

## **Return to School**

The latest version of the revised school guidance and update to vaccination section has been issued.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-reducing-the-risks-in-schools/>

The revised guidance includes:

- Risk assessments to be continued
- Environmental cleaning, hand and respiratory hygiene to continue
- Ventilation - strengthened guidance for LAs on CO2 monitoring
- Face coverings in communal areas and secondary classrooms to continue
- Physical distancing for adults at least 1m but 2m distancing expected to remain for logistical purposes
- One way systems to be continued
- Staggered start and stop times/ break and lunch times
- Restrictions on assemblies
- Support for people in the highest risk groups/pregnant staff
- Restrictions on school visitors to continue

Mitigations are to be kept under constant review and, if data and evidence suggest that any specific mitigations can be removed at an earlier stage, advice will be provided to that effect

## **Teacher Pay Negotiations 2021**

The SNCT Extended Joint Chairs met again on 19 August to discuss the 2021 pay claim. The Employers' Side confirmed an undifferentiated offer of 1.22% across all SNCT pay grades, backdated to April 2021. Whilst the acceptance of the principle of a universal pay offer is progress, the offer of 1.22% is not - it being simply a redistribution of the cost of the previous offer.

The Teachers' Side (SSTA and EIS) made clear that the offer of 1.22% is unreasonable, sub-inflationary and fundamentally misjudges the value of the profession.

The delay in reaching a negotiated settlement was highlighted and it was indicated that the possibility of a multi-year deal, suggested by COSLA, would only be considered if full details are provided with regard to the proposed percentage increase for each year.

The next meeting of the Extended Joint Chairs will take place in the week commencing 30 August 2021.

## **Pension Changes in 2022**

The recent changes announced to pensions will take effect for all members of previous pension schemes from 1 April 2022. Those who joined the scheme from April 2015 will not be impacted as they are already in the reformed scheme.

However, those who were in either the Normal Pension Age (NPA) 60 Scheme or NPA 65 scheme will have all future contributions made to the Career Average Revalued Earnings (CARE) scheme from that date. This means that any future contributions will go into the reformed scheme which puts aside a proportion of annual salary each year, uprated in line with inflation rather than being based on final salary and the retirement date is in line with the state retirement age.

The pension pot in the CARE scheme will therefore not be available until state retirement age without a reduction being applied but any pot in the previous schemes will be available at either 60 or 65 without any deduction.

The SSTA will be arranging pension briefing sessions for members and dates will be circulated once confirmed

### **Pay and Pension Contributions**

In order to keep track of pay and pensions it is good practice to:

- Download your payslips and save them to a file you can access from home
- Check your pay regularly to ensure it is correct to avoid over or underpayments
- Check your pension contributions are in line with your salary
- Access your annual pensions statement to ensure that your service is correct

It is very difficult to rectify mistakes later. Local Authorities are only obliged to keep records for five years so it is better to keep your own records. Any underpayments are always recovered as they are public funds so, if you notice any mistake, it is best to contact Payroll immediately.

If we can help in clarifying payslips or any query regarding pay or pension please contact: [info@ssta.org.uk](mailto:info@ssta.org.uk)

### **£400 Alternative Certification Model Payment**

The one-off exceptional £400 payment for teachers supporting the delivery of the Alternative Certification Model for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications in 2020/2021 has been paid in some authorities. The SSTA is disappointed that the remaining authorities have not seen this as priority and a recognition of all the extra work created for teachers associated with the ACM.

The SSTA expected headteachers to approach this in an open-handed way, taking into account individual teachers' varied workloads. Members who believe that they have not received the correct payment should discuss the matter with their Headteacher in the first instance.

For full details and SSTA advice can be found in the [Members' Bulletin of 17 June 2021](#).

### **Assessment of National Qualifications in 2021-22**

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills has confirmed that exams will be held for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses in 2022. The SQA has set out the key detail on plans for assessment of National Qualifications in 2021-22. Please follow link to see the [details provided by the SQA](#).

Unfortunately, returning to the exam diet with an alternative of assessment in the event of further disruption to schools as a consequence of the pandemic has the potential for increased numbers of exams and assessment tasks in schools. This will only add to teacher workload and pressure on pupils during this school year. The SSTA was not consulted on the arrangements for 2021-2022 and has been excluded from the National Qualifications Group by the SQA. SSTA will be meeting the Cabinet Secretary shortly and will push for the voice of the secondary school teacher to be heard.

**SSTA Membership**

The pandemic has made the recruitment of student and newly qualified members extremely difficult and we welcome your support in encouraging new colleagues in to the Association. Students in training and new entrants to the profession pay no subscription for sixteen months from the date of their teaching post.

All new members to the Association can benefit from our new special offer of 50% off the normal subscription for the first 12 months of paid membership when completing a direct debit with their application. This represents a saving of up to £95.00 a year based on current 2021 subscription paying by monthly direct debit. [Terms & Conditions apply](#)

Those interested in joining the SSTA can do so via our website at [www.ssta.org.uk/join](http://www.ssta.org.uk/join)

**Membership fees and income tax relief**

It is worth remembering that two-thirds of the annual subscription payable to the Association is allowable for income tax relief. Section 343, Part 5, Chapter 2 of the Income tax (earning and Pensions) Act 2003. A Proforma letter "[Tax Relief on Subscriptions – Jan 2021](#)" that shows subscription rates for Association membership over the past few years. Further information on how to claim the tax back can be found on the HMRC website. [Tax Relief for professional fees and subscriptions](#).

There are specialist firms that can assist you in doing this and at the same time, check if you have been missing out on any other tax allowances or been given the wrong tax code by HMRC meaning you are owed a tax refund.

The Tax Refund Company is one such firm and has helped over 140,000 teachers. They can quickly find out if it worth having your tax codes checked by visiting [www.thetaxrefundcompany.co.uk](http://www.thetaxrefundcompany.co.uk)

**Membership Details**

Have any of your personal details changed over the summer holidays? Moved House, Change of contract or moved to a new school? You can inform the SSTA of these changes by completing a form on our website at [www.ssta.org.uk/updatedetails](http://www.ssta.org.uk/updatedetails).

**SSTA says 'Put Teachers at the Centre'**