NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2024

I would like to take this opportunity to wish pupils, parents/carers and all members of the Dumfries High School community a Happy New Year. I am sure 2024 will be a busy and exciting time as we continue to work together to support and challenge our pupils to maximise their potential in the year ahead.

Due to an admin error, you will have received our end of term Sway newsletter earlier this week; it should have been sent before the Christmas break. Apologies for this.

Christmas Foodbank Appeal

Once again, the Dumfries High School community has come together to contribute an absolutely astonishing number of items to our annual foodbank appeal prior to Christmas. With your help, around 3500 items were delivered to the Dumfriesshire Foodbank, Apex Scotland in the last week of term. Thank you once again for your generosity, kindness and support.

Staffing Update

With Claire Harrison recently appointed to the post of Depute Headteacher, we will now begin the task of recruiting a substantive Principal Teacher for Languages. Lauren Wilson will continue to undertake this role in an acting capacity. I will provide further updates when this process has been concluded.

Holly Turner (Music) returns to school on Monday 15 January after a period of maternity leave.

S4/5/6 Prelims

Prelim exams for senior pupils started earlier this week on Wednesday 9 January and run until Tuesday 23 January 2024. Prelim timetables were issued prior to the Christmas holiday. Reports will be issued thereafter and Option interviews for S4/5 pupils will take place in late February. Further details about Option interviews will follow shortly.

It is important that all pupils in S4/5/6 continue to adopt a positive attitude towards their studies and revision to ensure success in the prelim exams and beyond. Performance in the prelim and subsequent results may determine presentation levels for the final SQA exams later this year and as such it is vital that all pupils prepare in the best possible way.

Study support sessions in all subjects continue to be offered to pupils throughout the week. Please encourage your child to attend these sessions to assist with their learning in preparation for both the prelim exams and the final SQA exams in May/June. Details of study support sessions are listed on the school website.

Email Communication

Could I ask parents/carers to ensure that your email contact details are as up-to-date as possible by sending an email message with the name of your child/children and registration class to the following address: gw08officedumfries@ea.dumgal.sch.uk. Please only do this if your email address has changed since the Data Capture forms were completed in August.

Sixth Year Senior Prom
Please note that the S6 Prom this year will take place at Hetland Hall on Friday 7 June. The Prom committee will be busy during this term making arrangements for this event and details will be shared with pupils and parents/carers in due course.

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.

If you are contemplating a holiday for Easter and/or Summer this year, I would ask for your consideration when booking to minimise the time out of school so that we can work together to support all of our learners as best we can.

S3 Exams
Please note that all S3 pupils will undertake a ten-day period of exams during May this year. The experience of completing these exams will help to prepare pupils for the demands of studying National Qualifications and S4 prelims in January of next year. It will also prove to be a useful benchmark to assess pupil progress at this point in time. It goes without saying that third year pupils should approach these exams in a focused, positive and mature manner to ensure they attain as highly as they possibly can. Therefore, it is important that all current S3 pupils continue to work hard between now and the May exam period.

S1 Swimming
Pupils in registration classes 1C1 and 1D2 will undertake a series of learning experiences at DG1 to build confidence, technique and safety in the water.

Below are the dates and times of each session:

Class: 1C1 2pm – 3pm	Class: 1D2 11.30am – 12.30pm
Wednesday	**Thursday**
17th January 2024	18th January 2024
24th January 2024	25th January 2024
31st January 2024	1st February 2024
7th February 2024	8th February 2024
21st February 2024	15th February 2024
28th February 2024	22nd February 2024

To allow each pupil to have the best possible experience during this block we require them to have the following kit at each session: appropriate swimwear (1-piece swimsuit for girls is preferred), goggles (if they choose), towel, waterproof bag for wet kit, £1 for a locker.

If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to get in touch with Susan Farquhar, Principal Teacher Home Economics and PE.

Medical Issues
When a pupil becomes ill during the school day it is important that they follow the correct procedures. In the first instance pupils should report to the main office and if necessary they will be assessed by a first-aider. Parent/carer communication will follow directly from the main school office as required. Pupils should not contact parents directly to come and collect them as this can often lead to difficult or confusing situations.

