



NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2019

With the new academic year well underway, I would like to say a big welcome back to everyone and extend a particularly warm welcome to all of the pupils and parents/carers of our new S1 cohort. Pupils have settled back into school life very well and are enjoying their learning activities. The support and encouragement that pupils get from parents/carers in relation to their school experience cannot be underestimated and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you once again for this. As always, it is important that we work together to support and challenge our learners as they work towards their individual targets this year.

SQA Exam Results 2019

Senior pupils received their SQA exam results on Tuesday 6 August. Dumfries High School pupils have once again produced very good results in fourth, fifth and sixth year; results in all measures continue to improve and we must now build upon this for the year ahead. There are many individual stories that lie behind the overall exam results and I would like to congratulate pupils on their achievements. I would also like to express my thanks to Dumfries High School staff for the commitment and support provided throughout the year to all pupils and also to the parents and carers whose support plays a pivotal role in ensuring students are fully prepared. It is important that our new S4/5/6 year groups focus on the year ahead allowing further exam success.

School Uniform

It is fantastic to see the overwhelming majority of our pupils returning to school with uniform in line with the standards and expectations set out at the end of term before the summer break. Our pupils look incredibly smart and there have been numerous comments in the community about how good they look. I would like to thank all of the parents/carers who continue to support us with this. Working together in this manner can help us all to raise standards in the Dumfries High School community.

Staff Update

A number of new staff come to Dumfries High School this year and I would like to extend a warm welcome to them all as they join our team.

Gillian Hunter (Modern Languages) has joined Dumfries High School on a temporary basis for a period of one year.

Robert Stewart (Physics), Bebhionn Paterson (Music), Lauren McWhirter (Home Economics), Lauren Wilson (English) and Heather Brown (English) are Probationer teachers with us this year.

Fiona Bryce (Physical Education) returns to Dumfries High School after her recent maternity leave. Robert Dickson (Removing Barriers to Learning) has secured a new post within the Supporting Learners team at Lockerbie. We wish Robert well in his new post.

Latecoming

Our school day begins at 8.50am and pupils should ensure they are in registration by this time. Morning registration finishes at 9am each day and during this important information and announcements will be shared with pupils. This is also a time for pupils to focus and prepare themselves for the lessons they are about to attend. Please ensure your child is in school no later than 8.50am to attend morning registration.

DHS 'House' Contacts

All pupils at Dumfries High School belong to a 'House' - Buccleuch, Caerlaverock or Devorgilla. If you have any concerns or queries the following people are the relevant contacts:

	Buccleuch	Caerlaverock	Devorgilla
Pupil Support	Debbie Holmes	Fiona Bryce	Jan Kilmurry
Depute Headteacher	Billy Davidson	Daniella Hogg	Kenny Pullen

School Improvement Plan Priorities

Each year every school has to create an improvement plan which identifies areas that the school will focus on for the year ahead. The priorities for Dumfries High School this year are as follows: (i) learning and teaching (ii) tracking systems (iii) improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing

Although these are fairly wide-ranging aspects of improvement, they will be broken down into many different areas that will remain a focus throughout the year. These targets are building upon the feedback and responses received as part of the surveys completed by stakeholders before the summer break.

How to Pass Evening – Fourth Year

Our '*How to Pass Evening*' this year takes place on Thursday 26 September. This event is specifically designed to give information to parents/carers of all pupils in fourth year about the courses that they are studying this year and importantly, how you can support your child with their learning at home.

This is an extremely important evening in the school calendar and goes a long way to ensuring each and every pupil in S4 can achieve success in the final exams next May. All parents/carers and pupils in S4 should attend this event. Further information will be issued in due course, but please make a note of the date to ensure you can attend.

Stepping up to Higher Evening – Fifth Year

To support all of our fifth year learners as they undertake courses this year we have organised for all pupils to work with an organisation called 'Tree of Knowledge' during a two-day period on Thursday 3 October and Friday 4 October. Workshops that pupils attend will help to combat the stresses that study in S5 can bring. Managing workload, prioritisation, target setting, focus and motivation will all be addressed to help pupils cope with the demands that the year ahead can bring.

In addition to this, a parent/carer information session has also been arranged for the evening of Thursday 3 October. This is for all S5 parents/carers and your attendance at this event will go a long way to helping us work together to support our fifth year learners. Further information will follow.

Prelim exams for all pupils in S4/5/6 take place between Monday 13 January 2020 and Friday 24 January 2020.

