



Dingwall Academy *News*

Another Puffer Performance



Another tremendous effort from our School team at the Strathpuffer 24 hour endurance event.

The team had to endure some very muddy conditions but an incredible team effort saw them to 2nd place in the school category. Dingwall Academy has achieved a podium place in the school event since it was introduced and are recognised and respected as one of the strongest teams in the competition.

Full report inside ...

DIARY DATES 2020

Friday 14th February -
S5 and S6 reports issued.
S6 option forms issued.

**Monday 17th & Tuesday
18th Feb—** Holiday

Wednesday 19th Feb—
In Service day; school
closed to pupils

Thursday 20th Feb—
Senior Phase exam
information evening

Tuesday 25th Feb—
Concert Strathpeffer
Pavilion 7pm

Wednesday 26th February
North Schools Cross
Country

Thursday 27th February—
S1 Contact Evening

Friday 20th March -
Eco Fair

Friday 27th March—
School closes for Easter
and re-opens Tuesday 14th
April

School news

So far we have not had to deal with too much severe weather and enjoyed a very mild January. However the recent storms are a reminder that winter is far from over, so please keep the severe weather information close at hand.

Adverse weather phone line:

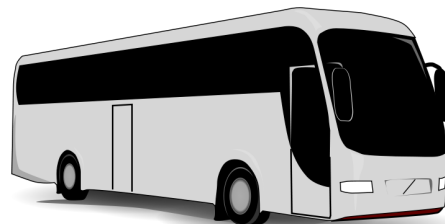
0800 564 2272

Pin number: 04 1010



Parents and pupils regularly check the D & E Facebook page for updates during adverse weather. Stagecoach will provide similar information on the link below:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/564119030722107/>



Chromebooks

A reminder that chrome books are now an essential piece of school equipment. Pupils are reminded that it is their responsibility to bring a fully charged chromebook to school every day.

Without chromebooks pupils may not be able to access and complete all their school work.

Parents are also reminded that they should be able to view their child's Google Calendar and in S1 and S2, their e-portfolio.

Parents can also arrange to receive a weekly summary of all work posted on Google Classroom. If you are not receiving updates please ask your child to check that your email details are included on the PSE or House Tutor classroom.



Staff News

Mr MacIntosh will be absent for much of this term following a knee operation. We all wish him well and hope that he is back up on his feet soon.

In Mr MacIntosh's absence year group responsibility will be covered as follows:

S3 Mrs Cormack

S4 Ms Harrison

Guidance teachers remain the first point of call for any pastoral issues.

Brahan Miss Alexander

Novar Miss Tullis

Tulloch Mrs Watson

Wyvis Mr Trimble



ATTENDANCE SUPPORT OFFICER

At the start of this term, all parents should have received an email outlining the recent appointment of our Attendance Support Officer, Mrs J MacDonald.

Mrs MacDonald will be working to support pupils, staff and parents and to ensure that attendance is as good as is possibly can be.

We know that absence is sometimes unavoidable and pupils must not worry about being off when they are unwell. However, we also know that there are some areas where attendance can improve and this will be the focus of this initiative. If parents have any questions or concerns about attendance then please do not hesitate to contact the school.



EXAM PREPARATION

The prelim exams have now finished and we hope that pupils are pleased with their results.

Pupils will soon be asked to reflect on their prelim results and to set targets for their final SQA exams.

It is tempting to relax following the prelims, however the final SQA exams start in May—only 8 school weeks away. There are now less than 40 school days until the start of the SQA exams. Pupils need to make use of all the time available and should now have an established study routine.



To help pupils and parents prepare for the exams there will be an information evening at **7pm on Thursday 20th February**. This evening will look at final arrangements for the SQA exams and will also give some support and advice on revision techniques.

Pupils are encouraged to attend this information evening along with their parents, it is important that pupils and parents have a shared understanding of what is required in the lead up to exams. However parents are also welcome to attend on their own.