Attendance at Parents' Evening
Parents' Evening for all pupils in S1/2/3 will take place between March and May (details listed below). Your attendance at these events goes a significant way to supporting our young people as they continue to work towards exams in S4/5/6. I would ask all parents/carers to ensure they attend Parents' Evening to discuss pupil learning and ways in which we can continue to work together to allow further progress.

Parent Council Meeting – Tuesday 23 January 6pm
The next meeting of the Parent Council will take place on Tuesday 23 January at 6pm in the main school library. Please get in touch with our new Parent Council Chair (Jackie Byrne) if you have any questions: jackiembyrne@gmail.com or 07816061976.

Our Parent Council body is always looking to recruit new members. 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. Please give some consideration to becoming a member of the Dumfries High School Parent Council.

Dumfries & Galloway College and Barony College Applications 2024
Pupils in S4/5/6 who are considering an application to either Dumfries & Galloway College (applications open Monday 29 January) or Barony College (applications already open) for courses starting in August/September 2024 should note that help and advice is available from Pupil Support staff if required.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS)
At this point of the term, many senior pupils will be considering their options for later in the year. Zoe Knox, our school Career Advisor can offer a face-to-face meeting to provide career information, advice and guidance. Many of our senior pupils and parents/carers may require specialist help to finalise future career paths. Please use the following contact details:

- Telephone: 01387 – 272500
- Email: zoe.knox@sds.co.uk

School Show – Beauty and the Beast
Dumfries High School will this year be performing *'Beauty and the Beast'* as our school show in June 2024. Rehearsals are well underway for what I am sure will be another great show. Performances will take place on Tuesday 11, Wednesday 12 and Thursday 13 June 2024; please keep one of these dates free to come along and support our school show. Further information about tickets will come out in due course.

Mobile Phones
As from this term, pupils who have been granted permission by a teacher to go to the toilet during a lesson will be required to hand their mobile phone to the class teacher before leaving the classroom.

All too often in recent times, some pupils have used the excuse of going to the toilet to undertake the inappropriate use of their mobile phone which has led to issues elsewhere in the school. Importantly, it is also a disruption to focus and concentration which impacts upon learning.

Easter Holiday

Please note that the end of term for the Easter break is Friday 22 March. This is much earlier than in recent years.

S2/3 Careers Event – Wednesday 7 February 2024

Our annual S2/S3 Careers Event takes place on Wednesday February 2024 from 9am - 2pm at Dumfries High School. This event has been timed to take place just before pupils make their subject choices to ensure they are armed with as much knowledge as possible regarding career pathways.

Numerous businesses will be attending from a wide range of career pathways along with representatives from universities and colleges. S3 pupils will be taking part in the Careers Event all morning, participating in a range of workshops run by industry as well as attending the Careers Fair in the hall. S2 pupils will attend the Careers Fair.

There will be an opportunity for senior pupils from S4-S6 will visit the Careers Fair during break and lunchtime.

Dates for the Diary

Wednesday 10 January – Tuesday 23 January 2024	S4/5/6 Prelim Exams
Wednesday 7 February 2024	S3 Parent/Carer Information Evening – 6pm
Monday 12 February – Wednesday 14 February 2024	Pupil Holiday
Friday 16 February 2024	S4/5/6 Reports Issued
Monday 19 February – Thursday 22 February 2024	S4 Option Interviews
Monday 26 February – Thursday 29 February 2024	S5 Option Interviews
Friday 1 March 2024	S2/3 Tracking Reports Issued
Wednesday 6 March 2024	S3 Parents' Evening (4pm – 6pm)
Thursday 7 March – Tuesday 12 March 2024	S3 Option Interviews
Thursday 14 March 2024	S2 Parents' Evening (4pm – 6pm)
Friday 15 March – Wednesday 20 March 2024	S2 Option Interviews
Friday 22 March 2024	End of term – Easter Holiday
Monday 8 April 2024	New Term Begins

Best wishes once again for the year ahead.