



1. General Update

Prelims

Our internal prelim diet for pupils in S4-S6 came to an end last week. Miss Quigley has emailed all pupils to confirm that paper copies of prelim results will be issued by Thursday 17th February. Individual class teachers will release results directly to pupils as and when marking is complete. However, an overview across all subjects will not be available until Thursday 17th at the latest to allow for internal verification of marking and to account for the fact that some prelims were not completed until Friday 27th January.

Options Information Evenings and Interviews

We held three information evening during the month of January. Kate Faulds (SDS Careers Adviser) and Mr Kane presented to all parents/carers and pupils in attendance. Supplementary materials are available on our website via the following links.

[S2 into S3](#)

[S3 into S4](#)

[S4/5 into S5/6](#)

Initial interviews for all but one pupil are now complete for current S2 and S3 pupils. Communication was sent out via the app and email to parents/carers today. All pupils in S2 and S3 should have returned home with an overview of the options we hold for them at the time of writing. Given that S2 and S3 reports have been issued, Friday 3rd February is the final deadline for S2 and S3 pupils to request changes to their initial options. This will allow for the creation of proposed columns for S2 and S3 from Friday evening.

Interviews for current S4 and S5 pupils are ongoing, with approximately half now complete. It is hoped that almost all interviews will be undertaken by Friday 3rd February, with Wednesday 8th February our definite deadline for initial interviews. Thereafter, communication will be sent to parents/carers and pupils will be issued with letters detailing their initial choices. The release of prelim results is a complicating factor. Where results are issued to pupils at class teacher level, they will be able to make requests to change their options immediately. A final deadline for change requests will follow once the pupil-by-pupil overview is released to pupils.

Once S4/5 option changes are gathered after prelim results are released, it will not be possible for school staff to consider any further change requests in advance of the generation of the timetable. We will of course look to accommodate any change requests once we have a column structure in place. However, the chances of accommodating any such requests are reduced after the timetable is complete. It will likely be mid-March before we can action any requests received after the deadline.

SQA –Assessment Arrangements (AA) – Verification

SQA conduct an annual sample of Assessment Arrangements in selected schools across Scotland. We were selected this year. SQA visited us in September, where they were able to conduct ninety per cent of the verification tasks. We passed in all areas. The final task necessitated examination of prelim and assessment evidence that was not available in September. Mrs Hoy (PT SfL) and Miss Quigley (DHT) met with a member of the SQA team last week. We passed the final verification activity. Assessment Arrangements take account of

provision for learners who require alternative provision to complete exams. This takes many forms, including but not limited to, additional time, reader/scribe, alternative accommodation, account of physical disability, account of mental health etc.

SQA commented very positively on our AA policy which is available on our website via the following link.

[St. Joseph's Academy – Assessment Arrangements](#)

S2 and S3 Reports

S2 and S3 reports were issued during January. Where further clarification is required, parents/carers should contact their child's Pastoral Care teacher.

Holocaust Memorial Day

Ms Basharat accompanied Lewis, Madeleine and Allan to the Council Chambers where our pupils delivered a presentation on Holocaust Memorial Day. The event took place on Friday of last week and initial feedback has been very positive.

Industrial Action

Industrial action is ongoing. As has been the case previously, East Ayrshire Council will release information to parents/carers in advance of school closures. The largest of the teaching unions has announced intended strike days on Tuesday 28th February and Wednesday 1st March. There is a formal process that will be initiated by professional associations prior to absolute confirmation of the above, and East Ayrshire Council will release further information when formal notification is received. Some of the other teaching unions have indicated that they will also strike on these dates.

The largest teaching union has also announced intended rolling strike action between 13th March and 21st April, with dates by local authority to follow. It is anticipated that there will be one day of industrial action in all sectors, bookended by one day of action in the primary and special sectors and another in the secondary sector. Further information will be released nearer the time.

February Weekend

The February weekend holiday for pupils runs from Thursday 9th February to Wednesday 15th February inclusive. The last day in school for pupils is Wednesday 8th February, with pupils returning to school on Thursday 16th February.

Staff are off from Thursday 9th to Monday 13th inclusive, with staff in-service days on Tuesday 14th and Wednesday 15th January.

Coronation – Additional Holiday

Monday 8th May will be an additional holiday due to the Coronation of King Charles III. School will be closed to staff and pupils on Monday 8th May.

Review of Car Park Area

St. Andrew's Parent Council raised concern around access to disabled bays and the layout of the car park. This is not a new issue, but there is little to no resource available to regularly monitor use of car park spaces. Mr Kane has invited Ayrshire Roads Alliance to visit the site this week to provide advice around the viability or otherwise of a barrier entry system beyond the zebra crossing. From memory, there are potentially

unresolvable issues due to the necessity to maintain bus only access to the bus bay area. This area would be the only route away from the disabled bays if a barrier were to be put in place and a vehicle were refused access. However, we will consider any suggestions from Ayrshire Roads Alliance. If there is a viable solution in practical terms, we will liaise with Mitie and East Ayrshire Council to determine viability in terms of cost.

2. Staffing

Clerical and AFO Staff

Gillian Barbour was appointed to the clerical vacancy. This is the first time in four and a half years that we have had a full complement of clerical staff. Gillian had been working with us on a short-term cover basis.

Both of our Administrative and Finance Officers (AFO) are back at work full time. AFOs line manage clerical staff. Our AFOs job share across the full working week.

Stability across our AFO and clerical staff will allow us to progress intended training and efficiencies in working practice that have been on hold during a period of uncertainty around staffing.

PE – Short Term Supply Post

Ongoing absence since mid-November in PE has had a significant impact on staff. Interim timetables have worked to minimise impact on learners. We are fortunate in that both Mr Boyle (DHT) and Miss Cathie (PT Pastoral Care) are PE teachers. PE staff and Mr Boyle and Miss Cathie have taken on as many sections as possible. Given the ongoing nature of the absence, we have been given permission to recruit a short-term PE supply teacher. The post was advertised today with a closing date of next week.

Secondment

Mrs Burnett is due to return to us on Wednesday 1st March and will resume her post as PT Pastoral Care (Carlo House). Mrs Burnett has been on out on secondment with Education Scotland for approximately eighteen months. Mrs Duthie will return to her substantive English teacher post on the same date.

Session 23/23 Staffing

There is a live budget consultation on the East Ayrshire Council website.

<https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/CouncilAndGovernment/Vibrant-Voices/Budget/2023-24/budget-202324.aspx>

Parents/Carers are encouraged to contribute to the consultation. Naturally, budgeting decisions within Education may impact on staffing levels. This is the case every year.

At school level, the options process will influence our required staffing by department, particularly due to the fact that we operate an absolute free choice model in the Senior Phase. Without final budget decisions and the conclusion of our options process, it is not possible at this stage to provide further comment on our staffing levels for next session. All Head Teachers are working in collaboration to contribute to discussions with colleagues in HR and the central education team.

Once budgets are finalised and our timetable requirements are known, it will be possible to share specific information at school level. Timetabling will not conclude until mid-March, which should coincide with final budgetary decisions taken at local authority level.