



Guidance Faculty Newsletter

Date – December 2007

AJG

At an end of an October morning meeting, the school staff were reminded that November is the only month of the year when teachers and pupils are in each others' company every Monday to Friday without a break. It is the long month in school calendars and the month when so much make or break teaching is carried out particularly for the older certificate classes. In addition, for most teachers, late October onwards means the main report writing season. Our subject reports are truly formative and their detailed compilation is indeed a time consuming operation. We continue to trust that parents can play their part in encouraging pupils to address areas of concern raised, in advance of the relevant 'At Home'. 'At Home' evenings are deliberately kept separate from reports and such occasions when staff and parents get together should be much more than a simple re-reading of the reports. In the interim period, between receiving reports and attending 'At Homes', parents are encouraged to use response slips to contact the school if they want to, and a few have already used this channel to have dialogue with subject teachers. This term there have been 2 sets of 'At Home' evenings. The S4 'At Home' was well attended and in many instances no holds barred messages were delivered as to what exactly S4 pupils had to do in advance of their January prelims. The Senior Prep appointment 'At Home' took place over 2 evenings – a long (but successful) haul for June Rynn and Kathryn Hopkin. The Senior Prep specialist staff 'At Home' was held on the following day from 4-6pm. This was poorly attended, and a demands a rethink for next year.

For S6 (and a few S5) pupils, UCAS report writing is now all but complete for this session. The internet based 'Apply' System that we use makes the completion of this lengthy operation much easier with staff and pupils able to enter so much data from home. As is always the case, one or two pupils, have left it very late. Please note that the UCAS deadline for submission is the 15th January; they simply must be ready by then. A growing number of the early applicants are already in receipt of their offers, both conditional and unconditional, and they know exactly where they stand with respect to their academic goals this session. It was pleasing to see James Latter's Cambridge application bear fruit with an interview and we wish him well as he chases a coveted place at Clare College.

S5 pupils are in the midst of what should be the most stressful year of their schooling. To help them through this, the weekly PSE period again welcomed motivational speaker Kerr Nichol to assist with 'Goal Setting' and equally important 'Making it Happen'. Academic targets have now been set, as far as possible tailored to future action plans which all of S5 were invited to complete. This exercise utilised data from the progressive snapshots supplied by Profile attainment scores. These personal targets will be reviewed after the February

prelims. Remember that the main aim of S5 must be to secure the academic passes required to give future aspirations the possibility of becoming reality. It is a tough year, and a year that we are happy to offer support to all of S5 to help see them through.

The important Subject Choice Pilot Surveys have taken place with S2, S4 and S5. These, completed by pupils after a short presentation, greatly dictate the Subject Option Blocks to be issued in the Subject Choice Booklets which will be given to pupils next term. A phenomenal amount of time and research goes into the compilation of these blocks, in a genuine attempt to allow pupils their favoured (and sensible) subject choices. Please note that despite random pupil stories, the blocks are not finalised – work remains in progress, although there will come a time towards the end of term 2 when the timetabling is fixed. In the meantime, questions are being continually asked of pupils regarding their likely options for next session. On the same theme, It was good to see so many parents of S2 pupils attend the annual Subject Choice Information Evening in the Theatre in late November. To all of you who did, thank you for coming. As I indicated, parents remain the most important factor in determining pupils' subject choices and it is good to have the opportunity to make parental input more informed.

The PSE programme continues as part of the weekly routine. Senior Prep have continued with their teaching block on Road Safety and now look forward to 'enterprising' this topic in January. S1 similarly completed their short courses on both bullying and career education, and have enjoyed a police presentation on drug awareness. S2 have been focussing on subject choice (including the CareerMatch programme) and on aspects of smoking. S3's course on 'sexuality and relationships' has been completed, and S4 have been tackling career education, health studies and aspects of sex education. We again welcomed input here from our friends of the Positive Steps organisation. The sizeable task of organising Work Experience for S4 is virtually complete for the week 21st – 25th January. Full details of all the placements and arrangements will follow. Note that S3 will participate in their annual Industry/Enterprise Education Day in school on 22nd January. House Staff interviewed all of S1 on routine matters; no major issues relating to school life, either social or academic based emerged. S1 come across as a very good year group with most having an excellent work ethic. The House Staff are presently interviewing all of S2 as they listen to their current thoughts about their imminent subject choices.

Two Profiles have been actioned since mid-term. Most

noticeable is the turnaround that rather a lot of S4 pupils have managed to achieve. Specifically targeting individuals thrown up by the September Profile seems to be paying dividends at present. The information provided on each pupil continues to be thoroughly examined and acted upon by various groups in school, from The Rector and the Director of Studies, through Form Teachers and House Staff and of course Learning Support, who rigorously examine how their case load are performing and reschedule themselves accordingly. Profiles remain an integral part of school life and the data obtained from the constantly updated snapshot pictures provided can make a difference to so many pupils. Note that a Music Instrumental Profile was run with Profile 3 feeding back information to parents from specialist music staff on how their kids are performing. As always, note that most Profiles are delivered by pupil mail. Only if a '4' is recorded do we use the post to ensure that parents are kept up to date with what is going on at the sharp end in school.

