



# Head Teacher's Update

January 2019

## Dear Parent/Carer

Welcome back. I hope you all had a most enjoyable holiday and that 2019 is a happy and prosperous new year. I am also aware that it is only four weeks until the February break and would remind you that school is closed to pupils on Thursday, 21 February and Friday, 22 February 2019 inclusive. I hope that you enjoy that long weekend and that pupils studying for exams use the time wisely to balance study and rest.

## Staffing

Welcome to Ms Papworth and Ms Little who have joined us as full-time teachers of Additional Support for Learning. We also welcome Mrs Taylor as full-time teacher of Home Economics. We are delighted that they have joined our team.

## Prelims and Exams

We are mid-way through prelims for pupils in S4-S6. Pupils have studied hard for them. S4-S6 results will enable pupils, parents and staff to work together to ensure success in forthcoming SQA exams. As always, we have high hopes for our pupils, but I must also impress the need for structured study routines and that pupils have a variety of after school and lunch time supported study classes on offer. A full timetable is available on our school website.

We will also be delivering workshops to all senior pupils in school on Friday, 1 February 2019. Tree of Knowledge, a commercial company, will be delivering a series of interactive workshops on exam reflection, coping with pressure and preparing for forthcoming SQA exams.

## SQA Exams

SQA processes are difficult to understand and there have been changes to exams over the past few years. This can be confusing to those parents/carers who have children sitting exams for the first time.

In a nutshell:

- Most internal assessment requirements have been removed and more emphasis is being placed on final exams
- Final exams have an increased time allocation
- National 4 qualifications, do not have external exams
- Some Highers have an element of internal assessment (practical performance, speaking, etc), some extended assessments/investigations that may be completed in controlled conditions and sent for marking and a final exam

## Learning and Teaching

Over the last 3 years we have carried out Faculty Reviews across all curricular areas. This means that we observe learning and teaching, speak to pupils, look at results and performance and evaluate how the school is making progress towards its targets. We carried out a recent review of support for learning across the school. There were many strengths and we were impressed by the amount of support provided for pupils, particularly those with additional needs. Targeted group work was seen as very effective and we were also impressed with the climate and relationships in classrooms. We are now focusing on improving differentiation to ensure the needs of all pupils are met, including the most able pupils. It is hoped to carry out a review of our health and wellbeing provision in March.

## Parent Council

The date of the next Parent Council meeting is Thursday, 24 January 2019 at 7.00 pm in room G4 (next to Janitors' office to the right when entering the building). We would be delighted for new members to join us. The Parent Council influences many of our decision making processes in the school including, options for senior pupils, school uniform, communication with home, partnership working, reporting and parents meetings. Members also organise and support fundraising activities. Please come along to our next meeting.

## Weather Conditions

It is that time of year when we may experience poor weather, including snow. Where possible, we aim to keep the school open to staff and pupils. However, the health and safety of our school community is paramount. The weather is unpredictable and it is not always possible to forecast whether we need to close the school in advance of severe weather. Should such a decision need to be taken, it will be a localised decision based on the health and safety of pupils and staff travelling to and accessing the building, maintaining a safe staff to pupil ratio and ensuring that the school is a safe, warm and conducive environment for learning. Should we need to close the school prior to the start of the school day, we would urge parents/carers to take the following steps:

- Ensure that the school has your most up-to-date contact details
- Check the emergency school closure list on the council website at [www.dumgal.gov.uk](http://www.dumgal.gov.uk)
- Check the school website at [www.dumfriesacademy.org](http://www.dumfriesacademy.org)
- Look out for SMS message on your mobile advising of any school closure
- Listen for school closure updates on WestSound Radio
- Telephone the school on 01387 274350 for advice

These steps are listed in order. Please be advised that it can take a while to send SMS messages to all parents/carers if senior staff are unable to get into school or access the service remotely. Please also be aware that phone lines may be engaged if all parents/carers telephone the school before checking online.

Should we require to close the school during the school day, parents/carers will be contacted via SMS in the first instance, then by the other methods above. Information/advice on ensuring your child's safe journey home will be given.

## Communication

This year, we hope to reduce the amount of paper that we send home and we are hoping to move to increased digital communication with home. We realise that a quick and effective way to communicate with parents/carers is via social media platforms. We currently use Facebook, Twitter and our school website. We still intend to send out our termly Focus Newsletter and a monthly update from me; however, we would also like to link these documents to one of our media platforms.

I have included our communication charter in this update and would remind you of our channels of communication and our aims.

I have also included our current School Improvement Plan so that you can see the priorities that we are working on this session.