Parents with pupils in S4, S5 and S6 are welcome to attend.

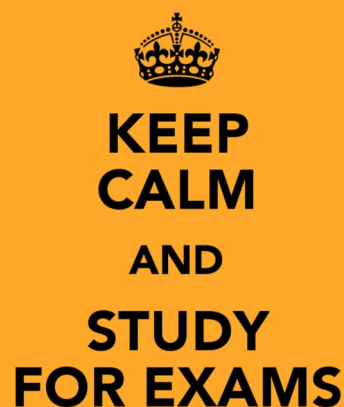
During this term senior pupils will be very focused on preparing for final exams. In the majority of subjects pupils also have coursework to complete in school. This can take the form of a folio, an investigation or a practical assessment.

Attendance in school is so important if pupils are going to complete all this work. It can be an anxious time, however this anxiety can be reduced through careful planning and hard work. Leaving things too late can lead to significant anxiety and stress.

The final exam timetable is already available on the SQA website.

https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/ExamTimetable2020.pdf

Please be aware that the exact timing of exams can change by up to 30 minutes, all pupils will receive a personal exam timetable.



Option Choices

This term pupils in S2, S3, S4 and S5 are all involved with making important option choices for next session.

The timeline for reporting and option forms is as follows:

S2 into S3

Options forms and reports issued Thursday 30th January

Option forms to be completed by Thursday 6th February

S3 into S4

Option forms and reports issued Monday 24th February

Option forms to be completed by Friday 6th March

S4 into S5

Option forms and reports issued Wednesday 11th March

Options forms to be completed by Wednesday 18th March

S5 into S6

Option forms and reports issued Friday 14th February

Option forms to be completed by Wednesday 26th February



Pupils will be given further information during assemblies and PSE. Information on all courses available via the school website.

