



NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2025

With the new term now 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. There is no doubt whatsoever that all of our pupils look incredibly smart in their school uniform; it is an impressive sight and I would like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone for your support in ensuring all of our young people are turned out wearing the correct uniform.

Pupils are settling 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 your continued support with 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.

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.

Punctuality

Our school day begins at **8.50am** and pupils should ensure they are in their period one class by this time. A 'warning bell' will ring at 8.45am. Please ensure your child is in school no later than 8.50am; any pupil arriving after this time will be late for important learning.

For those pupils who travel to school by bus, I appreciate that recent timetable changes may have caused some frustration. I do hope however, that everyone is now in a position to support their child to arrive at school on time each and every morning. Punctuality is important to ensure the day gets off to the best possible start.

Staff Update

Following interviews at the start of the summer holiday, Michael Griffin (Music) has been successful in securing another position in Fife. Michael will therefore not be returning to Dumfries High School. I'd like to thank Michael for his contribution to our school over the last couple of years and also wish him well in his new school.

Fiona Martin (Business) will now be known as Fiona Jamieson following her recent marriage. Erin Firth (Learning Assistant) also recently got married and will now be known as Erin Chalmers. Congratulations to both Fiona and Erin on their recent marriages.

Hannah King (Business) who has been with us on a temporary basis since the start of this year, now joins our school as a permanent member of staff. Nicky Rennie (Business) also comes to Dumfries High School for a period of one year to cover maternity leave.

Stewart MacRae (Principal Teacher, Nurture and Inclusion) joins the wider Pupil Support team at Dumfries High School.

Ailsa Little (Principal Teacher, Additional Support Needs) also joins the wider Pupil Support team on a temporary basis for a period of one year. Ailsa is undertaking the role previously held by Adam

Park who left earlier this year.

Katrina McLeod (Chemistry & Biology) and Kirsty Houston (Maths) join us at Dumfries High School as permanent members of staff.

Alex Gilbert (Temporary) is joining our Learning Assistant team as part of the ASN department. David Warner (Art & Design) will provide cover in the Creative faculty for a period of one year.

Ben Mitchell (PE) joins us as a probationer for the next academic year. Morven Dobie (PE) also joins us for a period of one year. Ben and Morven have both previously spent time within the PE department at Dumfries High School and we are delighted to welcome them back.

Marion Glen (Religious Education) will now be known as Marion Love.

Sam Thorburn (Modern Languages) will be absent from school for a period of time at the start of term. Rory Jones will provide cover in Sam's absence. Rory is a Modern Languages teacher.

School Car Park – Drop Off and Collections

At the beginning and end of each school day, the front of the main building is an incredibly busy area with hundreds of pupils walking around and numerous vehicles travelling in a variety of directions. With the introduction of such a large S1 intake, the school grounds will be busier than ever.

As such, parent/carers vehicles are not allowed into the school grounds before or after school at these busy times. This is to help maintain pupil safety.

When dropping pupils off at the front of the school prior to the start of the school day, please do so by stopping in Bane Loaning to allow pupils to get out of the vehicle; do not bring your vehicle into the school grounds at the front of the school. At the end of the school day, the main gates at the front of the school building will be closed and manned by the janitor as from 3pm to prevent vehicles entering the car park. Please also be vigilant in Bane Loaning at these busy times. Thanks for your support and understanding with this matter.

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 gw11holmesdebbie @ea.dumgal.sch.uk	Fiona Bryce gw09brycefiona2 @ea.dumgal.sch.uk	Jan Kilmurry gw08kilmurryjan01 @ea.dumgal.sch.uk
Depute Headteacher	Billy Davidson gw08davidsonwilliam @ea.dumgal.sch.uk	Daniella Hogg gw11hoggdaniella @ea.dumgal.sch.uk	Claire Harrison gw08harrisonclaire @ea.dumgal.sch.uk

School Improvement Plan Priorities 2025/2026

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) Inclusion, Equality and Wellbeing of all learners.

The priorities are very similar to previous years. However, our self-evaluation processes throughout last session which included pupil, parent and staff surveys and focus groups have identified these areas should remain a priority for the year ahead.

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 including the surveys that parents/carers, pupils and staff were asked to complete.

SQA Exam Results 2025

Senior pupils received their SQA exam results on Tuesday 5 August. Dumfries High School pupils have, this year once again produced exceptional results across fourth, fifth and sixth year; we must now build upon this for the year ahead.

