

## INDEX OF ENCLOSURES

Enc.	Description	Date	Explanation of redactions	Clause
1.	Email from Grandparent to DFM	12/10/20	Personal information	38(1)(b)
2.	Email from member of the public to DFM	13/10/20	Personal information	38(1)(b)
3.	Email from teacher to DFM	08/10/20	Personal information	38(1)(b)
4.	Email from parent to SG/DFM	08/10/20	Personal information	38(1)(b)
5.	Email from parent to DFM	08/10/20	Personal information	38(1)(b)
6.	Email from parents to DFM	08/10/20	Personal information	38(1)(b)
7.	Email to DFM	08/10/20	Personal information	38(1)(b)
8.	Email to DFM	09/10/20	Personal information	38(1)(b)
9.	Email to FM fwd to DFM	10/10/20	Personal information	38(1)(b)
10.	Email to DFM	13/10/20	Personal information	38(1)(b)
11.	Email to DFM	11/10/20	Personal information	38(1)(b)
12.*	Example 1 of "Us for Them Scotland" campaign correspondence	08/10/20		
13.*	Example 2 of "Us for Them Scotland" campaign correspondence	08/10/20		

\* Enclosures 12 and 13 form part of a campaign. There were 31 emails in total which have not been presented in full for the purposes of servicing this FOI request. There were 2 versions of the campaign email, examples of which have been included.

## Enclosure 1 - Email from Grandparent to DFM

Tue 13/10/2020 10:10  
202000102627

AO - [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

OR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)]to John Swinney MSP | Deputy First Minister of Scotland and Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills | Scottish Government | St Andrew's House | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG |Tel: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]| E: DFMCSSE@gov.scot

All e-mails and attachments sent by a Ministerial Private Office to any other official on behalf of a Minister relating to a decision, request or comment made by a Minister, or a note of a Ministerial meeting, must be filed appropriately by the recipient. Private Offices do not keep official records of such e-mails or attachments.

-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> On Behalf Of Swinney J (John), MSP  
Sent: 12 October 2020 19:42  
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>  
Subject: FW: Message from Scottish Parliament website

[Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)]to John Swinney  
MSP for Perthshire North / Deputy First Minister / Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills  
Tel: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]www.johnswinneymsp.com / www.scottish.parliament.uk  
 Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT

-----Original Message-----

From: noreply@parliament.scot <noreply@parliament.scot>  
Sent: 12 October 2020 19:28  
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>  
Subject: Message from Scottish Parliament website

name:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

address:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]West Lothian

postcode:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

email:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] yahoo.co.uk

telephone:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

message:

Can you please explain to our parents in Scotland why our children are not doing NAT5 exams after saying they would go ahead, but on the advice of Mark Priestly you have changed this. The rest of the UK announced today that their kids will do GCSEs (Nat5) and all Highers across UK go ahead. What is wrong with our Kids doing their NAT5 in line with the UK. If the 3 tier system is in place to align us with the rest of the UK why on earth is this one year group of exams not allowed. The fiasco will happen again as we have just went thru experience of a teacher no communicating and marking down grades who is an A star pupil. and you want us to rely on these marks. I dont think so. This needs to be relooked at. Your advisor has got it wrong, all teachers in UK say exams are the true result. I have put this out on public media as this needs to be addressed. Thank you. A very angry grandparent. Scottish kid should be treated the same, delay the exams not cancel.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Scottish Parliament: Making a positive difference to the lives of the people of Scotland  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba: A' toirt deagh bhuaidh air beatha sluagh na h-Alba

[www.parliament.scot](http://www.parliament.scot)<<http://www.parliament.scot>> :  
[facebook.com/scottishparliament](http://facebook.com/scottishparliament)<<http://facebook.com/scottishparliament>> :  
[twitter.com/scotparl](http://twitter.com/ScotParl)<<http://twitter.com/ScotParl>>

The information in this email may be confidential. If you think you have received this email in error please delete it and do not share its contents.

