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Enclosure 01 – Email: FW: SQA and Secondary schools

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> **On Behalf Of** Ewing F (Fergus), MSP

Sent: 07 January 2021 15:05

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

Subject: FW: SQA and Secondary schools

John Swinney MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Education

Dear John,

Please find below email from my constituent [Redacted s38(1)(b)] who is a Physics Teacher. He has raised valid concerns and questions, issues which I am sure you are already considering if not already taken decisions on. I would be most grateful if you can provide a reply which I can relay to him.

Many thanks as always.

Yours sincerely,

Fergus Ewing MSP
Inverness and Nairn

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)] **On Behalf Of** Ewing F (Fergus), MSP

Sent: 07 January 2021 15:02

To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@btinternet.com

Subject: RE: SQA and Secondary schools

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

Thank you very much for your email. I am responding as your constituency MSP and I will take up the issues you have raised with John Swinney as the Cabinet Secretary for Education and revert back to you as soon as I have the information.

Thank you for all you do.

Best regards,

Fergus Ewing MSP
Inverness and Nairn

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

Date: 7 January 2021 at 13:31:45 GMT

To: "Davidson R (Ruth), MSP"

<Ruth.Davidson.msp@parliament.scot>, "Rennie W (Willie), MSP"
<Willie.Rennie.msp@parliament.scot>, "Lochhead R (Richard), MSP"
<Richard.Lochhead.msp@parliament.scot>, "Grant R (Rhoda), MSP"
<Rhoda.Grant.msp@parliament.scot>, "Leonard R (Richard), MSP"
<Richard.Leonard.msp@parliament.scot>, "McArthur L (Liam), MSP"
<Liam.McArthur.msp@parliament.scot>, "Stewart D (David), MSP"
<David.Stewart.msp@parliament.scot>, "Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP"
<Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>, "Swinney J (John), MSP"
<John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>, "Wishart B (Beatrice), MSP"
<Beatrice.Wishart.MSP@parliament.scot>, "Cameron D (Donald),
MSP" <Donald.Cameron.msp@parliament.scot>, "Ewing F (Fergus),
MSP" <Fergus.Ewing.msp@parliament.scot>, "Finnie J (John), MSP"
<John.Finnie.msp@parliament.scot>, "Forbes K (Kate), MSP"
<Kate.Forbes.msp@parliament.scot>, "Halcro Johnston J (Jamie),
MSP" <Jamie.HalcroJohnston.msp@parliament.scot>, "Mountain E
(Edward), MSP" <Edward.Mountain.msp@parliament.scot>, First
Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: SQA and Secondary schools

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.

Re my earlier e-mail to you on Jan 5th,

My home postcode is [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and
My work postcode in [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Thankyou,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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

Sent: 05 January 2021 18:49

To: Ruth Davidson (ruth.davidson.msp@parliament.scot)
<ruth.davidson.msp@parliament.scot>; Willie Rennie
(Willie.Rennie.msp@parliament.scot)
<Willie.Rennie.msp@parliament.scot>;
'Richard.Lochhead.msp@scottish.parliament.uk'
<Richard.Lochhead.msp@scottish.parliament.uk>;
'Rhoda.Grant.msp@parliament.scot'
<Rhoda.Grant.msp@parliament.scot>;
'Richard.Leonard.msp@parliament.scot'
<Richard.Leonard.msp@parliament.scot>;
'Liam.McArthur.msp@parliament.scot'

<Liam.McArthur.msp@parliament.scot>;
'David.Stewart.msp@parliament.scot'
<David.Stewart.msp@parliament.scot>;
'Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot'
<Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>;
'John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot'
<John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>;
'Beatrice.Wishart.msp@parliament.scot'
<Beatrice.Wishart.msp@parliament.scot>;
'Donald.Cameron.msp@parliament.scot'
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'Fergus.Ewing.msp@parliament.scot'
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'Jamie.HalcroJohnston.msp@parliament.scot'
<Jamie.HalcroJohnston.msp@parliament.scot>;
'Edward.Mountain.msp@parliament.scot'
<Edward.Mountain.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: SQA and Secondary schools

Dear Madams / Sirs,

I am contacting you with respect to the SQA deadlines for exam estimates for the present academic session.