http://www.dingwallacademy.com/senior_phase_options_help.html

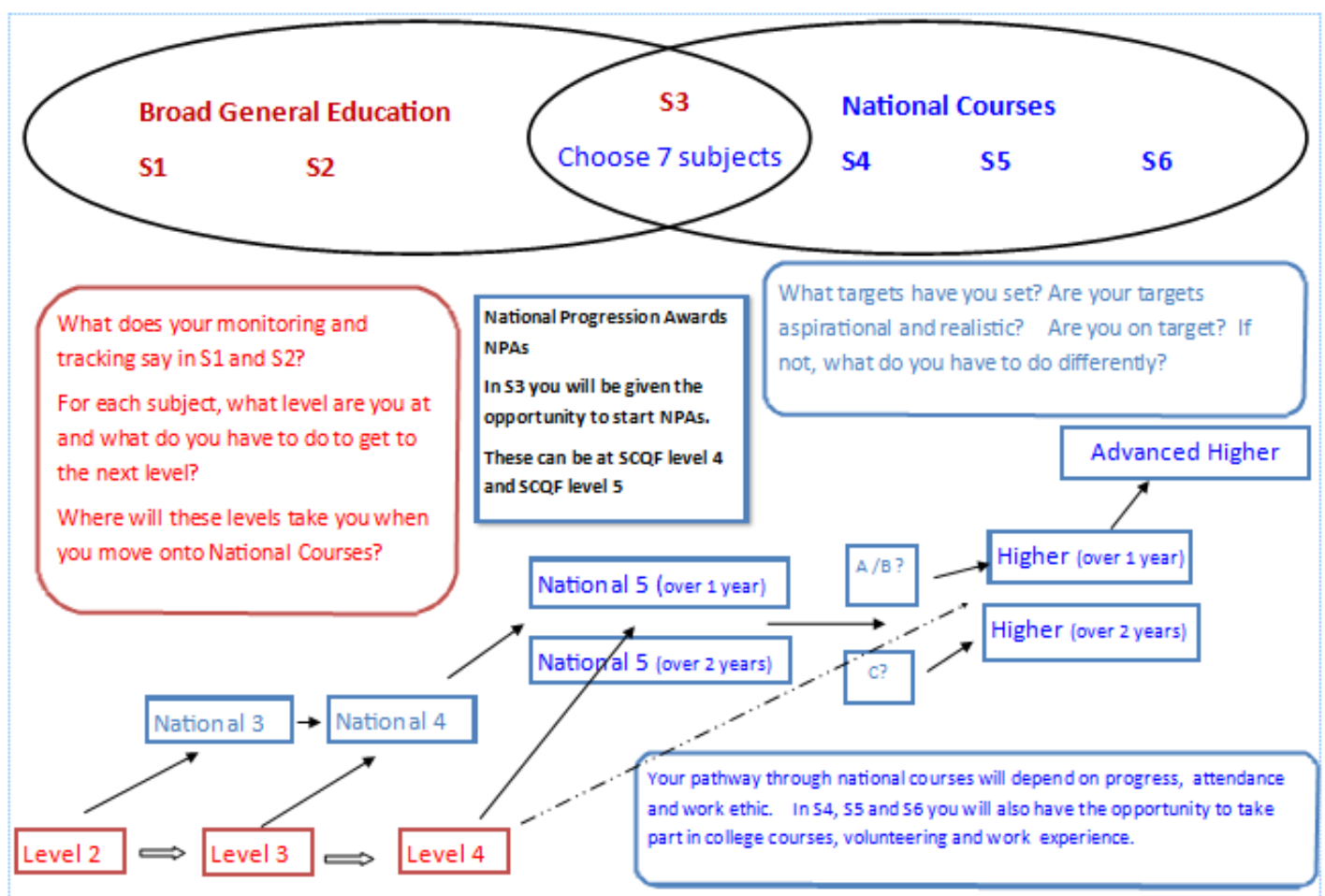
Monitoring and Tracking

A reminder that the progress of pupils in S1—S3 can be viewed through their e-portfolio or through sheets on Google Drive. This allows pupils and parents to see the level pupils are working at in each subject. Monitoring and Tracking is updated at various points throughout the year; all pupils still receive one report in addition to the tracking information.

This tracking information is used to help support any pupils at risk of underachieving and also to ensure that all pupils are being challenged in their learning.

Our curriculum structure has recently changed and from 2020 S2 pupils will be choosing 7 subjects to take into S3.

The diagram below is used to show pupils how they can progress through the levels in S1, S2 and S3 and then how this links onto National Courses.



Volunteering

Congratulations to Eilidh Will who volunteered with the Moray Firth Cash for Kids initiative over the festive period. Eilidh was interviewed about her involvement for the Breakfast Show just prior to Christmas.

This is a great example of how volunteering for a charity benefits all involved. Well done Eilidh!



At the start of this year we appointed Achievement Ambassadors. The role of the Achievement Ambassador is to help direct pupils into volunteering opportunities. Where pupils are already involved in volunteering, the Achievement Ambassadors can direct them towards awards where they can receive recognition and accreditation for their volunteering.

Our Achievement Ambassadors are S6 pupils Ashleigh Stirling and Lily Fraser. Please approach either of them if you think that you would be eligible for an award. There is a drop in session every Wednesday lunchtime in the ODL.

<https://saltireawards.org.uk/>



Fresh Start Literacy



The S1 Fresh Start group recently held their first mini International Food Festival, linking in with our literacy module “Cook—and enjoy!”

Pupils brought food from a variety of countries, including Scotland, England, Syria and Canada. We tasted everything from Cornish pasties to kibbeh, cranachan to butter tarts.

Abdul’s Rghif Mait Franji was a huge hit, as were the Canadian peanut butter and jam sandwiches. We even had haggis pizza, washed down with the iconic Scottish Irn Bru!

We had discussions around ingredients, cultures, the importance of food and traditions, and how many different ways you can make and eat pancakes.

One thing’s clear: the Fresh Start pupils love their food!



ECO FAIR

SAVE THE DATE!!