\*\*\*\*\*

---

This email has been scanned by the Symantec Email Security.cloud service.  
For more information please visit <http://www.symanteccloud.com>

---

## Enclosure 2 - Email from member of the public to DFM

13 October 2020

202000102596

AO –[Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
OR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)]to John Swinney MSP | Deputy First Minister of Scotland and Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills | Scottish Government | St Andrew's House | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG |Tel: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]| E: DFMCSSE@gov.scot

All e-mails and attachments sent by a Ministerial Private Office to any other official on behalf of a Minister relating to a decision, request or comment made by a Minister, or a note of a Ministerial meeting, must be filed appropriately by the recipient. Private Offices do not keep official records of such e-mails or attachments.

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> On Behalf Of Swinney J (John), MSP  
Sent: 13 October 2020 10:57  
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
<DFMCSSE@gov.scot>  
Subject: FW: Scottish National Exams 2021

[Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)]to John Swinney  
MSP for Perthshire North / Deputy First Minister / Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills  
Tel: ☐ [Redacted s38(1)(b)]www.johnswinneymsp.com / www.scottish.parliament.uk  
☐ Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@yahoo.co.uk>  
Sent: 13 October 2020 10:52  
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>  
Subject: Scottish National Exams 2021

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr Swinney

I am writing to you as the Minister for Education in the Scottish Government to express my concern and extreme surprise that the teachers of Scotland and their leaders are unable to organise examinations for S4 pupils to sit their National 5 exams this academic year like their counterparts are in England and Wales. Surely to goodness if England can manage to arrange for their children to sit these exams which are so important in the development of these children to become part of the adult world then we here in Scotland can do so too. These children have already been badly let down by the Scottish Education System and all you are doing is limiting their future even more. Children need to aspire to reach goals in this world not to make do with second best. The teachers leaders should be ashamed of themselves they are there to get the best from their pupils not just to make do and be hide bound by rules and regulations.

I trust you will take the feelings of parents and guardians and do the best for our young people and give them a first class education.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)]Stirlingshire [Redacted s38(1)(b)]Tel: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

" email is like an electronic postcard - anyone who wants to read it does"

\*\*\*\*\*

The Scottish Parliament: Making a positive difference to the lives of the people of Scotland  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba: A' toirt deagh bhuaidh air beatha sluagh na h-Alba  
[www.parliament.scot](http://www.parliament.scot) : [facebook.com/scottishparliament](https://www.facebook.com/scottishparliament) : [twitter.com/scotparl](https://twitter.com/scotparl)

The information in this email may be confidential. If you think you have received this email in error please delete it and do not share its contents.

\*\*\*\*\*

---

This email has been scanned by the Symantec Email Security.cloud service.  
For more information please visit <http://www.symanteccloud.com>

---

### Enclosure 3 - Email from teacher to DFM

8/10/20

20200097010

AO – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

OR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to John Swinney MSP | Deputy First Minister of Scotland and Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills | Scottish Government | St Andrew's House | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG |Tel: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]| E: DFMCSSE@gov.scot

All e-mails and attachments sent by a Ministerial Private Office to any other official on behalf of a Minister relating to a decision, request or comment made by a Minister, or a note of a Ministerial meeting, must be filed appropriately by the recipient. Private Offices do not keep official records of such e-mails or attachments.

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot>  
Sent: 08 October 2020 12:57  
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>  
Subject: RE: Exam Diet 2020-21

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com>  
Sent: 08 October 2020 09:24  
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>  
Subject: 2021 Exam Diet

Dear Sir,

Can someone in your office please explain to me why it is appropriate for all pupils to attend school in the same classes, but not to sit in an exam room socially distanced? Surely it's either safe for young people to be in school or it isn't? It is entirely possible to organise an exam diet that sees no overlap of any N5 and higher subjects so I do not understand why the decision has been taken to cancel the exams? I am a teacher myself and while I see others applaud this decision, I cannot understand the double standard? Exams are not just used for the purpose of gaining a qualification, they are used as a way to prepare for harder exams in the future. The idea that you can just miss a step and automatically catch up may be the case for some candidates, but is not the case for all. There are a significant minority of candidates who will be adversely disadvantaged by being denied the opportunity to 'practice'.