Whilst I completely understand the need for an extended school closure at present, I am concerned about the lack of time available for staff to accumulate sufficient evidence for which to make an estimate of a student's grade and of greater importance, the possible detrimental effect on the wellbeing of our students.

At present we effectively need to have this done by the end of March to allow these to be uploaded mid-April for National 5. The dates for Higher and Advanced Higher have not yet been communicated to us. It will be school staff that have to collect and moderate evidence more thoroughly that would normally take place in exam diet (5 weeks in May/June) so therefore school staff should be given more time to provide that estimate more in line with what was required in May 2020. In addition we will have students in class when study leave would normally have occurred. It is fine promising the money that markers would have been paid in lieu of this but money can't buy back time.

Many of are concerned that our students will have 2 months in which they'll be hit with up to 4 assessments for each subject (on average 5 to six), when normally they'd have a prelim diet and the final exam. To be sure, end of topic tests would normally occur and there would be an exit prelim in March BUT there would be less pressure on these.

Prelims often give students a chance to trip up and get their act together. We recognise the need to gather (and moderate) evidence but it is the compressed time scale we worry about, with each assessment “counting” and putting more pressure on students when they have a lot to deal with already. We feel that we (students and staff) may be in a worse place than we were last year.

At present I believe exam results will be issued on or around August 6th. Do they really need to be issued then other than it is “aye done” then ? Perhaps the results can be issued later. Remember we were told H/AH exam were put back by two weeks, to allow students extra learning time for that missed in May/June, now they have been cancelled we still do not know when evidence needs to be presented for them.

To be sure we are in challenging times and staff will do all they can to support students learn and achieve they qualifications they have worked for but we do feel more flexibility in timescales in required. One final point. Should Lockdown extend to March it would be reassuring to know that plans and timelines for that are being drafted.

Yours in education,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] Physics.

Enclosure 02 – Email: online learning

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Sent: 14 January 2021 10:47
To: Swinney J (John), MSP
Subject: online learning

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 John Swinney

I would be very grateful if you have time to note my profound anxieties on a particular issue of on-line learning:

I am a Maths teacher nearing retirement, currently posted at [Redacted s38(1)(b)], and deeply frustrated with on-line teaching.

[Redacted – not in scope]

I currently have 2 Nat 5 Maths classes on my time-table, made up of pupils repeating the course at least once, if not twice.

Most Maths teachers that I know also have at least one such class on their timetable (making at least 1000 pupils a year in [Redacted s38(1)(b)] alone, by my reckoning)

I have written to SQA, asking for the pass rate for pupils who sit a Nat 5 exam for the 3rd time. I thought it was a straightforward, and useful, query – the reply was a master class in obscurantism.

Has there ever been an audit of the efficacy of teaching Maths to pupils who continually fail at it and /or hate it?

And now – to compound all this futility – such N5 pupils have to do Maths lessons on-line.

The thinnest hopes I had of helping them learn enough & retain enough of the N5 syllabus to get them through a final exam when they were in class, and I could speak to them directly, helping them one to one, repeating the steps of (to many pupils - arcanelly byzantine) calculations as often as required until they could reproduce the steps - well – trying to do this on-line lowers the whole farce to new depths of pointlessness. And for even less than ever before – how they are to be assessed on what they have learned or failed to learn has yet to be worked out. And this year – more than ever before, despite how well I know each of my pupils I feel in no way confident about predicting a grade for any of them. The whole exercise feels like a travesty of sense and fairness.

Yours faithfully

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 03 – Email: National Examinations - Mathematics

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot>

Sent: 18 January 2021 10:04

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

Subject: National Examinations - Mathematics

Dear Mr Swinney,

I have been contacted by a constituent who is a highly experienced maths teacher [Redacted s38(1)(b)] in my area. My constituent is extremely concerned about the experience of many young people she sees, who have little aptitude for maths but who have to take the subject, largely due to little in the way of viable alternatives, and who often fail the national examination, even when they have taken it repeatedly.