Friday 20th March 2020

2pm— 5pm



For the last few years we have organised and held a very successful Spring Fair. The full Spring Fair will return, however, this year we are doing something slightly different ...

All teenagers are now much more aware of the environmental impact of their activities. However social media means that it is sometimes easy to be a virtual activist rather than brining about real change.

So ... all S2 pupils are being challenged to create our first ever Eco Fair! Each S2 class is being asked to organise and run a stall at the event, however there are certain environmental criteria that pupils must adhere to.

There should be zero waste—pupils must consider their product, their advertising, their packaging etc. If pupils are selling food products then they must be locally sourced.

To help, each class has been appointed an 'Eco Mentor' from our local community. These mentors are there to help provide advice and support and to act as an environmental conscience.

For a couple of years we hosted the Food Assembly at Dingwall Academy. This provided an online platform for local producers to sell their goods. Over the last year this has developed into The Dingwall Academy Market where we host an in-school food market. There have already been markets in September and December. The Dingwall Academy Market will be part of our Eco Fair with a number of local producers selling their delicious produce.

Please come along and support our pupils and the Food Market. The pupil stalls will run from 2—4pm with the Food Market continuing until 5pm.

Look forward to seeing you there!



Asdan Enterprise Project

The senior ASDAN class worked together with Mrs Downie to complete an enterprise challenge before Christmas and managed to raise £46 for the Puffin Pool charity here in Dingwall.

One class member uses the pool themselves and other class members know people who also use the facility which helped us to decide which local charity we wanted to raise money for. We received a lovely letter of thanks from the Chairwoman of the board.

We spent November and December hand crafting Christmas cards which were sold within the school. Cards which we didn't manage to sell within the school have been donated to the Puffin Pool shop and they will be brought out again in the run up to Christmas 2020.



The Asdan Class are now collecting materials to build Eco Bricks.

They also have a number of other money making ventures—watch out for them at the Eco Fair in March!



<https://www.asdan.org.uk/>

GEOGRAPHY FIELDWORK

S1 Geographers have been learning about the weather. The class was able to get outside and measure the wind speed with an anemometer, record temperatures and look at wind direction with a wind vane. The school flags helped to gauge the wind speed and practice using the Beaufort Scale to estimate the force of the wind.



Our S3 Geographers were also out and about in Dingwall last week carrying out a traffic and an environmental survey. They learnt how to gather and record data and make objective judgments about the environmental quality of the local area. Valuable team work skills and observation skills were also gained as well as learning how to process and present the data they gathered.



Travel and Tourism

The travel and Tourism class concluded their final employability assessment by holding a Dorset scone and tea morning.

Pupils were responsible for buying in the products and setting up a tearoom in the classroom. This was a highly successful event with both pupils and staff enjoying the occasion.



A number of our Senior Pupils have become very involved with the charity RASASH. The groups initial involvement was through the YPI initiative a couple of years ago. The group continued their involvement and have become very powerful advocates for the charity. The girls' contribution to the charity is recognised in the letter below, sent by one of the charity workers -

"I would like to say what a pleasure and inspiration it has been working with the Stand Up! girls since the YPI competition in June 2018. I worked closely with Kirsty Arnaud, Elsa Fearn, Melvine Lynch, Jade Allan and Anna Bayne on various projects and can only say they are a credit to the school and their communities. The latest piece of work they got involved in was with Plan UK which led to their voices and photos being included in the final piece of research produced by the charity, and also in a Guardian article!"

You can see the report here: <https://plan-uk.org/file/plan-uk-state-of-girls-rights-report-2020pdf/download?token=42bpRbf8> and the news article here: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2020/jan/19/what-young-women-think-in-2020>.

Such has been the impact of the girls' work that they appeared in the Guardian Newspaper!..



The impact and power of Dingwall Academy girls was also recognised in a short film made and shared by The Adventure Syndicate.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6U40R2CAIA>

We are incredibly proud of these girls, they are fantastic role models for all teenagers.



