



Newsletter April 2020

Welcome Back:

Under normal circumstances I would have sent out a newsletter at the start of this term. In it I would have been welcoming our pupils back after the Easter break and encouraging our seniors to prepare for the forthcoming exams.

I do wish to welcome all our pupils back to school even if that has to be done remotely at the moment. I hope the break was as good as it could be under the circumstances.

Clearly these are not normal circumstances. I have delayed this newsletter until now to give us all a chance to settle in to the working of a virtual school. This is a developing process which will continue to evolve in the weeks ahead as we find out what works well for staff and pupils and adapt to work around any problems.

Our teaching staff have been working hard to make sure that there is sufficient work available for all pupils.

In the Primary schools seesaw and google meetings are working very well to ensure that pupils are keeping in touch with their teachers and the feedback on this so far has been very positive.

In the High School we would expect in any other year to start our new timetable at the end of the SQA exams. Since there are no exams this year and therefore no study leave we have taken the decision to move our year groups on to the next stage. This in effect means that any leavers have now completed their courses and all returning S3 -5 pupils move on to the new courses they have chosen for next session. I have attached a complete list of courses and pupils in those classes to this newsletter.

We will arrange a proper farewell for our leavers as soon as it is possible to do so. The leaver's hoodies have arrived and are in school, they will be sent out as soon as we are allowed back in the building and we have decided this year to gift these to the leavers as a way of compensating for the lack of a proper end of term celebration.

Engagement with the new courses and classes across the High School has been good and is improving daily with almost all pupils now accessing the work provided. I would urge parents to encourage pupils to check their emails and google classrooms daily and we have also now developed a google registration class which we would like pupils to register with every day. Where google meetings and regular class contact is appropriate a timetable will be produced to alert parents and

pupils to these regular meetings. This is not appropriate for all subjects, not all staff have internet access which is sufficient and not all subjects require a face to face delivery. When that timetable is fully developed I will share it with parents.

I am also very conscious of the pressure remote schooling can place on families. Competition for internet use, shared devices and the lack of a normal routine will be difficult. We do not wish school and school work to become an argument or a source of conflict in families and we do not expect parents to be teachers. You all have other things which need to be done in the course of a day. Please do what you can to encourage engagement with the classes but do not allow it to become a fight. Teachers are not working to a timetable at the moment and pupils will also have much more flexibility about when they work. For some it works well to follow a routine, for others it is necessary and desirable to work when other matters have been dealt with and when internet access is easier. When we return to whatever normal is we will pick up on any work missed and make sure that courses are covered.

Staffing:

At present Highland Council have frozen all recruitment so no final decisions have been made on staffing for next year. In Kinlochbervie Primary I am very keen to keep Mrs Davidson and Ms Forrest next year and will do everything I can to make that happen. In Scourie Primary Mrs Davis will go on maternity leave in July and her classes will be covered by existing staff.

In Kinlochbervie High School, Ms Watkins has postponed her career break so will be with us in August. Ms Majanen will leave us and we will arrange a suitable farewell as and when we can but we thank her for all her hard work over the last few years. Senor Alzolar still plans to leave us as well and as soon as we are allowed to we will advertise for a replacement Spanish teacher.

Parent Contact:

I am very aware that at least some of my normal day is spent answering questions from parents and that it is not possible to operate the "open door" policy I would like. With that in mind if parents wish to contact me I can be emailed on graeme.smart@highland.gov.uk and contacted by phone during school hours on 07815 297565 and I will be happy to answer any questions or deal with any concerns you may have.

SQA

There will be no exams this year and no further assessment of any courses at any level. We are being asked to provide estimated grades for all our pupils. This is a process we go through every year but obviously this year it is significantly different. Our estimates will be submitted on the basis of demonstrated and inferred attainment. In simple terms this means that we are being asked to predict grades as if the pupils had gone through the whole course and sat the final assessment. We have a considerable amount of evidence from coursework and prelims and all our staff know our pupils well and what they are capable of. We will submit those estimates to SQA who will then analyse all the data across the country and arrive at a final grade. These grades and certificates will be delivered on 4th August as planned and the SQA are asking anyone who has not already done so to sign up to "mysqa" to get results by text or email.

Competition

Attached to this newsletter is a poster advertising an outdoor art competition organised by Mrs Jarvis. Get creating, there are prizes!

End of term and Prizegiving

It looks extremely unlikely that we will be back to any kind of normal school attendance before the holidays and as a result all end of term celebrations and prizegiving ceremonies will be cancelled. We will still award prizes where that is possible and it may be possible to have some form of ceremony when we return but details will be published when that becomes clearer.

I can announce that Tom Flannery will be the recipient of this year's Garvault bursary which is presented by the Woods family in Merkland every year. Tom will receive a cheque for £5000.

Thanks

I would like to add my thanks to all our staff across all schools for the incredible amount of work they have done and the way in which they have responded to this extremely new and different way of working. Our pupils have also stepped up in these strange times and are engaging with classes and producing some remarkable work under the circumstances. I also wish to thank all the parents and families for the support for our young people in continuing their education. Many thanks.

I hope you are all well and I sincerely hope to see you all as soon as possible.

Graeme Smart

Head Teacher.