My constituent points out,

“ I have become ever more distressed for them, and bewildered by a system which enforces them to continue taking Maths even when their exam results never rise above 20% in test after test, term after term, year after year.

She further notes that, while she assures students that learning mathematical concepts and techniques that are unlikely to be used in their adult life is useful in terms of developing logical approaches,

“ If learning how to use the cosine formula to calculate the area of a non-right angled triangle, or rationalising surds or finding the roots, apex or line of symmetry of a parabola etc causes a pupil to panic then the chances of that question increasing their logic skills are vanishingly low.”

I understand that, in the past, arithmetic was a separate subject from maths in the Scottish 'O' grade system. Whilst I am not suggesting that such a division could be directly applied to the 21st century curriculum, I would question whether setting some pupils up to fail - repeatedly- is conducive to ensuring pupils perception of themselves as “successful learners” can be achieved.

I believe that the OECD review of the curriculum is due to report next month. Could you tell me if the review has considered numeracy and maths in relation to the lowest attaining pupils in the subject - not necessarily those in the least advantaged deciles - and whether understanding of complex mathematical concepts is needed for ordinary life and to be tested at National 5? If not, why?

Has the Government given advice to authorities and schools on alternatives for pupils who have displayed little aptitude for maths at National 5 level but which would allow them to develop their numeracy, arithmetical and statistical knowledge and skills at that level?

My constituent is also concerned that pupils, who may have passed an exam or understood a concept, due to one-to-one, in-class, coaching, are now struggling as this is not able to be done effectively with online learning and teaching. As we near the end of January, my constituent is also concerned that key assessment methods

and content for maths have yet to be decided. So pupils with little aptitude for maths are being further failed by the system.

As my constituent remarks

“ The whole exercise feels like a travesty of sense and fairness.”

Can you tell me what actions the Scottish Government will take to ensure that maths assessments this year will take account of the increased difficulty of “borderline” candidates to receive the additional support that they needed, and when advice on this will be given to schools?

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Bibby

[Redacted s38(1)(b)], **Neil Bibby MSP** | **West Scotland** | **Labour**Suite 3A, Mirren Chambers, 41 Gauze Street, Paisley, PA1 1EX

Telephone: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 04 – Email: MSP Colin Beattie - Exams & Covid-19 Education Policies (Case Ref: CB4148)

From: Colin Beattie MSP <colin.beattie.msp@parliament.scot>

Sent: 20 January 2021 17:24

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

Cc: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>

Subject: MSP Colin Beattie - Exams & Covid-19 Education Policies (Case Ref: CB4148)

Dear Colleagues,

Please find attached a letter for the attention of the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.

Kind regards,
Colin

Colin Beattie MSP
Midlothian North and Musselburgh

Scottish Parliament
M3.05
Holyrood
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
Tel: 0131 348 6373

Constituency Office
164 High Street
Dalkeith
EH22 1AY
Tel: 0131 454 0204



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



Colin Beattie

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Midlothian North and Musselburgh

Mr John Swinney MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills
Education and Skills
Scottish Government
St. Andrews House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Our Ref: ED/CB4148
20 January 2021

Dear Mr Swinney,

School Examinations & Covid-19 Education Policies

Dear Mr. Swinney,

I am writing on behalf of a constituent who has contacted me regarding concerns they have over the handling of the education system and schools throughout the pandemic.

The constituent is a high school teacher and their primary concern is surrounding the cancellation of National 5s last year and the cancelling of higher exams this year. The constituent stated:

“With the cancellation of exams, in particular the Higher exams, Mr Swinney has denied a cohort of pupils the opportunity to sit any kind of exam, since they also missed out on their N5 exams. Whilst I am confident that my colleagues and I will work tirelessly to make sure these pupils get the grades they deserve; it is the lack of guidance on the estimates process which is concerning. Along with where the time in the school year is coming from to do this adequately for both N5 and Higher. Mr Swinney’s suggestion of using remaining in service time for this is not enough.”