Fourth Year Exam Data - Percentage of Pupils (of S4 roll) Attaining 5, 6, 7 or 8 National 5 Qualifications

Year	Dumfries High School	D&G Average
2025	49%	41%

- 75 S4 pupils (49% of year group) attained 5, 6, 7 or 8 National 5 qualifications
- 18 pupils in S4 achieved 7A's; 10 pupils in S4 achieved 8A's

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

Year	Dumfries High School	D&G Average
2025	19%	11%

- 22 pupils attained five Highers in S5 in 2025;
- S5 attainment in 2025 is higher than the Dumfries and Galloway average by 8% points

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

Year	Dumfries High School	D&G Average
2025	33%	26%

- 54 pupils attained five Highers in S6 in 2025
- S6 attainment in 2025 is higher than the Dumfries and Galloway average by 7% 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. 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.

'How to Pass' Evening – Fourth Year

Our '*How to Pass*' evening this year takes place at 6pm on **Tuesday 23 September**. This event is specifically designed to give information to parents/carers of all fourth year pupils about the courses that they are studying this year and importantly, how you can support your child with their learning at home.

This event is specifically for the parents/carers of S4 pupils undertaking National 4 and National 5 study.

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 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 **Wednesday 5 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 Wednesday 5 November (6pm). 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 6 October – Friday 10 October 2025)

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 6 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 2026. 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 2026)

Prelim examinations for pupils in S4/5/6 will begin on Wednesday 7 January 2026 and finish on Tuesday 20 January 2026. 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 between now and Christmas.

Behaviour/Standards

The standards and expectations that we have of our pupils will continue to be addressed during House assemblies throughout the school year. 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 have been sent home with pupils yesterday and today. Please ensure completed forms are returned to registration tutors no later than **Friday 29 August**.

Free School Meals/Clothing Grants

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 copy and instructions are also attached along with this newsletter. An electronic version is also available on our website or at the following address: <https://www.dumfriesandgalloway.gov.uk/schools-learning/schools/school-meals/free-school-meals>

Please use the following email address if you have any queries in relation to free school meals and/or clothing grant payments: educationbenefits@dumgal.gov.uk

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

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: <https://dumgal.gov.uk/EMA>

Please use the following email address if you have any queries in relation to EMA payments: ema@dumgal.gov.uk

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 our school Facebook page.

Parent Council Meeting

The next meeting of the Parent Council will take place in the main school library on **Wednesday 17 September** at 6pm. If you would like to take part in this meeting, please contact the Parent Council Chair Dr Glidden Chalmers: dumfrieshighschoolpc@gmail.com. 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 22 September and Tuesday 23 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 1 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 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

Thursday 28 August	S1 Parents' Information Evening – 6pm in Main Hall
Monday 8 September	S1 Buccleuch Trip – Galloway Activity Centre
Tuesday 9 September	S1 Caerlaverock Trip – Galloway Activity Centre
Wednesday 10 September	S1 Devorgilla Trip – Galloway Activity Centre
Thursday 18 September	Senior Prizegiving – 7pm
Monday 22 & Tuesday 23 September	School Photographs
Tuesday 23 September	S4 'How to Pass' Evening – 6pm
Monday 29 September	P7 Open Evening
Monday 6 October – Friday 11 October	S4/5/6 October Assessment Week
Wednesday 8 October	S1/2/3 Tracking Reports Issued
Friday 10 October	End of Term
Monday 27 October	New Term Begins
Wednesday 5 November	S5 Stepping up to Higher Evening – 6pm in Main Hall
Thursday 13 November	DHS Christmas Fayre (6pm – 8pm)
Friday 14 November	S4/5/6 Interim Reports issued
Tuesday 18 November	S4 Parents' Evening (4pm – 6pm)
Wednesday 26 November	S5/6 Parents' Evening (4pm – 6pm)
Tuesday 9 December	Junior Christmas Ceilidh (S1/2/3)
Thursday 11 December	S1 Parents' Evening (4pm – 6pm)
Tuesday 16 December	Senior Christmas Ceilidh (S4/5/6)
Friday 19 December	End of Term

The school year we are about to embark on, will be the final one in this building before we move to our new home next Spring. These are exciting times to be part of the Dumfries High School community with the prospect of our new building on the horizon.

With your help, support and encouragement, the current pupils of Dumfries High School can have the most successful of years as they undertake their learning journey over the new few months and play their small part in history, knowing that they are the final cohort of pupils to ever attend classes in this building.

As always, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the school if we can help or assist in anyway.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Paul Gibson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and a long, sweeping underline.