I understand this decision is being taken out of an abundance of caution, but I believe there are alternatives that would allow all exams, or at least some form of summative assessment, to take place.

Regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

## Enclosure 4 - Email from parent to SG/DFM

8/10/20

20200097703

Dear Scottish Government,

I am writing with great concern to the announcement that was made by Mr J Swinney regarding the cancelling of the exams for National 5 exams. I find this very upsetting baring in mind this may of been the only opportunity for some pupils to actually sit an exam as they are legally allowed to leave education at 16.

I also fear that this could be a start of things to come post Covid as i know in the past it has been mentioned that exams should be replaced with course work only!

I understand why it has been chosen for the year 4 pupils to have there exams cancelled but where do we stop as i feel this could be the argument next year and before we know it year 4 pupils never actually sit any exams!

I feel it is important for pupils to sit exams as it gets them ready for adult life with regards to studying taking notes etc. I feel just doing course work and teacher assessments does not have the same effect.

My other concern is that employers in the future will treat some of these students in the future differently and unfairly as they know that the individual may never of sat any exams. I also have a concern that you may also cancel the higher and advanced higher if the numbers increase to high!

If England, Wales and Northern Ireland actually have a full exam year next year then i would say that Scotland has made a big mistake and failed our pupils.

regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

---

This email has been scanned by the Symantec Email Security.cloud service.  
For more information please visit <http://www.symanteccloud.com>

---

## Enclosure 5 - Email from parent to DFM

8/10/20

AO – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

20200100010

OR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)] to John Swinney MSP | Deputy First Minister of Scotland and Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills | Scottish Government | St Andrew's House | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG | Tel: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | E: DFMCSSE@gov.scot

All e-mails and attachments sent by a Ministerial Private Office to any other official on behalf of a Minister relating to a decision, request or comment made by a Minister, or a note of a Ministerial meeting, must be filed appropriately by the recipient. Private Offices do not keep official records of such e-mails or attachments.

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @ymail.com>

Sent: 08 October 2020 00:50

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: Education Exams

Dear Mr Swinney

I am hugely disappointed in Wednesday's announcement on the Nat 5 exam diet for 2021. I understand the decision made would not have been an easy one and I have no doubt that you considered all possibilities and outcomes, before making this decision that will undoubtedly have a huge impact on all our young people. It is deeply regrettable that our young people will not be allowed to sit their exams and feel the sense of achievement and satisfaction that comes from having worked hard, studied harder, and reaped the rewards. Instead, for many, there will be intense pressure on them to continue to work hard and achieve exceptional grades for the duration of the course, and in particular, all year from now until exams. This could have a massive impact on stress levels and mental health for many. While they should be doing this anyway on nat 5 course, the pressure of knowing every single piece of work will be important, is actually enough to have the reverse effect. Our government has robbed our young people of the chance to feel a sense of achievement in passing exams after all the hard work has been completed, and yet, it appears to be OK for those sitting highers and advanced highers to have this privilege. I can not understand this at all. Surely if it is considered acceptable to make allowances for these exams, nat 5 should be no different.

I understand the pandemic might well have caused 2021 exams to be cancelled anyway, and that would have been acceptable, but at least let them have a chance for that to happen and let 2021 exams all go ahead until something happens preventing it. Give them a chance to actually earn their grades in the time mannered fashion they always have done.

I realise you believe are doing your best for the young people, but I am not sure I agree. I am absolutely downhearted by the decision taken and I am certain many parents and young people will be too. What measures have been considered to ensure a more positive outcome

than this year exam fiasco? How will young people be graded? Will prelims still go ahead?  
Parents and young people will need to know all this.

