

NEWSLETTER

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Parental Newsletter - August 2007

A new session is now well underway with the new S1 having settled in particularly well. This is the biggest S1 intake for some years and they have done very well during their first week.

SQA Examination Performance

I am delighted to be able to tell you that our pupils performed very well in this year's diet of SQA examinations. At Higher level, 23 pupils were successful in gaining 5 Highers and this represents a percentage of 12%, which is higher than the national average. The percentage of pupils passing 3 Highers has also increased this year and the number of pupils gaining 5 or more Credit Awards in S4 has risen by 5 points during the course of this session. My congratulations go to all pupils and staff for their hard work and to the parents for their continued support in this area.

Post-Inspection Plan and Development Priorities

As you will be aware, the school was inspected during the course of last session. There were two main points for action outlined by the Inspectorate and we now have to take steps to address these action points. These

have been identified as development priorities for action and these priorities along with targets, criteria for success and implementation strategies and time scales are also included with this mailing. I have also included a priority relating to Curricular Transition and a fourth one in which we will co-operate with our associated school group in engaging and developing the Curriculum for Excellence for all Dingwall Associated school group staff. In due course, these development priorities will be posted on the website.

School Uniform

I am very much indebted to all parents and guardians for supporting our school uniform policy, and the percentage of pupils wearing school uniform is very high indeed. We will continue to work with parents to try and make sure that this figure becomes 100%.

Data Capture Form

You will soon receive a form entitled School Data Capture Form. This allows us to update all of our information relating to pupils in our charge. As you can imagine, contact details are extremely important to us and in particular we would appreciate notification of an emergency contact number outwith parental contacts. It is particularly important to us that before we can organise medical attention for youngsters, we are able to speak to a responsible person connected to the child. It is also very useful for us to have pupil mobile phone numbers in the interests of health and safety. Emergency contact addresses and numbers are also required in the event of the school having to close for any reason.

Photographer

The school photographer will be in Dingwall Academy on Wednesday 29th August. Family group photographs will be also be possible at this time but parents and guardians are asked to notify the school in advance if they wish to take advantage of this facility.

Holidays/In Service days

I know that all pupils, parents and guardians are interested in knowing the holidays and regional In Service training days and these are now included with this newsletter. In addition to this you will find inserted with this mailing a credit card type information document which I hope you will find handy for wallets and purses. As well as giving key school term and holiday dates, this card gives the contact number and address for the school as well as our website address. I hope that you find this card useful and you use the website to become more familiar with all our news and policies.

New School Build

The building work on the new school site is very near to completion and much of the internal work has already begun. The construction programme is running on time and we remain hopeful that the school will be handed to us as agreed on May 12th 2008. That date is in the middle of the SQA examinations and it would obviously be unwise to start the moving process at that stage. It is likely that we will begin the move to the new school on the week beginning June 2nd 2008 with full occupation beginning with the new timetable on June 9th 2008. In agreement with the Education, Culture and Sport authority, it is probable that pupils will be given some extra days holiday to allow us to progress the movement between the two schools. At the moment, it is likely that pupils will be excused attendance on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday 2nd, 3rd and 4th of June with an induction process being held for all pupils on Thursday and Friday, 5th and 6th June. As you might imagine, the planning for all of this is in the provisional stages and these dates may well change as the session progresses. I very much

hope that there will also be opportunities for parents and friends of the school to be able to have tours of both the new school and indeed the old one before the demolition process begins. It is also intended to produce a number of mementoes for public sale and to have some social functions in the present Dingwall Academy.

NABs

Parents of pupils in S5 and S6 and those with pupils sitting Intermediate exams in S3 and S4 are reminded of the importance of Unit Assessments – often referred to as Nabs. Pupils must pass all Unit tests in order to gain an overall course award. Further information on Nabs is available on the Policies section of our website.

Mobile phones and Internet usage

We regularly hold special assemblies with the help of the police for S1 to S4 pupils regarding the inappropriate use of mobile phones. A small number of parents have been informed that their child has used a mobile phone inappropriately, either by sending offensive or bullying text messages to others. We have also had a few instances of obscene images and video material either homemade or downloaded from the internet. I encourage you to reinforce the message about these practices and suggest

that you discuss this and seek to monitor your child's mobile phone usage at regular intervals in case of any such activity. There are also a number of websites which are very popular with the youngsters, which regularly display what could be construed as disturbing or offensive images. These include sites like Bebo, MySpace, YouTube, LiveJournal and RateMyTeachers. A very few pupils have posted offensive material on these sites using obscenities against other pupils, and occasionally, teachers. All schools are listed on Bebo, without our permission and 'Accounts' for any school can be opened by supplying basic details such as a name and email address which are often fictitious. We seek to monitor such sites on a regular basis and we will take strong action against any offenders. I would very much like to ask for your co-operation on this issue.

Sponsored Walk

The first major event of the new session sees our now traditional school sponsored walk take place on Thursday October 4th 2007. This is a very important event in the school year as it raises much needed funds for out of school activities and initiatives. Please encourage your youngsters to try and raise as much as possible and to enjoy their day. Any adult willing to help with supervision duties on the day is invited to contact the Rector or Mr MacIntosh, Head of PE, Health and Nutrition.