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Local Authority Chief Executives and
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SOLACE
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Teaching Unions

22 March 2020

COVID-19 – SQA National Qualifications Coursework

I wrote to you on 19 March in relation to the decision that all schools and local authority early learning and childcare settings should close to children and young people from Friday, with the exception of any critical provision to protect a number of key interests and groups. This included senior phase pupils requiring to complete coursework in relation to SQA national qualifications. However, I am writing again now to confirm a further change to this due to updated public health advice around social distancing.

Given the latest public health advice, I have decided that, with immediate effect, no young person with coursework to complete should attend school or other education setting to do so. Where coursework for SQA national qualifications can be completed remotely, and safely following public health advice, then I am requesting that schools make arrangements to do so.

The SQA Chief Examiner fully agrees with this decision and will be setting out how the SQA will now aim to certificate young people's qualifications and achievements as soon as possible.

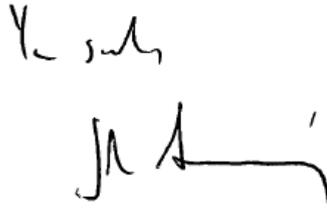
I wish to take this opportunity to apologise for this further change. I am acutely aware of just how tirelessly local authorities and schools have been working to put alternative senior phase arrangements in place. I do, though, believe firmly that this further step is now essential to protect public health and lives. It is critical that we keep the number of children and young people in schools, or in other settings local authorities decide to use, to an absolute minimum. We must prioritise and are doing so exclusively for the children of the most critical key workers and the most vulnerable children in our society. I ask that you continue your hard work to ensure that provision for these groups is in place as soon as possible. It is important that teachers and other education staff, while of course keeping themselves safe in line with public health guidance, are supporting vulnerable children and

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the children of key workers in schools and other settings, as well as providing ongoing support and learning remotely for the majority of children, now including S4-6 pupils.

Thank you for all you have already done, and are continuing to do, for Scotland's children, young people and wider society in relation to the extraordinary challenges we are facing.

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

JOHN SWINNEY

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