Kind regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android

---

This email has been scanned by the Symantec Email Security.cloud service.  
For more information please visit <http://www.symanteccloud.com>

---

## Enclosure 6 - Email from parents to DFM

8/10/20

202000101032

Ao – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

OR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)]to John Swinney MSP | Deputy First Minister of Scotland and Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills | Scottish Government | St Andrew's House | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG |Tel: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]| E: DFMCSSE@gov.scot

All e-mails and attachments sent by a Ministerial Private Office to any other official on behalf of a Minister relating to a decision, request or comment made by a Minister, or a note of a Ministerial meeting, must be filed appropriately by the recipient. Private Offices do not keep official records of such e-mails or attachments.

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> On Behalf Of Swinney J (John), MSP  
Sent: 08 October 2020 14:56  
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
<DFMCSSE@gov.scot>  
Subject: FW: Nat 5 cancellation

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]to John Swinney  
MSP for Perthshire North / Deputy First Minister / Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills  
Tel: ☐ [Redacted s38(1)(b)]www.johnswinneymsp.com / www.scottish.parliament.uk  
☐ Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com>  
Sent: 08 October 2020 14:22  
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>  
Cc: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>  
Subject: Nat 5 cancellation

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Good afternoon First Minister,

I am not a member of Usforthem & you may have seen headlines quoting that 'Parents are furious' at the cancellation of the Nat 5 exams for 2021.

Parents are not furious. We are parents of a current S4 & we think this is the best & fairest decision for them. We have spoken to many other parents since yesterday & without exception, they feel as we do.

Our son himself is immensely relieved to have this one pressure lifted from him given what he is already having to cope with & the uncertainty of the future.

He should have started his Nat 5 coursework back in May, & although his teachers put in a commendable effort with online schooling, it was not the same as the face to face teaching our son feels he needs.

We are confident that a rigorous assessment process together with teacher opinions should ensure our son ends up with the grades he deserves & I know he appreciates the clarity of now knowing what he is working towards.

Please expect your inbox to be inundated with correspondence from the 'furious' members of Usforthem.

This group do not represent all parents. They do not even represent a majority of parents, being only 10k in membership.

With our grateful thanks as the parents of a much happier S4.

Kind regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]\*\*\*\*\*

The Scottish Parliament: Making a positive difference to the lives of the people of Scotland  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba: A' toirt deagh bhuaidh air beatha sluagh na h-Alba  
[www.parliament.scot](http://www.parliament.scot) : [facebook.com/scottishparliament](https://www.facebook.com/scottishparliament) : [twitter.com/scotparl](https://twitter.com/scotparl)

The information in this email may be confidential. If you think you have received this email in error please delete it and do not share its contents.

\*\*\*\*\*

---

This email has been scanned by the Symantec Email Security.cloud service.  
For more information please visit <http://www.symanteccloud.com>

---

## Enclosure 7 - Email to DFM

8/10/20

202000101528

AO - [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

FOR OR PLEASE

-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> On Behalf Of Swinney J (John), MSP  
Sent: 08 October 2020 20:04  
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>  
Subject: FW: National 5 Exam Cancellation

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]to John Swinney  
MSP for Perthshire North / Deputy First Minister / Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills  
Tel: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]www.johnswinneymsp.com / www.scottish.parliament.uk  
 Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT

-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@hotmail.com>  
Sent: 08 October 2020 19:57  
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>  
Subject: National 5 Exam Cancellation

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Sir

I am writing to express my disappointment at your decision to cancel the National 5 exams in 2021. I believe this sends the wrong messages to our young people. We should be encouraging our youngsters to push on in the face of adversity. We must allow them the opportunity to sit these exams and meet an important milestone that they have been working towards for years. An experience that will prepare them for subsequent exam requirements and as well as for challenges presented throughout life.

I believe you have underestimated our young people and their ability to rise to the challenge of proceeding with exams in these trying times. I urge you to reconsider, lead by example and also to rise to the challenge by allowing the National 5 exams to go ahead in 2021.