As always, should you have any questions about any aspect of your child's education, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Yours sincerely

*J Dillon*

Mrs J Dillon  
Rector

## Parent Council Fundraising Lottery Winners November 2018

First Prize DAPC 00119 Sheri Murray  
Second Prize DAPC 00003 Elaine Tipping  
Third Prize DAPC 00005 Rosemary Scott

## December 2018 –

First Prize DAPC 00094 Tammy McColm  
Second Prize DAPC 00102 Eileen Adamson  
Third Prize DAPC 00081 Gillian Brydson

## Forthcoming Event

26/01/2019 – 02/02/2019	Ski Trip
31/01/2019	UKMT Individual Maths Challenge
01/02/2019	Inter-house Competition
06/02/2019	Cross Country event
07/02/2019 – 08/02/2019	P6 Maths Challenge
14/02/2019	P6 Maths Challenge
20/02/2019	S3 Dumfries Retail Project
21/02/2019 – 22/02/2019	Pupil Holiday (Teacher Training - Inset days)
27/02/2019	S3 Parents' Meetings
01/03/2019	Inter-house Competition
05/03/2019	Parent Council meeting
14/03/2019	S1 Hub Parents' Afternoon
20/03/2019	Netball League Final
29/03/2019	Inter-house Competition
05/04/2019	Non-Uniform Day
08/04/2019	Teacher Training (Inset day)
08/04/2019 – 22/04/2019	Spring Holiday



# Dumfries Academy Communication Charter



At Dumfries Academy, our values should underpin the way we communicate with each other to ensure that we achieve the best outcomes for pupils. To this end we believe in the following set of principles for pupils, parents, staff and partners when communicating:

**Respect**

**Ambition**

**Compassion**

**Fairness**

**Responsibility**

**Resilience**

We will speak to each other in a respectful manner using appropriate and plain language

We will not tolerate swearing, shouting, harassment, verbal aggression, threats or offensive language and reserve the right to end any conversations or interactions that proceed in this manner

We will show compassion and understanding when dealing with people who are upset and anxious by listening first before deciding on the best course of action

We will promote ambition in our staff and young people to ensure high standards of written and oral literacy when communicating about progress in learning

**Above all, we will strive to ensure channels of communication are clear, explicit and consistent.**

We will focus our conversations on the best outcome for the individual young person being discussed and ensure that all partners, including the young person, share responsibility for this outcome

We will use social media and mobile devices appropriately to promote the good work of the school and provide clear information for all members of our community

We will respect confidentiality where appropriate and will only share information with third parties in agreement and in line with appropriate policy and procedures

We will respect and adhere to the school's processes for making decisions and accept that these processes are fair, open and honest

We will respond to or raise compliments, comments and complaints in accordance with the school's policy on these matters

We will endeavour to respond to queries within an agreed, reasonable timescale, if any initial queries cannot be dealt with



# 2018 - 2019 School Improvement Plan



## PRIORITY 1

We aim to work together to improve pupils' progress and performance in literacy and numeracy in S1 - S3 and in senior phase qualifications.

### How will we do this?

- Dedicated staff in English and our support team with young people in S1-3 on personalised reading programmes and track their improvements
- We will work with pupils in S4 to ensure they are able to progress their numeracy skills in a meaningful way, such as financial education programmes of study, that prepares them for work and life.

## PRIORITY 2

We aim to work together to support all learners, including the most disadvantaged, to ensure that we raise attainment and remove barriers to successful learning.

### How will we do this?

- We will help pupils in S1 and 2 to evaluate their health and wellbeing, through peer support and pupil voice, and provide them with the support to be better involved in school and their learning
- We will continue to develop our approach to nurturing pupils through our specialist nurture hub and by training more staff to evaluate pupils' wellbeing
- We have employed a dedicated support worker through Aberlour Futures to work with families to ensure better engagement with school, including attendance, achievement and participation.

## PRIORITY 3

We will work together to improve health and wellbeing for all members of our school community, including mental and emotional health and wellbeing.

### How will we do this?

- Pupils in S1-6 will have more opportunities to improve study skills and be better prepared for transitions in school and beyond
- We have trained S6 pupils as Mentors in Violence Prevention to help younger pupils improve relationships with each other
- Our revised Mobile Devices Policy and Communication Policy will help streamline communication and improve learning and relationships
- Our staff have developed individual projects, such as S1 Tracking, School of Netball, Strategies to improve reading, in order to improve their professional learning and to achieve better outcomes for pupils

## PRIORITY 4

We will work together to improve pupils' skills and readiness for work so that they sustain a positive destination on leaving school.

### How will we do this?

- Pupils in S2/3 will have more opportunities to improve their understanding of career pathways through My World of Work and through employability events
- Pupils in S5 will be trained as My World of Work Ambassadors to support younger pupils to shape their career pathways



**Dumfries  
& Galloway**