NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2026

With the new term now under way, I would like to welcome everyone back to school for the year ahead. On behalf of the staff at Dumfries High School, I would also like to wish all pupils, parents/carers and the wider school community a very Happy New Year. By continuing to work together, we can look forward to 2026 being a successful and enjoyable year for our pupils.

Staffing Update
Sam Thorburn (Modern Languages) has returned to Dumfries High School following a recent absence. Nikki Blackwell (Modern Languages) will also return from maternity leave in mid-February. Rory Jones will continue to provide cover within Modern Languages until Nikki's return.

Sophie Wotherspoon (Art & Design) will join the staff at Dumfries High School in early February; this will be on a temporary basis. At this point, we will say goodbye to Susan Priestley who has provided subject specialist cover in Art in recent months. I would like to thank Susan for her time and commitment to our pupils since the October break.

Transition to New School Building
Friday 29 May 2026 is a planned inset day; no pupils will be in school during this day. It is at this point that the official move to our new school build will begin.

Importantly, SQA exams for all S4/5/6 pupils will be undertaken in our current building. I am delighted with this as it means that all exams will be completed in familiar surroundings that pupils have experienced previously.

Details about additional closure days to assist with the move to our new school are yet to be finalised; once agreed, I will give a further update.

Christmas Foodbank Appeal
With your help, over 2000 items of produce and £1178 were donated 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. During times of financial hardship for some, your support is, as always, very much appreciated and has gone a considerable way to help local families most in need over the festive period.

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.

At this time of the year, many families may be in the process of booking a holiday for the coming months. I would ask for your support to avoid booking any holiday during term time to minimise the impact upon pupil learning, progress and attainment.

Punctuality
By way of a reminder, please note that 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.

Traffic congestion, road works and mechanical issues with vehicles can all cause unavoidable delays when pupils come to school in the morning. However, despite this, there still remains too many pupils arriving late to school each morning which is impacting upon progress with learning and attainment. As always, your help and support with this would be greatly appreciated.

Health and Wellbeing Padlet – School Website
Our school website now contains a HWB Padlet which will be updated each term. This will allow you to keep up-to-date with all aspects of health and wellbeing at Dumfries High School. In the 'padlet' you will find;

- Information on the HWB (PSE) Programme
- Signposting to contacts for support in Dumfries High School
- Signposting to sources of support for self help
- Details of the Dumfries High School Mental Health First Aid provision
- Photographs and details of pupil participation and achievement in Health and Wellbeing lessons and activities.
- Details of our external partners in curriculum delivery

Please take some time to look through this valuable resource.

S4/5/6 Prelims – January 2026
Prelim exams for senior pupils started earlier this week on Wednesday 7 January and run until Tuesday 20 January 2026. 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 5 June. The Prom committee will be busy during this term finalising arrangements for this event and details will be shared with pupils and parents/carers in due course. Tickets, priced at £47.50 can be purchased from the main school office.

Reclaiming PE Kit
Our PE team have over 200 items of clothing/footwear in the department which have been left behind by pupils over quite some time; some items are of considerable value.

Despite various reminders for pupils to check the clothing/footwear to identify whether any items belong to them, very few have been claimed. If you believe your child may have left behind an item of clothing and/or footwear in the PE facilities at some point and you would like to check for yourself to help reclaim it, please contact Stuart Douglas, PT HE & PE, in the first instance to reclaim this: gw20douglasstuart1@ea.dumgal.sch.uk

Bus Travel To/From School
There has been a growing number of complaints made by members of the public in relation to the behaviour of our pupils when travelling to and from school each day. All of the bus services that our pupils use are also accessed by members of the public and as such, the high standards and expectations that we have of our pupils during the school day, remain exactly the same.

If your child travels to/from school by bus, please discuss with them the need for appropriate and respectful behaviours.

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.

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*

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 – Wednesday 21 January 6pm
The next meeting of the Parent Council will take place on Wednesday 21 January at 6pm in the main school library. If you would like to take part in this meeting, please contact the Parent Council Chair Dr Glidden Chalmers: dumfrieshighschoolpc@gmail.com.

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 2026
Applications open for Dumfries and Galloway College on Monday 26th January. Staff from the college along with the school Careers Adviser and Ms Kilmurry, will be on hand all morning on Monday 26 January to support pupils to complete their application forms. Pupils who wish to make an application for a full-time course will be advised of their appointment time when they should report to the Numeracy Suite. Pupils who currently attend a College Academy Course who are applying for a full-time course will complete their applications in college the week before.

Pupils who are applying to the Barony College (applications already open) for courses starting in August/September 2026 will also be given an appointment and will be supported by the Careers Adviser and Ms Kilmurry to complete their applications.

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 are required to hand their mobile phone to the class teacher before leaving the classroom

S2/3 Careers Event – Friday 27 February 2026
Our annual S2/S3 Careers Event takes place on Friday 27 February between 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. S2 and S3 pupils will be attending the Careers Fair in their register classes across the morning. This is a brilliant opportunity for our pupils to find out more about specific career pathways and speak directly to employers and professionals to find out more about their area of interest and confirm which subjects they should be choosing in planning for their futures.

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 7 January – Tuesday 20 January 2026	S4/5/6 Prelim Exams
Thursday 5 February 2026	S3 Parent/Carer Information Evening – 6pm
Thursday 12 February 2026	S4/5/6 Reports Issued
Friday 13 February – Wednesday 18 February 2026	S4 Option Interviews
Thursday 19 February - Friday 20 February 2026	Pupil Holiday
Monday 23 February 2026	S1/2/3 Tracking Reports Issued
Monday 23 February – Thursday 26 February 2026	S5 Option Interviews
Monday 2 March 2026	S3 Parents' Evening (4pm – 6pm)
Tuesday 3 March – Friday 6 March 2026	S3 Option Interviews
Tuesday 10 March 2026	S2 Parents' Evening (4pm – 6pm)
Wednesday 11 March – Monday 16 March 2026	S2 Option Interviews
Friday 27 March 2026	End of term – Easter Holiday
Monday 13 April 2026	New Term Begins

Best wishes once again for the year ahead.