The constituent also stated:

"The cancellation has increased pupil stress levels in the classroom as well as having huge workload implications for teaching staff. Whilst the awarding of grades this year will be as fair as possible, we still live in a society which measures success by exam results, and I worry that this cohort of pupils will be handled differently by employers"

The constituent feels that the decision to return pupils to schools in August and the subsequent decision to delay closing schools until the second week of January has added further strain on teacher's workload and has been detrimental to the students learning.

Finally, as the constituent is vulnerable, she is concerned about her physical health as she continues to teach pupils in schools who are unable to learn from home. She has expressed concerns that teachers such as herself are being put at risk by continuing to work in person from school.

I would appreciate it if you could review my constituents concerns and provide a detailed response to each.

Sincerely,
Colin

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin Beattie', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Colin Beattie MSP
Midlothian North & Musselburgh

Enclosure 05 Email: RSGS and SAGT Submission re current concerns

From: SAGT President <sagtpresident@gmail.com>

Sent: 26 January 2021 10:24

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

Subject: RSGS and SAGT Submission re current concerns

Dear Mr Swinney,

Please see below the two main concerns the Scottish Association of Geography Teachers (SAGT) and the Royal Scottish Geographical Society (RSGS) currently have over the ongoing changes to the National Qualifications as well as our recommendations as to how they should proceed.

Firstly National 4

Pupils have missed almost three months of being in school and at the moment not one single piece of mandatory content has been removed from National 4 courses in the social subjects whereas significant areas of assessed content have been removed from both National 5 and Higher courses. How can this be considered fair to N4 candidates?

The SQA is also insistent that the Added Value is completed for National 4 pupils, which is in contradiction to its removal from both National 5 and Higher across the social subjects. N4 Added Value units have also been removed from science subjects because there are restrictions on practical activities and doing experiments in class. The same situation applies in Geography, where we are unable to take pupils out of school to do fieldwork and data collections activities (hence the reason for removing assignments from N5 and H). It seems unfair on candidates in Geography that they need to show attainment of three units plus an added value to get a course award; whereas in Chemistry (for example) it is only three unit passes.

Our recommendation to ensure consistency and equity and to ensure we have the opportunity of finishing courses this session, N4 Added Value Units should be removed from ALL subjects

Secondly AH Geography

AH Geography is unique in that 67% of the course is assessed by a pupil folio, consisting of a 1,800 word Geographical Issue and a 3,000 word Geographical Study. The SQA anticipates that both folio pieces will be completed as normal but marked by teachers.

There are two issues with this:

1. The difficulty with taking pupils out of school has meant that many teachers have been unable to show pupils how to undertake physical fieldwork methods safely such as a river study, coastal studies or soil analysis. This restricts what pupils can focus on for their Geographical Study. Pupils have been “encouraged” to focus on secondary methods of data collection (e.g. Internet research, textbooks) within their Geographical Study, however, there are no examples of Understanding Standards material on how candidates can focus on one restricted area of research and many teachers are concerned about how this necessitated change of

emphasis within the course can be delivered successfully. Most presenting centres that I am aware of encourage candidates to do fieldwork, which can in turn be supported by Internet or library-based sources, but assignments based solely on secondary sources are unusual and fairly uncommon. Teachers need to be equipped and supported with resources if the course is to be completed in different ways from normal.

2. Generally, teachers of AH Geography adopt a “light-touch” approach to marking through the year to ensure that the final Folio pieces are their candidates own work without being steered or coached too much by subject professionals. This year, to ensure accuracy of estimates, teachers will effectively have to rigorously mark their own candidates' work. Many teachers do not have the experience or support to do this, particularly without exemplification of how a purely research-based Study should be marked. The workload, stress and uncertainty generated by asking teachers to mark these folios cannot be offset by a generic marking payment, particularly considering external SQA markers normally receive £28 per candidate folio. This situation may also need to be considered for other subjects with extensive Folio pieces for AH.

