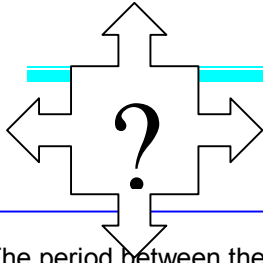


Guidance Faculty Newsletter



Date – March 2008
AJG

The period between the February week and the Easter break remains one of the most hectic times of the session for guidance staff. For pupils, academic guidance tends to be the main focus as external examinations loom, subject courses decisions have to be made for next session and, for most of S6, UCAS offers begin to roll in. Younger pupils are largely oblivious to all that is going on here, although S2 have had to consider their subject options for their examination years.

To date, it is proving to be a less stressful year than usual for S6 students, as most of them are getting their rewards for good exam performances last session with either 'unconditional' university offers or very reachable 'conditional' offers. We have not as yet noticed a 'demob happy' attitude amongst most of our S6, although as always we ask those with their futures assured to allow those who simply must meet their academic targets to do so. It is all about S6 getting the right balance between enjoying a pleasant end to all their good times at KA with keeping the correct focus to allow them to end their academic careers here on a high. For the couple of pupils still undecided as to what the future holds for them, remember that advice and expertise remains available and waiting to be accessed.

Preparation for meaningful subject options for next session for S2, S4 and S5 continues to take up a disproportionate amount of time as every effort is made to customise next session's timetable. There were well advertised dates to submit subject option forms, all well before the end of the Spring Term. Despite this, pupils (and their parents!) have been particularly slow with their final returns, and this makes the necessary fine tuning of the timetable to allow individual options impossible. I still don't think there is an appreciation of just how much these late returns hold up the planning process for next session's timetable. We can only act on information given! Options returns will be finally analysed over Easter and I will be in touch early next term if there are any significant issues posed. I do hope that the advice offered via in-school presentations at PSE classes, and the use of the CareerMatch programme, House Staff interviews, Subject Reports and at the March S2 At Home, has led to sensible choices. There was a very good turnout at the annual Higher Still Information Evening for S4 Parents in mid February. Thank you for the positive comments regarding the content of this.

Although we regrettably have much less input from CareerScotland – politics I'm afraid – they have

been very helpful in trying to accommodate pupils requiring specialist career enquiries, although appointments have had to be made with their Byres Road Office during the Easter Break. Next session we plan to remove this uncertainty by stepping up our input from the Independent Schools Careers Organisation (ISCO). We will be fully signing up for the Futurewise Programme that Ann Boyle piloted last session. All of next year's S4 pupils will be involved in this. More details in due course.

A lot of input continues to be afforded to S4 pupils following the analysis of their prelim results. Targets re-established, hopefully with a degree of realism, and a number of revision and supported study classes have sprung up, particularly at lunchtimes as staff are only too willing to give up their time. Attendance has been variable; you can take a horse to water..... Remember that S4 choices for next session are largely determined by meeting pre-entry requirements brought about by May exam performances. Further information on revision skills is always available in school – the library is a well stocked resource – and note that pupils are welcome to come into school at any time during study leave and work in the library. They do not have to stay at home! Pupils will get a full pre-exam briefing upon their return to school next term, outlining amongst other things, the exam room 'don'ts' like the dreaded mobile phones. Possession of one of these in the exam room DOES mean disqualification – be warned. As last session, they will also receive information as to how they can access their results on the internet, instead of waiting like their predecessors, for the postman.

Similarly, the S5/6 Prelims taken later this session, at the end of February were also analysed and targets reset. A lot of follow up work has been done in school concerning meaningful presentation of candidates; some pupils were advised to drop a level to Int2 and one or two were advised that postponing the final examination for a year was their best option. But for most, lessons have been learned from by and large encouraging prelim results, and pupils should optimistically work for success in May. Note that Higher Still Tracking 4 was actioned at the end of term for those sitting external examinations this summer. If no contact has been made regarding concerns with NABs, then your son/daughter is on course for the Internal Award. If contact has indeed been made, the reality is that your son/daughter is one of a few pupils who have not coped with the Internal Assessment NABs and this will affect their exam presentation in the

summer.