Regards,  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Sent from my iPhone

**Enclosure 8 - Email to DFM**

9/10/20

20200010551

AO - [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

FOR OR PLEASE

-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> On Behalf Of Swinney J (John), MSP  
Sent: 09 October 2020 18:30  
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>  
Subject: FW: Exams

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]to John Swinney  
MSP for Perthshire North / Deputy First Minister / Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills  
Tel: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]www.johnswinneymsp.com / www.scottish.parliament.uk  
 Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT

-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com>  
Sent: 09 October 2020 17:45  
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>  
Subject: Exams

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi John

The talk about exams are that national 5s are having no exam. But is there a prelim and if so what is the difference?

Thanks [Redacted s38(1)(b)]\*\*\*\*\*

The Scottish Parliament: Making a positive difference to the lives of the people of Scotland  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba: A' toirt deagh bhuaidh air beatha sluagh na h-Alba

www.parliament.scot<<http://www.parliament.scot>> :  
facebook.com/scottishparliament<<http://facebook.com/scottishparliament>> :  
twitter.com/scotparl<<http://twitter.com/ScotParl>>

The information in this email may be confidential. If you think you have received this email in error please delete it and do not share its contents.

**Enclosure 9 - Email to FM fwd to DFM**

10/10/20

202000101569

AO –[Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
FOR OR PLEASE

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> On Behalf Of Swinney J (John), MSP  
Sent: 10 October 2020 19:15  
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>  
Subject: FW: National 5 examinations 2021

[Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)]to John Swinney  
MSP for Perthshire North / Deputy First Minister / Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills  
Tel: ☐ [Redacted s38(1)(b)]www.johnswineymsp.com / www.scottish.parliament.uk  
☐ Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com>  
Sent: 10 October 2020 12:44  
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>  
Subject: National 5 examinations 2021

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Ms Sturgeon,

I write with regard to the cancellation of National 5 examinations in 2021. Both parents and pupils are very angry at your decision and wonder why you have made it now when the examinations are still more than six months away ?

Continuous assessment with grading from teachers will always be subject to partiality and suspect accordingly. These grades will not be recognised and those leaving at 16 will do so with no qualifications.

Do you suppose, perhaps, that your decision has something to do with the current malaise in the state system in Scotland ? There are an astonishing number of teaching vacancies advertised and year groups are being taught together. Does the virus, perhaps, provide an excuse to cancel examinations and avoid some embarrassing results ?

I would ask you to reconsider your decision and let external examination take place in Scotland as they do in the rest of the UK.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

## Enclosure 10 - Email to DFM

13/10/20

202000102164

AO – [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

OR please

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] [Redacted s38(1)(b)]to John Swinney MSP | Deputy First Minister of Scotland and Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills | Scottish Government | St Andrew's House | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG |Tel: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]| E: DFMCS@gov.scot

All e-mails and attachments sent by a Ministerial Private Office to any other official on behalf of a Minister relating to a decision, request or comment made by a Minister, or a note of a Ministerial meeting, must be filed appropriately by the recipient. Private Offices do not keep official records of such e-mails or attachments.

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com>  
Sent: 12 October 2020 18:50  
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>; First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>  
Subject: Exams

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr Swinney

I am emailing in regard to your decision to cancel the Nat 5 exams next year. This decision is nothing short of shocking.

The First Minister stated 'judge me on education', well we are judging.

This decision is ruining our childrens' future. How can you make a decision to cancel the exams for next year?

Throughout this whole pandemic we have seen nothing but failings on the part of the SNP.

How could you honestly expect to run an independent country if you fall at the first hurdle.

I voted for independence because I believed in a better country for myself and my children.

I would never vote for independence again.