Our recommendation is AH Geography folios could be externally marked by the SQA as all pieces of work could be sent electronically.

This email has also been sent to Fiona Robertson (Chief Executive of the SQA)

It has not been made public

Kind regards,

[Redacted
s38(1)(b)]

Alastair McConnell
Chair of the RSGS Education Committee

Enclosure 06 – Email: SQA courses

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

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@hotmail.co.uk>

Sent: 27 January 2021 17:55

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

<DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: SQA courses

Dear Mr Swinney,

Like many other parents and teachers, I'm watching eagerly to understand how best to support our young people. I can only imagine how awful it is to have to make decisions.

I am writing as I have concerns that some schools - at least one I am aware of - are not attempting to cover the whole course. I write as an English teacher, and the school in question has deliberately not started the Scottish text section. Instead, they have done a second folio piece, something that has already been removed to ease congestion in the course.

I urge you to discuss a clarification of course content with the SQA and make an official announcement regarding this. I think it is highly unfair that teachers and pupils in most schools work hard across all areas while one school only covers 80% of the course. If the Scottish text is made optional or cancelled, I feel that many candidates will have been disadvantaged. Most young people I know have covered all 6 poems, or a whole novel, at the expense of other elements.

Kind regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 07 – Email: Lockdown Learning

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@btinternet.com>
Sent: 29 January 2021 16:32
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: Lockdown Learning

Good afternoon Deputy First Minister,

It's evident that lockdown learning is likely to continue for some time yet. The whole nation is aware of the importance of getting pupils back into school and returning to face to face learning. Although, this is a difficult balancing act throughout this pandemic.

I'm currently a teacher in the secondary sector and a parent of 2 primary aged pupils. I know only too well the difficulties senior pupils and staff face in trying to gather substantial evidence for SQA grade judgements to be made. Also the impact on primary pupil's progress through these important years.

With the SQA extending their deadline for schools to return results until mid June this is a welcome amendment to the key dates set by SQA. Having pupils back in front of a teacher to support them the best way we can is going to be tricky and then a race to try and get courses completed etc.

A possible suggestion, that you may very well have evaluated already, is the switching of Easter and summer holidays.

Giving pupils 6 weeks off over the Easter period and then only 2 weeks in August would help alleviate the issue of pupils struggle with home learning. This would then allow pupils to, fingers crossed, be back in front of their teacher throughout the whole of June and July. Giving younger pupils that all important face to face teaching and the senior pupils yet more time to gather vital evidence to help support teacher judgements. It would also allow SQA to push their date back until end of July and this still allowing for results to be issued as the start of August for pupils and colleges/universities.

I'm aware that there may be legislation or processes that must be follow that would prevent this suggestion but I'm sure the Government are open to suggestions.

With regards to teachers, pupils and parents feeling as though they are missing out on summer holidays, many people have paid the ultimate sacrifice in this pandemic, surely a slight change to holidays is a fair compromise. Summer holidays this year are unlikely to involve foreign travel as it is.

If lockdown continues for some time yet then childcare may not be an issue over Easter with many people still working from home or furloughed from they job. Giving pupils only 2 weeks holiday in the summer may then remove the headache that some parents have over childcare. Allowing them to get back to work in some of the sectors hit but lockdown such as hospitality etc.

Regards
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 08 – Email: Damage caused by school closures

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

Sent: 01 February 2021 14:16

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

Subject: Damage caused by school closures

Dear Mr Swinney

I would be grateful if you would take the time to read the attached article which i have sent to the press.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Below as per word attachment

Enclosure 08.1 – Attachment: Word document

Our children must return to their schools.

In 1995 Nelson Mandela stated that ‘our children are the rock on which our future will be built, our greatest asset as a nation. They will be the leaders of our country, the creators of our national wealth who care for and protect our people’.