At the end of the term, and following a fairly intense period of Internal Assessment NABs, Higher Still Tracking 2 was actioned for S5/6 pupils. If you have heard nothing, it is safe to assume that your son/daughter is currently on course for the successful completion of the Internal Award. If a NAB has been failed, note that resit opportunities are limited, and there is indeed pressure to pass next term if the External Examination is going to be taken in the summer.

The Preparation for Life Course for S6 has continued, coordinated by Karis Leckie. A recent interactive presentation by MSP, Bill Kidd was very well received, generating plenty for the S6 students to think about. 7 pupils followed up the ISCO interview skills session in October with a full personal mock interview for their university place. David Setchell of ISCO gave very meaningful feedback to the interviewees and we wish them well when they encounter the 'real thing'. For most of S6, the focus this term has very much been 'Kenya' and they have taken the project to real heights at every opportunity. The traditional non-uniform Children in Need Day, a Staff Bleep Test the sponging of the School Captains and a packed Theatre at a KA Talent show (fronted by Lloyd Morton and Allen Mackenzie, and won by Spencer McMillan) were the high profile events, but a lot of other fund raisers have been taking place. The ambitious target of £4,778 to support the Kelvin Craft initiative is getting ever closer, and S6 must take a lot of credit for this. I'm not sure if the 4 House Captains, Matthew, Ronan, Marc and Michael knew what they were letting themselves in for when they launched the initiative at their own House assemblies at the end of October. More on the impact of the Kenya initiative will be reported at greater length elsewhere. It was also pleasing to see activity from Student Councils once again. S6 pupils chaired various meetings, forwarded views to the Rector who in turn responded to the points made at various assemblies. Term ended for what has to date been another really good S6 with a 'Christmas Pie and Mulled Wine Gathering' in the Library.

Learning Support have now completed the onerous task of organising evidence for the assistance that their pupils require for their SQA assessments this session. It is important to note that evidence for exam room dispensation

is required on an individual subject basis, and that application by the school to SQA does not automatically mean that a pupil gets extra time, reading, scribing or whatever. Forms have already been issued to parents via pupils; these should by now have been returned to LS. This is a sizeable task, which has had to be carried out in amongst their normal LS caseload work which tends to hit a peak with a high demand on reading and scribing for the November / December NABs. Extra-curricular support for all pupils remains available for all pupils. Please remember that it is very much the responsibility of the pupil to attend these extra sessions. Barbara, Rachel and Gill spend a lot of time with pupils who undoubtedly benefit from out of timetable support; it can be very frustrating for them however, when pupils choose not to turn up. Our annual plea for assistance... we would appreciate it if any parent who was willing to read and scribe either for internal and external SQA exams, or for Senior Prep-S3 pupils, would contact Barbara or Rachel directly on 0141 357 3376 ext328. Note that LS staff are phenomenally busy during the Jan-Feb prelims.

A word about Ann Boyle and Career Education delivery. Ann remains ill, in and out of hospital, but still so typically takes every opportunity to keep up to date with what is going on in 'her patch' in school. She has been troubleshooting career enquiries for a number of pupils from home, and has been diligently completing so much of the work experience week preparations for S4 pupils. This is always a huge task; Roddy Moir has been timeously handling the huge school end of the organisation; Ann has been doing a stack of unsung administrative work from home. CareerScotland, Byres Road Office have been very supportive and pupil details have been forwarded there for specialist input. Pupils have been encouraged to be pro-active in requesting careers assistance. Although we have not been able to offer the instant drop-in service that Ann has so effectively provided, career education has not simply marked time in her absence.

Finally, the 'old hands' House Staff, Sheena, David and Roddy have welcomed newcomer Bev Davison into the fold and she has quickly realised that time is not friendly to guidance staff. Teaching and updating PSE lessons, interviewing, being there for parent contacts and pupil referrals, supporting competitions – somehow it all gets fitted in, even though there always seems to be someone at the staffroom door! At the time of writing we await the final event of the term in the House Competition. The Road Race, organised by David Wilson, remains a huge annual event with most of the school wanting to run the canal bank course and earn points for their House. The overall Inter-House competition still arouses much passion, and there has been keen competition throughout the term, particularly with Bev Davison's 'Go Macgregor' chant and her House Hoodies. Who will start Term 2 in pole position? The current placings (pre-road race) are 1st - Buchanan, 2nd - Stewart, 3rd Macgregor, 4th - Colquhoun. All to play for!