I truly hope that you reinstate the exams or we find more able leaders to create a better future for us.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

**Enclosure 11 - Email to DFM**

FOR OR PLEASE

-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> On Behalf Of Swinney J (John), MSP  
Sent: 11 October 2020 12:55  
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills  
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>  
Subject: FW: National 5 exams in 2020

[Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)]to John Swinney  
MSP for Perthshire North / Deputy First Minister / Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills  
Tel: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] www.johnswinneymsp.com / www.scottish.parliament.uk  
 Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT

-----Original Message-----

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@virgin.net>  
Sent: 11 October 2020 12:51  
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>  
Subject: National 5 exams in 2020

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Sir

I would like to suggest a method of achieving some standardisation in national 5 exams in 2020 which I believe will be assessed internally in schools. Could the SQA, for whom I worked as a setter from 1995 to 2013, send out exam papers to all schools so that all pupils sit the same examination. The SQA would send out detailed marking schemes for each exam. The teachers in school would mark the papers. To ensure that bias is eliminated the marking would be carried out by a teacher different to the class teacher. The class teacher could then review the marking to see if it was fair. Once marking was completed the raw marks could be submitted to SQA to decide grade boundaries.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)]@virgin.net  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)][Redacted s38(1)(b)]Fife  
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]  
Sent from my iPad

\*\*\*\*\*

## Enclosure 12

### Version 1 – no longer SNP voter

I am a member of Us For Them Scotland, the only organisation standing up for our children at a time when adults in authority are utterly disregarding them and their futures.

I WAS also a voter for the SNP. No longer.

I am writing to you to express in the strongest terms possible the importance for S4 pupils to sit National 5 exams this academic year like their counterparts are in England and Wales.

You are taking away the opportunity for the 80,000 young people, who are also voters, to sit these incredibly important exams.

Given that it is possible for Highers and Advanced Highers to be run, why can National 5s not be similarly run? There has been no plausible reason given as to why National 5s cannot be run.

Since there has been no answer given to this critical question, all the following arguments are in reality superfluous!

Clearly cancelling National 5s is a compromise position the Scottish Government has reached with teachers unions who have been pressing for exams to be cancelled and for Blended Learning. Why should our children accept the Scottish Government's poor compromise?

Changing the way pupils are awarded their Nat 5s mid curriculum is a recipe for disaster.

Teachers don't know what they will have to do in order to have the material required to make their estimated grade for pupils.

- When will they know this?
- How much extra work is this going to create for teachers?
- Will they be able to and have the time to do it?

Last years failed efforts demonstrate that there was a significant issue with inflated grades. We suspect that, given the inflated grades last year, that we will see an increase in inflated grades.

- How is the issue of grade inflation going to be addressed?

Exams offer pupils a chance for an evidence based chance for assessment free of any bias from teachers. To strip this away from pupils is extremely unfair.

There are no clear Lessons Learned document that has come out of last academic years exam results fiasco that gives us confidence that there will be effective standardisation for this years pupils.

- Why is there going to be effective standardisation this year, when clearly there wasn't effective standardisation last year? Yes, teachers have more time but that is not the same issue as effective standardisation.

The terrible position Highers pupils are in this year is that they are now sitting a set of critically important exams, perhaps the most important exams they will ever sit. They are doing this having not sat their National 5s and as such are woefully under prepared. The National 5s are an important set of exams for pupils going on to Highers to prepare them for the rigours of Highers.

If they take National 5s they will go for Highers. The Scottish Government has failed to ringfence Highers in their latest statement. We fully expect the next push by the teachers unions to be the cancellation of Highers.

The majority of the 6,000 pupils who will leave at the end of S4 will be going on to further training. They will leave school having never sat a full set of exams. Many will go on to have to sit exams as part of their further training and career development and they will be disadvantaged by having never sat a set of proper exams at school.

There seems to be an underlying assumption from many people that if you leave school at S4, you're a no hoper and that never having sat exams will have no material impact on them. This is completely wrong. It is very common to see people who left school in S4 who progressed their career vocationally. They go on to take positions in senior management and operations. These people subsequently have to sit repeated exams as they progress from the tools up the ladder.

To rob these young people, many of whom struggled within the school system, of the opportunity to sit exams at school is a terrible thing. These young people deserve this opportunity. These young people go on to be hugely important members of companies, business owners, members of our society and important tax payers!