To guarantee any future for our children we must get them back to school or we risk losing an entire generation. The current wave of school closures is causing immeasurable damage to children and families. As a former headteacher and HM Inspector of Education, I have spent my entire working career supporting children’s learning and wellbeing in schools and feel compelled to speak out on their behalf. I share the sentiments of [Redacted s38(1)(b)] who commented recently that he had never felt so worried or so despondent about children’s education. Right now, there are families in crisis and children and young people in despair because we have deprived them of their schools. That anxiety and depression arises because schools do not simply educate – they care, they nurture, and they support. They offer rich contexts for personal, social, and emotional development. They encourage children to co-operate and collaborate, and to develop teamwork and strong interpersonal skills. With teachers’ support, children thrive academically. Schools give children structure and purpose and hope. They are complex organisations but ultimately, they are about relationships which support learning and wellbeing – and most of that has been taken from our children. During the first lockdown early in 2020, we reluctantly accepted the dire situation as unfortunate but probably inevitable as we dealt with what we assumed was a short-term viral catastrophe. However, we quickly learned that even short periods out of school cause significant damage to children and their families. Mental health issues rocketed while attainment and achievement plummeted. Large numbers of children were at risk because the school ‘team around the child’ could not function effectively. The NSPCC reported a 30 per cent increase in child abuse. Child deaths and teenage suicides increased, and child protection concerns grew at an alarming rate. What is particularly worrying is that we seem not to have learned from that awful period last year. We have failed to prioritise education or acknowledge that schools are quite literally a lifeline for many children. Whilst I applaud the sterling efforts of councils and organisations to address the digital divide, what we are doing is improving a ‘sticking plaster’ approach to children’s learning. Although the vast majority of teachers are pulling out all the stops for children both educationally and emotionally with live lessons, regular check ins, and more, this is at best a poor compromise. Furthermore, not all children are receiving high quality learning. While vulnerable children are without doubt more adversely affected by school closures, it is thoroughly naïve to assume that if a child has a laptop and decent Wi-Fi, they are doing well. No child is doing well without school. The real truth about remote learning is that there is only a remote chance anyone is learning anything – and that is no criticism of the many teachers working tirelessly for their children or the parents doing their very best in difficult circumstances. The reason teachers train for four or five years and then undertake further qualifications and engage in intense continuous professional development is because teaching is a highly skilled, complex juggling act of meeting each child’s unique personal, social, and emotional needs as well as their learning needs. To do their job, teachers need children in school – they need to see them, to chat with them, to check in with them, to observe their responses to new learning, to see where further explanations are needed, to see who is struggling with learning, to laugh with children and to support them and encourage them when the going gets tough. I applaud the headteacher in England who quickly designated all of his

children as vulnerable and opened the school to everyone. Would that others were so brave because the truth is every child out of school is a vulnerable child. All children are suffering. Right now, there are homes where teenagers are close to giving up because they have lost hope of their dreams and ambitions ever coming to fruition, there are homes where children have no laptop, or Wi-Fi or even a table to work at, there are homes where parents are sinking further into depression and homes with additional support needs children where families are close to breaking point. What is hard to comprehend is why those in positions of power, who themselves were never denied an education, seem so willing to deny one to our children. Instead of accepting home learning as some form of long-term remedy, we need to become much more solution focused and proactively explore alternatives. Teachers should be key workers so should we vaccinate them to get our children back to school? I have heard objections to this on the basis that 'granny would have to wait'. Well, I am a granny, and I would willingly delay my vaccine to give our young people the chance to return to school. While we may not be able to have all children back together, can we allow children back even on a part-time basis until full time becomes possible? Can we prioritise exam pupils and let them back to complete the necessary assessments for SQA purposes? Can we at least explore solutions that move us forward to ensure better outcomes for our children? Young children have no voice and no vote and depend on those of us who do, to speak up on their behalf. Our children need to get back to school, otherwise we risk losing a generation of young people who will be forever damaged because those of us with knowledge and understanding of the catastrophic consequences of school closures did not do something. I am not a Covid sceptic. My father died of Covid five weeks ago, so I accept we are dealing with a serious situation - but is it any more serious than a generation of children denied an education? Whilst I do not envy those who have to make challenging decisions on a daily basis, we cannot sacrifice one group to protect another. Ultimately it is a balance of risk. Unfortunately, parents' understandable anxiety and frustration has recently manifested itself in anger and abuse online. One of the many life lessons we teach children in school is how to negotiate or disagree assertively but calmly and respectfully because often that is more powerful, and perhaps we will achieve more if we follow the advice we give to our children. I would therefore respectfully ask our politicians to meet with those of us who know and understand that the complex, challenging work schools do, cannot be done at home using a laptop. Perhaps our collective wisdom and experience could result in some manageable solutions. I began with Nelson Mandela and will close with his comment 'there can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children'. My real hope is that others speak out too. Our children deserve nothing less.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] Former Headteacher and HM Inspector of Education