Although it seems a long way off, please note that university applications for Oxbridge, Medicine, Vet and Dentistry are due in October. This deadline, with all of its demands, will be upon pupils before they know it. Personal statement writing has been covered in PSE classes and all S5 pupils have been encouraged to submit a first draft of their personal statements regarding this and also to be aware of the importance of any necessary work experience which should be organised for over the summer. Serious candidates should not leave all of this too late. Linked to this, we held a small Oxbridge Information Evening for interested parents and pupils in early March, and David Setchell of ISCO elaborated on the Oxford and Cambridge experience. Finally, on a related matter, we were grateful to a parent, Dr David Dunlop who arranged a visit to the new West of Scotland Beatson Cancer Centre for four of our prospective S5 Medics.

Although S6, as indicated earlier, have been mainly pre-occupied with UCAS matters and securing places on next year's courses, their innovative 'Preparation for Life' course has continued under the guidance of Karis Leckie. They have had presentations from a community fireman regarding driving (a totally enthralling session, extremely sobering and scary), Skin Care (no shortage of volunteers from the boys!), a Relaxation Workshop, The Middle East (from son of former pupil, Col. A.K.Miller) and Health Issues (from Tricia Gray, nurse). Note that next term S6 pupils will get a presentation on funding and finance issues relating to university. Finally, the trip to Kenya is back on after the political uncertainties so apparent earlier on this year. Six 6th year pupils have currently applied for a place to spend 2 weeks of the summer break working in and around the Jonathan Gloag Academy and the Thomas Barnado House Orphanage.

Profile 5 was routinely actioned just before the Easter Weekend, for Senior Prep to Senior 4, reporting as usual on effort and attitude with respect to both classwork and homework. The 5 pupils on Report cards can expect these to be monitored at the start of term 3. Over the course of the past 2 terms, it has been pleasing to observe the clear upward movement in the work ethic of our pupils. Out of a total of 241 pupils in Senior Prep to S3, 174 received commendations at morning assemblies this profile. You will be aware of the ongoing reference to the efforts put into the overall work ethic of rather a large number of S4 pupils. Their final profile confirmed what was becoming apparent to us, that the penny was indeed dropping. A much improved all round work ethic gives us genuine cause for optimism with respect to their summer exams. For some it has been a

long haul, and I do hope that they can keep the momentum going to the end of May. As a postscript to Profile 5, a couple of items are worth mentioning. Yan Ping Lee (4S) recorded the perfect score – 1s in every box, and there were a few other pupils across the year groups that were just one short. And Sen.Prepare C rightly claimed their prize from the Rector, requesting that he honoured his promise of a large box of sweets to any class who gets a commendation for every pupil!

Friday lunchtimes in March again saw the school virtually devoid of pupils as they crammed into the Theatre in numbers in support of Sheena Crichton's Inter-House competition. Once again the standard was very high. Matthew Pattie (6B) won the main event. After this keenly contested event and the Classwork Awards for Profile 5, the latest Competition places are 1st – Buchanan, 2nd – Macgregor, 3rd – Stewart, 4th – Colquhoun.

The weekly PSE programme has delivered lessons in Environmental Safety to Senior Prep (including 2 excellent presentations on Fire Safety by Philip Floyd, Community Fire Officer), 'Adolescence' to S1, Alcohol and Drug Education to S2, and HIV/Aids to S3. S4 have been continuing with their 'World of Work' programme and are in the final stages of submitting log books to get their Int1 Work Experience accreditation from SQA.

Senior Prep pupils had an Enterprise morning at the end of February when, working in their 4 Houses, they all produced a campaign on 'Healthy Eating' targeting the Junior School. The McGregor Breakfast Bunch who promoted the merits of eating a decent breakfast before coming to school were the victors and they presented their pitch at a junior school assembly, and followed this up by issuing home made certificates and badges to a large number of younger pupils who pledged to come to school well fed and ready for action!

Rachel, Gill, Nicky and Barbara in Learning Support still find life dominated by scribing duties for NABs and preparing their caseload for the external examinations. Extra-curricular support for all pupils is still available and senior pupils especially are encouraged to use this constructively in the run-in to their external examinations. Note that LS are contactable by phone on ext. 328.

Finally, plans are now well underway to move Career and Enterprise Education into a new era after Ann Boyle sadly lost her fight with cancer last month. It is no easy matter replacing Ann as she had so much expertise in so many diverse areas. The structure and delivery of Career and Enterprise Education cannot possibly remain the same. That almost goes without saying, but we will continue to build on the wonderful legacy that Ann left. I will keep you informed of which staff will be handling which roles in due course.