



NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2020

As we work towards the October holiday, I would like to recognise the manner in which the Dumfries High School community has once again come together to support each other during this first term of the school year. We continue to operate in a very different and challenging environment, but the measures that we have implemented as a school and the way in which parents/carers have supported us with that is allowing us to ensure that we can keep our school open and everyone safe within it.

SQA Exams 2021

The Deputy First Minister John Swinney announced earlier this week that National 5 exams will not take place as part of the SQA exam diet next May/June for pupils in S4/5/6. There will be no external assessment of National 5 courses this year – either by exam or by coursework. National 5 courses will now be assessed using an alternative certification approach. This will be based on teacher judgement supported by assessment resources and quality assurance.

Pupils in fourth year must remain focused and work hard throughout the duration of this year to ensure that assessments undertaken to generate final grades are of the highest quality. Pupils must continue to be aspirational and set the highest targets for themselves across all subjects.

Higher and Advanced Higher externally assessed exams, including the completion of coursework where appropriate, will remain as planned. Higher and Advanced Higher exams are planned to start on Thursday 13 May 2021 and finish on Friday 4 June 2021. That said, SQA is continuing to develop contingency arrangements for the Higher and Advanced Higher exams should the current position change in the coming months. SQA results day is scheduled for Tuesday 10 August 2021.

Communications will follow in the new term once we have further clarity from SQA.

Supported Study Classes 2020/2021

All parents/carers of senior phase pupils (S4/5/6) have received an email earlier today detailing the extensive list of supported study classes that will be available to all pupils after the October break. Attendance at supported study classes should be built into the weekly revision schedule for senior pupils as they prepare for assessments, prelims and final examinations.

Please discuss the importance of attending supported study with your child and encourage them to benefit from the extensive schedule being offered by DHS staff.

S4/5/6 Prelims – January 2021

Prelim examinations for pupils in S4/5/6 will begin on Monday 11 January 2021 and finish on Friday 22 January 2021. More than ever, prelim performance is an absolutely vital element to help ensure that all senior phase pupils achieve the best possible outcomes in every course this year.

A structured programme of study and revision must be put in place by each and every S4/5/6 pupil to prepare fully for the prelim exams early next year. Regular and ongoing revision will ensure a depth of learning in each course that will go some considerable way to ensuring success in the January prelims.

Parents/carers have a crucial role to play within this and once again I would ask for your help to ensure that your child has a programme of study in place at home for the term between October and Christmas.

School Photographs

Martin McNae will be in school on Monday 26 and Tuesday 27 October to take school photographs for pupils in all year groups. Family photographs will also be taken for those that have replied to the groupcall text message requesting this. Martin will also be in school on the morning of Wednesday 28 October to catch up with any pupil who is absent in the first two days of the new term.

Face Masks/Hand Sanitiser/Entry to Building

It is the responsibility of every pupil to come to school with a mask each day; this measure was introduced by the Scottish Government as of Monday 31 August. These steps are vitally important to ensure we continue to work towards reducing the risk of Covid-19 transmission.

However, there is an increasing number of pupils who are not bringing their own masks to school on a more frequent basis. As a school we have a limited supply of these to issue when required and the rate at which we are distributing these each morning is not sustainable. Please ensure your child brings their own mask each and every day; they must be worn in corridors and communal areas as well as on buses travelling to and from school.

Sanitising stations are located around the school for use by pupils when entering the building. Sanitising hands must be part of the routine when entering the school building and I would ask you to discuss the importance of this with your child to ensure this is happening each and every time during the school day.

Following the October break, entry to the school building will continue to be at 8.35am each morning on days when it is not raining; pupils will continue to be asked to vacate the building during interval and lunch when it is not raining. These measures are in response to advice received to reduce possible opportunities for Covid-19 transmission and are extremely important to help ensure we can keep our school open.

Given the probable change in weather following the October break, please ensure your child is appropriately dressed.

Behaviour Within Our Community

In recent weeks, there has been a significant increase in the number of complaints coming from members of the public in and around the Dumfries High School community. Complaints about littering, behaviour in local shops, concerns about road safety and the manner in which members of the public have been spoken to when addressing these issues with our pupils have all been brought to my attention since the start of term.

It is a tiny minority of pupils that fall short of displaying our school value of *Respect* when out and about within our community. However, the behaviour and attitude of a small number of individuals can often reflect negatively on the wider school. Please take a few minutes during the October break to speak with your child to reinforce the appropriate behaviours and standards that we would all expect of our young people.

Following the October break, Police Scotland and Community Safety Officers will be patrolling around the school during lunchtimes and taking relevant actions when examples of anti-social behaviours are witnessed.

Pupil Attendance

Maximising attendance at school is important to ensure that pupils progress in their learning. However, on occasion a pupil may be absent from school for a variety of reasons. As a school, it is important that our records are as up-to-date as possible.

When your child is absent or late, you must phone the absence line – 01387 702799 before 9.15am recording your child's name, registration class and reason for the absence or lateness. If you do not do this, you will receive a groupcall, prompting you to make contact with us to explain the absence or lateness. Any unexplained absence thereafter will be recorded as an unauthorised absence on your child's record.

Homework/Behaviour/Uniform

Staff at Dumfries High School have worked incredibly hard in recent years to improve and maintain standards in relation to homework, behaviour and uniform. This has been done with the fantastic support of parents/carers and engagement of pupils; ultimately it is leading to improving attainment within the school.

The completion of homework as part of the school week is important to reinforce learning taking place within classes across the school. A positive attitude towards homework ensures each individual can continue to progress in their learning.

Coming to school each day with the relevant resources and materials will ensure pupils are prepared and ready for learning; just as importantly, it can reduce the number of times parents/carers need to come to school to drop things off which have been forgotten.

Upon returning to school following the period of 'lockdown', it has been important to re-establish the standards and expectations that underpin school life. As I have mentioned a number of times previously, your help and support with reinforcing this can ensure we are all able to work together to achieve the best possible outcomes for every single young person within our school.

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.

Parent Council

The next meeting of the Parent Council will take place on Thursday 29 October at 6pm. This will be an online 'Zoom' meeting. If you would like to take part in this meeting, please contact the Parent Council Chair Lorrie Kyle: lorriekyle@btconnect.com or 07859939895. A strong Parent Council can have a huge impact upon a school community and we are keen that as many new members join and support the work of the group.

School Contacts

As a reminder, various contact details are listed below to help support families during the school year:

- Head of House Buccleuch – Miss Holmes – gw11holmesdebbie@ea.dumgal.sch.uk
- Head of House Caerlaverock – Miss Bryce - gw09brycefiona2@ea.dumgal.sch.uk
- Head of House Devorgilla – Ms Kilmurry - gw08kilmurryjan01@ea.dumgal.sch.uk
- Child Protection Coordinator – Mrs Hogg – gw11hoggdaniella@ea.dumgal.sch.uk

Additional contacts if required: Childline: 0800 1111 Social Work: 030 33 33 3000

Please get in touch with the school if you have any queries at all about an aspect of school life as we progress throughout the year. On behalf of the staff at Dumfries High School, I would like once again to extend the very best of wishes to every parent/carer within our community and thank you for your ongoing support.

Take care and stay safe.