RASASH

This year was Dingwall Academy's 6th time competing at the Strathpuffer 24 hour mountain bike race in the school team category. Heavy rain on the Friday night ensured that the 15th running of the event was going to be a muddy one.

The team of eight from the school had a nice mixture of experienced riders who had completed the event previously and new riders who had heard all of the tales and faced the day with excitement – and a little apprehension.



The riders were: Callum Porter, Andrew Georgeson, Stefen Matheson, Alexander Taylor, Alexander Brown, Nathanael McCully, Finlay Walker and Jakub Krystkowiak.

Pupils give accounts of their Puffer Experiences ...

"When an opportunity like this comes up you wouldn't dare to step back from the challenge. It was my first time taking part in Strathpuffer 24. I had ridden the course numerous times when practising. When cycling the track it had only been in broad daylight and not such muddy conditions. As the race drew nearer I began to realise how much responsibility I had undertaken as being part of the school team.

As I arrived on early Saturday morning I saw how really competitive this race was. I saw many hundreds of individuals daring to take on this gruelling 8 miles of track, trail and mud over the 24 hour period. The race started at 10am my first lap was at 3pm. I waited with other members of the team at the changeover line and the anticipation was killing me on what to expect out on the course. Once out on the course it was hard going but thrilling! The hardest parts were the climbs and the best part was the last leg which was downhill and cross country. In between the laps I rested, ate, and walked around the site meeting people and getting freebies.

As the race drew to a close there was a sense of relief as well as a sense of achievement. I was pleased that I had accomplished one of the UK's best mountain bike races. I would love to be part of the team next year."

Alexander Brown

Strathpuffer



"As always the weeks leading into the puffer led us to believe that maybe once the weather would be nice to us. But in true puffer fashion, just a few days before the race it began to pour with rain and the wind began to pick up. I came into the weekend knowing that it was going to be incredibly muddy and that our main challenge would be keeping everyone dry and keeping all of their kit and bikes clean. As I set off on the first lap after the running start to find myself surrounded by hundreds of other riders all trying to overtake each other before we arrive at the first bottleneck. I came back from this lap buzzing with excitement as I could tell it was going to be a good race from that point on. Throughout the morning and into the afternoon the team was running like clockwork and everything was going smoothly. As the darkness approached most of the team had done a lap and it was almost time for me to head out again, the spirits remained high even though everyone was soaked to the bone as the track had deteriorated and the bogs had begun to form. Into the night we were constantly battling for second place with Fortrose and we were eager to get a lead on them again. Soon enough things had settled down and everyone was beginning to fall asleep. The track got icy and it was pretty cold but the team managed to get through the night with a few mechanicals but Andrew had a big crash that put him out for the last part of the race. As the sun rose we were on our final laps and we were getting anxious to see if we would overtake Fortrose again, on our second to last lap Nathanael had done an amazing job to keep things close. When I was setting out on this lap the dull ache in my legs seemed to fade away and I could concentrate on the riding. I had managed to overtake Fortrose at the top of the hill and I just had to finish the lap before the cut off time now, as I came into the finish area and handed in the dibber everybody was ecstatic."

Callum Porter

As you will have read in Callum's account, after a very close race we managed to overhaul Fortrose to take second spot behind a strong team from Invergordon. Massive team effort with every rider playing an important part. Special mention to Andrew Georgeson who managed to post our fastest team lap – 46 minutes – despite crashing on ice, halfway round the lap. He ignored the pain and completed the lap, but on inspection the injuries that he sustained removed him from any further racing on advice of the event medics. #toughcookie



Strathpuffer



"The Strathpuffer 2020 was my fourth time doing the Puffer and just like the other years, it was a completely unique experience. I was racing it solo but I had so much support from a number of people. My family helped me to actually complete the event but there were different people throughout the event who chatted to me and really helped boost my motivation levels especially through the night including Mr Graham, Mrs Wilson, Jenny Graham and many others whose motivation I really appreciated.