Behaviour/Standards

The standards and expectations that we have of our pupils have been addressed recently during House assemblies. School should be a place of fun and enjoyment as well as a place of learning. Punctuality, uniform, behaviour at all times, in and around the school, litter, homework and being prepared for classes are among some of the areas addressed with pupils ensuring they are clear about the expectations we have of them. High standards in these areas will allow all pupils to engage and focus fully on learning activities without disruption. Pupils who make choices not to work towards meeting such standards will be dealt with appropriately and parents/carers contacted.

Additional In-Service Days 2019/2020

Two additional in-service days have been granted to all schools in Scotland for the academic year ahead. Within Dumfries and Galloway, it has been agreed that these days will be on Tuesday 7 January 2020 and Friday 29 May 2020. This means that pupils should not attend school on these days.

Data Capture Forms

It is important that all information we hold in school relating to each individual pupil is as accurate and up-to-date as possible. Data Capture Forms and various consent forms were sent home recently. Any outstanding forms should be returned to the school office as soon as possible.

Website

Our school website continues to be updated on a regular basis. This is an important source of information and communication with parents/carers, pupils and the wider DHS community. The website will continue to be updated regularly. Your suggestions as to how further improvements could be made to the website would be most welcome; please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Free School Meals/Clothing Grants/EMA

Forms for parents/carers wishing to apply for free school meals and/or a clothing grant can be collected from the main school office. An electronic version is also available on our website or at the following address: <http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/article/15246/School-clothing-grants>.

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) forms and guidance notes are also available at the main office. In relation to EMA, a fresh application must be made each academic year and submitted with all documentation needed to complete the assessment.

Wider Achievement

As a school, we are very keen to be kept informed of pupil successes both in and out of school in order that we can share and celebrate this with staff, other pupils and the wider Dumfries High School community. If your son/daughter has undertaken a particular challenge, completed something amazing or had success in an activity outwith school, please get in touch and let us know. Please follow all of the experiences and successes of our pupils on the school Facebook page.

Use of Social Media

Staff at Dumfries High School regularly go above-and-beyond to provide opportunities and experiences for pupils to ensure that their time at school is both enjoyable and successful. Outwith the normal school day, staff provide an array of study support sessions, run various clubs and other extra-curricular experiences including numerous sporting opportunities. Trips after school, during weekends and even during holiday periods are offered to all pupils. All of these are offered by staff within their own time; they are under no contractual obligation to do so.

It is therefore disappointing when unhelpful comments which are often factually incorrect are made on social media. Posting comments of this nature in a public forum may prompt staff to remove their gesture of goodwill and decide not to undertake unpaid overtime for after school events.

Therefore, in the best interest of our learners, I urge all parents/carers and their families to consider the impact of putting negative and sometimes hurtful statements on social media. As always, any parent/carer who has a genuine concern or suggestion for improvement, please contact the school directly so that your views can be heard and addressed in an appropriate forum.

Parent Council Meeting

The first Parent Council meeting of the new school year will take place at 6.30pm on Wednesday 12 September. We will meet in the school library. A strong representation from the parents/carers of our pupils can help to ensure we work together to enhance learning opportunities for all of our pupils within Dumfries High School. Meetings usually last no longer than an hour and a half; it would be fantastic to have more parents/carers being part of this group.

Dates for the Diary

Thursday 29 August	S1 Parents' Information Evening – 6.30pm in Main Hall
Tuesday 3 September	S2 Parents' Information Evening – 6.30pm in Main Hall
Monday 9 September – Friday 13 September	Paris Trip (Art/Drama)
Tuesday 17 September	S3 Parents' Information Evening – 6.30pm in Main Hall
Wednesday 18 September	S1 Buccleuch Trip – Galloway Activity Centre
Thursday 19 September	Senior Prizegiving – 7.30pm
Wednesday 25 September	S1 Devorgilla Trip – Galloway Activity Centre
Thursday 26 September	S4 'How to Pass Evening' – 6.30pm in the Main Hall
Wednesday 2 October	S1 Caerlaverock Trip – Galloway Activity Centre
Thursday 3 October	S5 'Stepping up to Higher Evening' – 6.30pm
Monday 7 October – Wednesday 9 October	London Trip (Music)
Thursday 10 October	S1/2/3 Tracking Reports issued
Friday 11 October	End of Term
Monday 28 October	New Term begins
Friday 16 November	S4/5/6 Interim Reports issued
Friday 6 December	S2 Full Reports issued
Friday 20 December	End of Term
Wednesday 8 January 2020	New Term begins

It has been a very positive start to the new academic year. With your help and support, we can continue to work together to ensure our learners have a successful and enjoyable year.

On behalf of all staff at Dumfries High School, I would like to thank you for your continued support.

