



NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2023

With the new term now well under way, I would like to extend a warm welcome back to all of our pupils as they begin their learning journey for this year. As parents/carers and family members, I hope you have all had a lovely summer period despite the dismal weather for the majority of the time.

It has been quite amazing to see how well our pupils have been turned out at the start of the new term. With the whole school now wearing our green blazers, it is a spectacular sight to see. I would like to take this opportunity to say a huge thanks to all parents/carers, families and friends for the amazing efforts you have made to ensure that our pupils have returned to school looking as smart as they do wearing their Dumfries High School uniform. As you know, we have very clear expectations in terms of uniform and it is your help and support that ensures our pupils maintain such high standards each year. Thank you once again.

As always, it is important that we work together to support and challenge our learners as they work towards their individual targets this year. Regardless of whichever year group your child is in, each and every pupil should remain focused, committed, work hard and be ambitious about their learning at all times; this will go a long way to helping them attain and achieve this year.

SQA Exam Results 2023

Senior pupils received their SQA exam results on Tuesday 8 August. Dumfries High School pupils have, this year produced exceptional results across fourth, fifth and sixth year; results in all measures continue to improve and we must now build upon this for the year ahead.

Fourth Year Exam Data - Percentage of Pupils (of S4 roll) Attaining 5, 6 or 7 National 5 Qualifications

Year	Dumfries High School	D&G Average
2023	56%	40%
2022	58%	42%
2021	62%	44%
2020	46%	48%
2019	42%	39%
2018	36%	38%

- 87 S4 pupils (56% of year group) attained 5, 6 or 7 National 5 qualifications
- S4 attainment in 2023 is higher than the Dumfries and Galloway average by 16% points

Fifth Year Exam Data - Percentage of Pupils (of S4 roll) Attaining 5 Higher Qualifications

Year	Dumfries High School	D&G Average
2023	19%	12%
2022	26%	13%
2021	20%	15%
2020	14%	16%
2019	13%	13%
2018	11%	16%

- 6 pupils achieved 5As in S5 in 2023; 26 pupils attained five Highers in S5 in 2023
- S5 attainment in 2023 is higher than the Dumfries and Galloway average by 7% points

Sixth Year Exam Data - Percentage of Pupils (of S4 roll) Attaining 5 Higher Qualifications

Year	Dumfries High School	D&G Average
2023	44%	27%
2022	33%	31%
2021	32%	34%
2020	30%	30%
2019	24%	31%
2018	28%	26%

- By the end of S6, 58 pupils attained five Highers in 2023
- S6 attainment in 2023 is higher than the Dumfries and Galloway average by 17% points

Sixth Year Exam Data – Percentage of Pupils (of S4 roll) Attaining 1+ AH Qualification

Year	Dumfries High School	D&G Average
2023	32%	20%
2022	21%	22%
2021	32%	24%
2020	29%	23%
2019	30%	21%
2018	13%	19%

- By the end of S6, 42 pupils attained at least one Advanced Higher in 2023
- S6, Level 7 attainment is higher than the Dumfries and Galloway average by 12% points

As can be seen in the tables above, Dumfries High School pupils are performing extremely well and in all cases this year, are performing well above the Dumfries and Galloway average.

I would like to congratulate all of our senior pupils from last year for their fantastic achievements. There are many individual stories that lie behind the overall exam results and the successes are testament to the focus, determination and strength of character that our pupils have shown over quite some time. It is also important to recognise the crucial part that parents/carers and wider family members play in supporting our young people; please never underestimate the vital role that you play at home in a number of ways.

I would also like to express my thanks to Dumfries High School staff once again for the commitment and support provided throughout the year to all pupils. It is now important that our new S4/5/6 year groups focus on the year ahead allowing further exam success.

Staff Update

Lauren Wilson (English) continues as Principal Teacher of English, Literacy and Modern Languages on a temporary basis as does Claire Harrison in the Acting Depute Headteacher position.

Darren Monteith joins the Maths department as a permanent member of staff.

After a successful probationer year with us last session, Lauren Lee (Social Subjects) now joins the Dumfries High School team as a permanent member of staff.

Kelsey Garton (Business Education) and Declan McGarva (Music) both join the Dumfries High School team as probationer teachers for a period of one year.

We also welcome Nikki Blackwell (Modern Languages) back to Dumfries High School from a period of maternity leave. Natalie Hamblin (Business Education) begins a period of maternity leave.

Richard Earle (School Technician) also joins our team to provide support to the Technical Department.

Punctuality

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	Claire Harrison

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) Broad General Education (BGE) learner experiences (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 findings from self-evaluation tasks carried out throughout the last school year.

S4/5/6 Parents' Evening - Change of Dates

After a review of Parents' Evening events with our school calendar, please note that the S4 and S5/6 Parents' Evening sessions will now take place before Christmas and not following the January prelims as they have done in recent years.

It is hoped that discussions held at the earlier dates will help to improve pupil performance and subsequently attainment at prelim time in the new year.

How to Pass Evening – Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Year

Our '*How to Pass Evening*' this year takes place at 6pm on **Wednesday 13 September**. This event is specifically designed to give information to parents/carers of all senior phase pupils about the courses that they are studying this year and importantly, how you can support your child with their learning at home.

In recent years, this event has been specifically for the parents/carers of S4 pupils undertaking National 5 study. In response to parent/carer feedback, this event is being expanded to include pupils in S4/5/6 studying National 5 and/or Higher qualifications this year.