There are arguments for and against exams as a method of issuing certification to our young people. If there were to be a change from exams to continual assessment then this should be voted on, researched, trialled, piloted, extensive training given to teachers before it could be rolled out nationwide. This would be a process that should rightly take years. All of these stages have been missed. This is why it is doomed to be a disaster. Any change to the education system is risky. A change such as this brought in overnight with no planning is going to be a disaster for our young people. Anyone who believes that this transition is going to be easy and problem free is living in la la land.

National 4s are not valued by employers and other organisations as they are internally assessed. I fear that if we continue down this path the National 5s will be the new National 4s.

There is question as to whether pupils will be in a position to sit exams given the amount of lost time due to self isolation. The solution to this problem is not to cancel exams. The solution is to stop excluding healthy pupils from school.

Exams are an important part of the curriculum. They are an opportunity for young people to work to present themselves in a set of circumstances that many will find themselves in repeatedly over the years. Like many rites of passage they are challenging but we have to go through them and we know that they're achievable when we have done them.

We must do MORE for our young people not the LESS that seems to be coming down from the Scottish Government and teachers unions. We can change the exams to allow for current circumstances without doing away with exams altogether!

Last academic year European schools sat all their exams - we did not. The Scottish Government has decided for reasons that are unclear that our young people cannot sit exams in 6 months time. I cannot see any other European countries not sitting exams in 2021.

We have to ask ourselves, why is the Scottish education system so poor that you cannot arrange for exams in 2021? All we hear is CAN'T DO from the Scottish Government and teachers unions.

For myself, my child is in S4 and although they are planning to sit Highers, we consider National 5s to be part of their critical path, like it has been for generations of children. The first exams these young people sit will be their Highers. You are not giving them the chance to prepare and work through the exam process before they sit their Highers.

My child has worked extremely hard to catch up after the disaster that was Home Schooling. They have been focused on the National 5s for 2 years. You have now taken this away from them for reasons that simply don't stack up to anyone, least of all a 16 year old whose focus has been on these exams as the central point of their education for years.

- Why are you allowing pupils in Scotland sitting the Scottish education system to be disadvantaged compared to pupils in England and Wales?

If Highers can be sat, why can National 5s not be sat?

- Are you going to cancel Highers on the basis of the vague and unverifiable statement of "public health".

- What would the "public health" be such that you would cancel Highers?

It is absolutely unacceptable that our young people are having their futures tossed away so casually by a government that lacks the political will to give to our children what they deserve.

You said that you want to be judged on you Government's performance on education – quite frankly you have failed. I award the Scottish Government a "U".

Yours sincerely

## Enclosure 13

### Version 2 – SNP voter

Dear First Minister,

I am a member of Us For Them Scotland, the only organisation standing up for our children at a time when adults in authority are utterly disregarding them and their futures.

I am also a voter for the SNP.

I am writing to you to express in the strongest terms possible the importance for S4 pupils to sit National 5 exams this academic year like their counterparts are in England and Wales.

You are taking away the opportunity for the 80,000 young people, who are also voters, to sit these incredibly important exams.

Given that it is possible for Highers and Advanced Highers to be run, why can National 5s not be similarly run? There has been no plausible reason given as to why National 5s cannot be run.

Since there has been no answer given to this critical question, all the following arguments are in reality superfluous!

Clearly cancelling National 5s is a compromise position the Scottish Government has reached with teachers unions who have been pressing for exams to be cancelled and for Blended Learning. Why should our children accept the Scottish Government's poor compromise?

Changing the way pupils are awarded their Nat 5s mid curriculum is a recipe for disaster.

Teachers don't know what they will have to do in order to have the material required to make their estimated grade for pupils.

When will they know this?

How much extra work is this going to create for teachers?

Will they be able to and have the time to do it?

Last years failed efforts demonstrate that there was a significant issue with inflated grades.

We suspect that, given the inflated grades last year, that we will see an increase in inflated grades.

How is the issue of grade inflation going to be addressed?

Exams offer pupils a chance for an evidence based chance for assessment free of any bias from teachers. To strip this away from pupils is extremely unfair.