Conditions this year were incredibly difficult, in previous years it had been snowy and easy to ride on but this year there was thick mud which I would compare to cycling through a bog. Each year has its own different challenges and this year for me it was trying to find the motivation to get out and keep on doing laps even when my legs were in agony.

I found this year the toughest yet, both mentally and physically, but at the end it was all worth it. I was really pleased to reach my target of getting into double figures for my number of laps and it was great to see how well the school team and other people racing in other teams did.

Bring on the 'Puffer 2021!"

Rowan Masterson



Other pupils from the school were also in action across a range of other categories, all supported by some very committed parents and clubs. These included; Rowan Masterson (11 laps Solo), Lilly-Belle Kelt (11 laps Solo), Victor Atkinson (10 laps Solo) Murray Mackenzie (7 laps Pairs) and Bethany McCully (4th in Mixed Quad). Also ex pupils Sean Kelt and Callum Russell competed in – and won – a fiercely fought Quad category.

As ever, participation at an event like this is impossible without the support of the organisers, school staff, parents, local clubs (Our link club BWCC in particular) and also our long standing community partners:

Frank Nicol Farm and Garden Machinery who always provide the best generator on site, to keep us going through the 17 hours of darkness.

George Cockburn and Son who keep the riders and pit crew fuelled throughout the event with enough bacon and haggis to feed a small army.

And finally **Tesco** who provide the tea, coffee and hot chocolate to keep the brews flowing throughout the night, as well as the more calorific biscuits and bars too.

Many many thanks to you all. Your support enables us to give the pupils experiences that challenge and develop their resilience.

Lucky2bHere Charity



All S3 pupils were given the opportunity to take part in emergency life support training with the Lucky2bHere charity.

This Highland based charity have done tremendous work and are responsible for defibrillator devices being placed across Highland communities.

Their work also involves engaging with schools and making sure that our young people have the skills to help save a life.

Thank you to the charity and well done to all pupils involved.



Music

Catriona Magee 3W2 plays French Horn in Highland Future Brass under the baton of Mark Bell, and took part in the Scottish Youth Brass Band championships in Perth on the 24th of November receiving a bronze award.

She also performed for the first time in Acclaim (an adult choir based in Inverness which draws people from churches all over the inner Moray Firth).

Sport

Beaully Shinty Club U14s were crowned North Division One Champions after a play-off final win against Kinlochshiel. They ran out 4-1 winners with all goals scored by Dingwall Academy boys (Scott Cameron (2), Marcus MacRae and Finlay MacLennan).

Dingwall Academy pupils in the team were: Finlay MacLennan, Callum MacIver, Scott Cameron, Marcus MacRae, Ian MacLachlan and Euan More.



STRATHPEFFER CONCERT

On Tuesday 25th February, we will welcome and host visitors from an International school in Kuala Lumpur.

The school are visiting Scotland and taking part in a number of concerts during their tour. Pupils and staff from Dingwall Academy will join them at Strathpeffer on the evening of the 25th for a night that will be one to remember!

We would be delighted to welcome all friends and family to the event. Entry is by donation at the door.



Watch out for the next issue of the *News...*

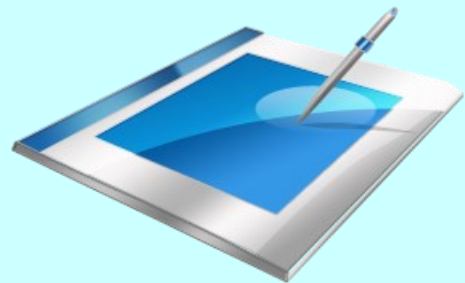
Something missing? Correction? Is there a feature you'd like to see? Get in touch!

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Dingwall Academy

A school with a sense of community—a school where by taking collective responsibility, pupils and staff have the opportunity to achieve extraordinary things.

RESPECT

RESPONSIBILITY

HONESTY

DETERMINATION