Enclosure 09 –Email: FW: SQA examinations (Case Ref: DJ10977)

From: Daniel Johnson MSP <daniel.johnson.msp@parliament.scot>

Sent: 02 February 2021 16:49

To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>

Subject: FW: SQA examinations (Case Ref: DJ10977)

Dear Minister,

I am writing on behalf of my constituent, [Redacted s38(1)(b)], regarding remuneration for the marking and extra hours of work teachers are being asked to do to ensure the continuation of grading and SQA awards throughout the pandemic.

I would be grateful if this could be considered and responded to as a matter of great importance.

Kind regards,
Daniel

Daniel Johnson MSP

0131 541 2145

danieljohnson.org.uk

Constituency Office

134 Comiston Road, Edinburgh, EH10 5QN

Daniel would like to keep you up to date with his activities in Parliament and in the constituency. You can sign up to receive regular updates and his eNewsletter [here](#).

Your data privacy will be taken seriously. Read Daniel's privacy notice [here](#).

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)],

Sent: 29 January 2021 14:02

To: Johnson D (Daniel), MSP

Subject: SQA examinations

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 Johnson,

As a teacher of Chemistry in Scottish senior schools for nearly 35 years I have seen many an examination student through my doors. I fully understand the SQA's position, in these restricted times, in having to implement assessment via IAQPs - internally assessed question papers. These will be provided securely to schools and will be set, marked and moderated by teachers. Teachers who on average will have exam classes at least two of the following levels, N5, H and AH.

My main point is this. I am therefore performing a key role in all this and effectively doing the work of a remunerated SQA marker (and more!). In any other profession we would be fully recompensed for this incredibly important role. I would like you to consider passing on my comments to Mr Swinney. I have contacted you as the last time I contacted a senior member of the SNP government I was told I had to go through my local representative.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 10 – Email: (Case Ref: KF11043)

From: Kate Forbes MSP

Sent: 08 February 2021 16:07

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Subject: (Case Ref: KF11043)

Dear John, thank you for all that you continue to do provide education throughout the on-going Covid-19 pandemic.

One of my constituents who is a secondary school teacher in the Highlands has raised their concerns regarding the lack of information from the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) regarding the replacement examination process for 2021.

My constituent teaches Business Management and has explained that the SQA guidance for gathering evidence for Higher and Advanced Higher was published on 28 January which she believes was too late. Many of my constituents senior students are filled with the same uncertainty and stress regarding the SQA assessment process as they did last year. My constituent has explained that this week she had to tell her Advanced Higher students that they will be required to produce a project of 2500-3000 words, in addition to all the work they are currently trying to keep up-to-date with. This has only compounded the stress and strains these pupils are under and is having a detrimental effect on their mental health.

Please can you explain if the SQA had a contingency plan in place for progressing with assessments and coursework for senior secondary pupils, if they had to home-school as a result of a further lockdown? If so, why was this information not disseminated sooner to give pupils a better opportunity to plan and prepare?

I would welcome your comments on my constituents' concerns.

Kind regards,
Kate