There are no clear Lessons Learned document that has come out of last academic years exam results fiasco that gives us confidence that there will be effective standardisation for this years pupils.

Why is there going to be effective standardisation this year, when clearly there wasn't effective standardisation last year? Yes, teachers have more time but that is not the same issue as effective standardisation.

The terrible position Highers pupils are in this year is that they are now sitting a set of critically important exams, perhaps the most important exams they will ever sit. They are doing this having not sat their National 5s and as such are woefully under prepared. The National 5s are an important set of exams for pupils going on to Highers to prepare them for the rigours of Highers.

If they take National 5s they will go for Highers. The Scottish Government has failed to ringfence Highers in their latest statement. We fully expect the next push by the teachers unions to be the cancellation of Highers.

The majority of the 6,000 pupils who will leave at the end of S4 will be going on to further training. They will leave school having never sat a full set of exams. Many will go on to have to sit exams as part of their further training and career development and they will be disadvantaged by having never sat a set of proper exams at school.

There seems to be an underlying assumption from many people that if you leave school at S4, you're a no hoper and that never having sat exams will have no material impact on them.

This is completely wrong. It is very common to see people who left school in S4 who progressed their career vocationally. They go on to take positions in senior management and operations. These people subsequently have to sit repeated exams as they progress from the tools up the ladder.

To rob these young people, many of whom struggled within the school system, of the opportunity to sit exams at school is a terrible thing. These young people deserve this opportunity. These young people go on to be hugely important members of companies, business owners, members of our society and important tax payers!

There are arguments for and against exams as a method of issuing certification to our young people. If there were to be a change from exams to continual assessment then this should be voted on, researched, trialled, piloted, extensive training given to teachers before it could be rolled out nationwide. This would be a process that should rightly take years. All of these stages have been missed. This is why it is doomed to be a disaster. Any change to the education system is risky. A change such as this brought in overnight with no planning is going to be a disaster for our young people. Anyone who believes that this transition is going to be easy and problem free is living in la la land.

National 4s are not valued by employers and other organisations as they are internally assessed. I fear that if we continue down this path the National 5s will be the new National 4s.

There is question as to whether pupils will be in a position to sit exams given the amount of lost time due to self isolation. The solution to this problem is not to cancel exams. The solution is to stop excluding healthy pupils from school.

Exams are an important part of the curriculum. They are an opportunity for young people to work to present themselves in a set of circumstances that many will find themselves in repeatedly over the years. Like many rites of passage they are challenging but we have to go through them and we know that they're achievable when we have done them.

We must do MORE for our young people not the LESS that seems to be coming down from the Scottish Government and teachers unions. We can change the exams to allow for current circumstances without doing away with exams altogether!

Last academic year European schools sat all their exams - we did not. The Scottish Government has decided for reasons that are unclear that our young people cannot sit exams in 6 months time. I cannot see any other European countries not sitting exams in 2021.

We have to ask ourselves, why is the Scottish education system so poor that you cannot arrange for exams in 2021? All we hear is CAN'T DO from the Scottish Government and teachers unions.

For myself, my child is in S4 and although they are planning to sit Highers, we consider National 5s to be part of their critical path, like it has been for generations of children. The first exams these young people sit will be their Highers. You are not giving them the chance to prepare and work through the exam process before they sit their Highers.

My child has worked extremely hard to catch up after the disaster that was Home Schooling. They have been focused on the National 5s for 2 years. You have now taken this away from them for reasons that simply don't stack up to anyone, least of all a 15 year old whose focus has been on these exams as the central point of their education for years.

· Why are you allowing pupils in Scotland sitting the Scottish education system to be disadvantaged compared to pupils in England and Wales?

If Highers can be sat, why can National 5s not be sat?

· Are you going to cancel Highers on the basis of the vague and unverifiable statement of "public health".

· What would the "public health" be such that you would cancel Highers?

It is absolutely unacceptable that our young people are having their futures tossed away so casually by a government that lacks the political will to give to our children what they deserve.

You said that you want to be judged on you Government's performance on education.  
Yours sincerely