am excited to launch our new Google Site: Mental Health and Wellbeing Information Point - [Mental Health and Wellbeing \(google.com\)](https://www.google.com) and Google Drive Shared folder "MHWB Information for Schools".

The google site contains up-to-date information for children & young people, families, and school staff around a variety of mental health and wellbeing topics. It provides information and resources to sign-post to, as well as support in having conversations around mental health. There is a page introducing our Mental Health Youth Work team and we plan to update this with information and supports on offer. This site will be ever-growing and updating.

Martin Lahiffe, Mental Health Youth Worker – North Berwick cluster
East Lothian Council, East Lothian Wellbeing Academy

Pupil Survey for Scottish Government's Play/Leisure Time Strategy

Dear Secondary Pupil

Play Scotland is producing a report for the Scottish Government to help inform the refresh of the Play/Leisure Time Strategy. We understand that young people might not use the word "play" – please think of it as recreation, leisure time, free time throughout. This follows up an earlier report sent to the government in March 2020. This latest report looks at the impact of COVID-19 on play and is being finalised in early Spring 2021. Play Scotland would like this report to be informed by the views of children and young people, so **we are asking you to help us by completing this survey which closes 8th February**. The questions in the survey are general themes.

The survey can be found here: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CYPsurveyEL>

On behalf of Play Scotland, thank you so much for your help.
Mark Urwin | East Lothian Senior Active Schools Co-ordinator

Careers

Mick Burns Careers Adviser

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Careers talks

We always try to post these online so you can access what we are delivering in school and to date we have completed the following:

[S1](#) introduction to us and our services

[S2](#) Decision making and option choice resources

[S3](#) Getting ready to make subject choices. In addition to the talk, all S3 students have been offered a one to one interview

[S4](#) Developing your Career Management Skills

[S5](#) Identifying your strengths

[S6](#) Post school options

Other

Edinburgh College courses are now taking applications

I have delivered a preparation for college talk on 20 January and you can view this [here](#)

I have posted several vacancies recently at edubuzz.org/careers so please visit if you are considering employment, apprenticeships or training. There's even one for Aston Martin!

Another useful site if you are looking for local vacancies is edubuzz.org/midandeastvacancies as well as www.apprenticeship.scot

We have put together a short presentation on The Apprenticeship Family [here](#) that you may find useful, particularly at subject choice time.

Message from East Lothian Council

Do you know of any East Lothian businesses or self-employed people who have not yet qualified for any COVID-19-related support grant funding? Please make them aware that East Lothian Council's Discretionary Fund is open for applications, with a closing date of 5pm on Monday 8th February – so it's very important that applications are submitted quickly. More details are in this [news release](#). The application form will be on our dedicated [business support web page](#) – which also contains other really useful information on grants, loans & other financial support for businesses at this time.

COVID-19 Positive Cases

Although the majority of our young people are not in the school building, we would appreciate it if you would inform the authority if your child tests positive for COVID-19. Please email the details to covidinschools@eastlothian.gov.uk. If you have no access to email then please call East Lothian Council on 01875 613 921. If your child is attending the school hub during lockdown, please do not send them if they have any COVID-19 symptoms; instead, please ensure that they self-isolate and book a test.

COVID-19 – Financial Issues

The following link provides information to parents and carers on the advice and support available for anyone experiencing financial hardship due to COVID.

https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/30092/financial_support_during_covid-19

NBHS Communications

We have had some instances recently of parents contacting teachers directly via their child's edubuzz email address. Please note that this is not allowed under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). If you wish to contact any member of staff, please do so by the normal process - via the communications inbox, as outlined below. Your email will then be directed to the relevant person who can address your query or concern.

Just a reminder that if you wish to contact school you should email us at the address below, or contact your child's guidance teacher directly. This email inbox will be monitored every school day during the closure of the school building; it will also be checked occasionally over weekends and during the February break. During the school day, there are not always staff available in the building to take phone calls so please email, or leave a phone message which will be picked up as soon as possible. Please note that should a member of school staff phone you, it will likely be from a withheld number.

communications@northberwickhigh.elcschool.org.uk

Dates for your Diary

Monday 15 February	Staff inservice day
Tuesday 16 February	School reopens for pupils (remotely for the majority; in hub for those pupils with allocated places)
Monday 22 February	Some practical lessons begin to take place in school building for senior pupils (subject to confirmation by First Minister on 16 Feb)
Wednesday 24 February	S5 and S6 parents' evening