This is an extremely important evening in the school calendar and goes a long way to ensuring each and every pupil in S4/5/6 can achieve success in the final exams next May. All parents/carers and pupils in S4/5/6 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 our fifth year learners undertaking five Highers, this year we have once again arranged for all pupils to work with an organisation called 'Tree of Knowledge' during an interactive session on **Tuesday 7 November**. Workshops that pupils attend during the school day 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 same evening on Tuesday 7 November (6.30pm). This is for the S5 parents/carers of pupils undertaking five Highers this year 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.

S4/5/6 October Assessment Week (Monday 9 October – Friday 13 October 2023)

As with recent years, all fourth, fifth and sixth year pupils studying National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses will undertake a series of subject assessments during week commencing Monday 9 October. A detailed programme of study leading up to this assessment period is crucial to ensure that pupils perform as best they can.

This is an important week of assessments which will help to determine pupil progress at that point. Importantly, it can also help to identify areas of improvement that pupils can address before the prelim exams in January 2024. Please discuss thorough preparation for the October assessment week with your son/daughter and ensure a structured revision schedule is in place.

S4/5/6 Prelim Exams (January 2024)

Prelim examinations for pupils in S4/5/6 will begin on Wednesday 10 January 2024 and finish on Tuesday 23 January 2024. 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. 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.

Behaviour/Standards

The standards and expectations that we have of our pupils have been addressed during year group assemblies this week. School should be a place of fun and enjoyment as well as a place of learning. Punctuality, uniform, exemplary 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.

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 earlier this week. Please ensure completed forms are returned to registration tutors no later than **Friday 1 September**.

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, which are applicable to pupils in S4/5/6, are attached to the email along with this newsletter; paper copies 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 the experiences and successes of our pupils on the school Facebook page.

Parent Council Meeting

The next meeting of the Parent Council will take place in the main school library on Wednesday 20 September at 6pm. 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. Meetings usually last no longer than an hour and it would be fantastic to have more parents/carers as part of the group. I would particularly appeal to new S1 parents/carers to consider joining the DHS Parent Council.

Mobile Phones/Headphones

Mobile phones and/or Headphones should not be visible or used by pupils in corridors when at school. They should also not be used by pupils in a classroom setting unless instructed to do so by a staff member; on occasion, they may be used to aid learning and teaching. When pupils are using mobile phones for personal use they are not engaged in learning and this can cause distractions, disruption and sometimes danger for themselves and others. All pupils have been reminded of this. Pupils may be asked to hand their mobile phone to a member of staff if they fail to follow this clear instruction.

School Photographs

Martin McNae will be in Dumfries High School on Monday 18 September and Tuesday 19 September to take school photographs for pupils in all year groups. Family photographs will also be taken for those that indicate a request for this; an email link will be sent in advance to determine this. Martin will also be in school on Wednesday 4 October to catch up with any pupil who is absent when pictures are taken on the two original dates.

Child Protection Concerns

I would like to take the opportunity once again to ensure that our community is aware of the fact that Mrs Daniella Hogg (Depute) is the main point of contact within Dumfries High School should a child protection concern ever exist.

Holidays During Term-Time

In recent times there has been a significant increase in the number of pupils taking time out of school during term to attend family holidays; in some cases this can often be a week or longer. Whilst I recognise that in some situations this is unavoidable due to parent/carer work commitments, it is against council policy to authorise this and has an obvious negative impact upon pupil learning.

As always, I would ask for your consideration when booking holidays to minimise the time out of school so that we can work together to support all of our learners as best we can.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)

The MHFA is Dumfries High School's Mental Health First Aid service, aimed at promoting positive mental health in the school community. Please be aware of the support that is available to pupils in relation to any mental health issues, including stress, feelings of uncertainty, anxiousness or low mood. Pupils can contact our fully-trained team using the 'get help' button on the home-page of the school website.

Dates for the Diary

Wednesday 30 August	S1 Parents' Information Evening – 6.30pm in Main Hall
Monday 11 September – Friday 15 September	Battlefields Trip to France
Tuesday 12 September	S1 Caerlaverock Trip – Galloway Activity Centre
Wednesday 13 September	S1 Devorgilla Trip – Galloway Activity Centre
Wednesday 13 September	S4/5/6 How to Pass Evening – 6pm
Thursday 14 September	S1 Buccleuch Trip – Galloway Activity Centre
Monday 18 & Tuesday 19 September	School Photographs
Thursday 21 September	Senior Prizegiving – 7.30pm
Friday 6 October	S1/2/3 Tracking Reports Issued
Monday 9 October – Friday 13 October	S4/5/6 October Assessment Week
Friday 13 October	End of Term
Monday 30 October	New Term Begins
Tuesday 7 November	S5 Stepping up to Higher Evening – 6.30pm in Main Hall
Thursday 16 November	DHS Christmas Fayre (6pm – 8pm)
Friday 17 November	S4/5/6 Interim Reports issued
Thursday 23 November	S4 Parents' Evening (4pm – 6pm)
Wednesday 29 November	S5/6 Parents' Evening (4pm – 6pm)
Thursday 30 November	Flu Vaccines – Staff and Pupils
Monday 4 December – Thursday 7 December	S3 Berlin Trip
Tuesday 12 December	Junior Christmas Ceilidh (S1/2/3)
Tuesday 19 December	Senior Christmas Ceilidh (S4/5/6)
Friday 15 December	S1/2/3 Tracking Reports Issued
Friday 22 December	End of Term

Thank you once again for your support to ensure that the start of the new school year has been as positive as it has. As a staff, we look forward to working with you to support our young people throughout the year ahead to ensure they achieve and attain as best they can.

Best wishes

