



## NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2025

As we start the new academic term, I would like to wish everyone a very Happy New Year and hope that we can look forward to 2025 being a successful and enjoyable year for our pupils. This is a long and busy term, but with hard work, the support of parents/carers and the advice and guidance of staff I am certain that our pupils will continue to go from strength-to-strength.

### Staffing Update

Jackie Snailham (RMPS) has returned to school following a period of absence last term.

Nikki Blackwell (Modern Languages) has started her period of maternity leave. We look forward to hearing about Nikki's new arrival soon. For the remainder of the school year, David Thornburn who also works within our languages team, will take all lessons for both the National 5 French and Spanish classes leading up to the final SQA exams. A temporary Modern Languages post has been advertised to provide additional cover within this subject.

### Christmas Foodbank Appeal

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 and kindness with our annual foodbank appeal; your support is, as always, very much appreciated and has gone quite some way to help local families most in need over the festive period.

### S4/5/6 Prelims

Prelim exams for senior pupils started earlier this week on Wednesday 8 January and run until Tuesday 21 January 2025. 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](mailto:gw08officedumfries@ea.dumgal.sch.uk) Please only do this if your email address has changed since the Data Capture forms were completed in August.

### **Timetable Alignment**

As previously communicated, from June 2025 all Dumfries and Galloway secondary schools will adopt a standardised timetable structure. This will promote an increase in the range of subjects offered and an increase in equity of the offer in all schools across the region.

For the Dumfries High School community, changes are minimal. Young people in S4, S5 and S6 will continue to have the opportunity to study up to 7 subjects in S4 and 5 subjects in S5 and S6.

The school day will begin at 8.50am and finish slightly later at 3.20pm. Small tweaks will be made to the duration of morning interval and lunchtime. Pupils will continue to undertake 7 lessons every day with each lesson lasting 45 minutes as they currently do.

### **Roads Works/Traffic Congestion**

For a ten week period starting on Monday 20 January, there will be significant traffic delays and congestion near the Tinwald Downs roundabout (Little Tesco) as essential drainage works are carried out.

Work will be carried out between the roundabout and the entrance to the garden centre. I have been informed by Amey that suggested 'average delays' will be around 7 minutes longer than any normal morning journey on that route at this time.

Please be aware of this and try to ensure that any journey to school is started earlier throughout the duration of the roadworks; this will help to reduce latecoming to school each morning. Thank you for your understanding with this.

### **Sixth Year Senior Prom**

Please note that the S6 Prom this year will take place at Hetland Hall on Friday 6 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.

## **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 S2/3 will take place in March (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 21 January 6pm**

The next meeting of the Parent Council will take place on Tuesday 21 January at 6pm in the main school library. Please get in touch with our 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 2025**

Pupils in S4/5/6 who are considering an application to either Dumfries & Galloway College (applications open Tuesday 28 January) or Barony College (applications already open) for courses starting in August/September 2025 should note that help and advice is available from Pupil Support staff if required.

Staff from Dumfries and Galloway College will be in Dumfries High School to work with and support and pupil wishing to complete an application.

## **School Show June 2025 – 'Oliver'**

Following the success of *'Beauty and the Beast'* in June last year, I am delighted to announce that Dumfries High School will once again be producing another whole school show later this year. Rehearsals are well underway for what I am sure will be another great stage production.

Performances will take place on Tuesday 10, Wednesday 11 and Thursday 12 June 2025; 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**

An increasing number of schools are implementing a ban on mobile phone use within the school grounds at any point throughout the day. There is increasing evidence to suggest that sustained periods of mobile phone usage can negatively impact upon the focus and concentration of young people and subsequently, their ability to learn. Concerns also exist in relation to inappropriate accessing of materials and online bullying which can directly affect the self-esteem and confidence of young people.

Although we are not currently at the point of an outright ban as such, we do have clear guidelines that we expect pupils to follow during the school day in terms of mobile phones and/or headphones.

\*In a classroom setting, including morning registration, mobile phones/headphones should be switched off and out of sight

\*Mobile phones/headphones can be used to assist with a learning task within class, but only when a clear instruction has been given by a staff member

\*Mobile phones/headphones should not be used by pupils when moving between lessons. They should be switched off and out of sight in corridors

\*Mobile phones/headphones can be used by pupils if they so wish during interval and lunchtimes in the main hall or outside of the school building

\*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

### **S2/3 Careers Event – Wednesday 26 February 2025**

Our annual S2/S3 Careers Event takes place on Wednesday 26 February 2025 from 9am - 1pm 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.

### **Lockdown**

Prior to the Christmas break, we held a 'lockdown' practice drill. Feedback following this has been collated in recent weeks and I will be reviewing the policy and procedures so that we can continue to make further improvements prior to our next practice.

### **S1/2 Online Safety Event – Tuesday 11 February 2025**

An important online safety event has been organised in conjunction with primary staff across the Dumfries High School cluster. Given the increased use of social media by young people and the subsequent dangers associated with this, I would strongly encourage all S1/2 parents/carers to attend. A 'hold-the-date' invitation was issued last month.

Input from Police Scotland and the Safeguarding Manager from D&G Council will help to give advice and guidance to ensure that all parents/carers can take steps to keep young people safe. The event will take place in the main hall at 6.30pm.

### **New School Website**

Our new school website went 'live' in December. At this early stage we are keen to gather some feedback to allow us to make some tweaks and changes based upon your thoughts and suggestions.

A survey will be emailed out to all parents/carers next week. I would appreciate everyone taking a few minutes to complete this brief survey.

## Dates for the Diary

Wednesday 8 January – Tuesday 21 January 2025	S4/5/6 Prelim Exams
Saturday 1 February – Saturday 8 February 2025	Ski Trip – Aosta, Italy
Wednesday 5 February 2025	S3 Parent/Carer Information Evening – 6pm
Wednesday 12 February 2025	S4/5/6 Reports Issued
Friday 14 February – Tuesday 18 February 2025	S4 Option Interviews
Wednesday 19 February – Friday 21 February 2025	Pupil Holiday
Monday 24 February 2025	S2/3 Tracking Reports Issued
Tuesday 25 February – Friday 28 February 2025	S5 Option Interviews
Monday 3 March 2025	S3 Parents' Evening (4pm – 6pm)
Tuesday 4 March – Friday 7 March 2025	S3 Option Interviews
Tuesday 11 March 2025	S2 Parents' Evening (4pm – 6pm)
Tuesday 12 March – Monday 17 March 2025	S2 Option Interviews
Friday 28 March 2025	End of term – Easter Holiday
Monday 14 April 2025	New Term Begins

Best wishes once again for the year ahead.

