

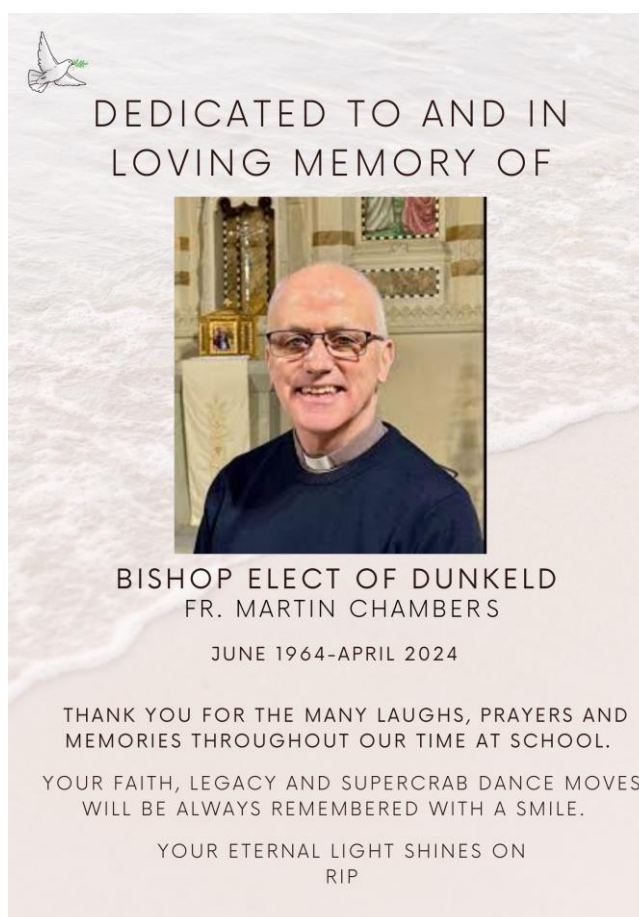


## 1. General Update

### Fr. Martin Chambers

Our school community were shocked and saddened by the death of Fr. Martin Chambers. Fr. Martin was a central figure in the life of our school and spent fourteen happy years with us before moving to his new parish in Troon at the end of last session. As you will know, Fr. Martin was Bishop Elect of Dunkeld, and his ordination was to take place in late April. Many staff, pupils and families were very close to Fr. Martin.

Our outgoing S6 pupils created the tribute image shown below which was added to their yearbooks. The image will be included in school year books until the current S2 leave S6.



All staff and pupils joined in prayer together at 11am on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> April, and the short reflection and prayer offered can be accessed here via the link shown below.

[Fr. Martin - St. Joseph's Academy.mp4](#)

Fr. Martin's funeral arrangements have now been confirmed.

Our Lady of the Assumption and St. Meddan's, Troon

Evening Reception – Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> April, 6pm

Funeral Mass – Monday 29<sup>th</sup> April, 12.00pm

Many staff will attend the reception of Fr. Martin's remains on the Sunday evening. A small group of staff and pupils will formally represent the school on the day of Fr. Martin's funeral, and senior staff will reach out to families soon. It should be noted that Fr. Martin's funeral is, we understand, a public funeral service, and very high attendance is anticipated. While a formal delegation will attend, we are not attending against a formal invitation (given the funeral is a public funeral), which means that it could be the case that our staff and pupil group are unable to be in the church, but we are to understand that overspill areas will be in use in the church grounds for the duration of the Mass.

In addition, Fr. Martin's funeral will be livestreamed, and we understand that many families and staff will find this of comfort if unable to attend. Should there be a cohort of pupils who wish to join in prayer via the livestream, we will look to make arrangements to facilitate this nearer the time.

In time, a more permanent tribute to Fr. Martin will be planned.

### **Drama Showcase Event**

In early March, parents/carers joined us for our annual Drama Showcase event, where pupils from S1-S6 were able to perform in front of their peers and a live audience of family members. The event was a significant success and demonstrates the definite impact that Drama has had on our pupils and the school curriculum since its reintroduction four years ago. The performances were excellent, and the pupils a credit to the department and families. Thanks to Mrs Ferguson and all pupils and families for having supported the event.

### **Ordination of Bishop Dougan**

Mrs Shearer was accompanied by Tosia and Olivia as they represented our school at the ordination of Bishop Dougan to the office of Bishop of Galloway. In addition, Joseph, Luca and Aidan were altar servers. We thank Mrs Shearer and our pupils for representing our community so well and look forward to working closely with Bishop Dougan in the coming years.

### **Patronal Feast**

Bishop Dougan joined Fr. Jim, Fr. Philip, Fr. Stephen, Fr. Gabriel and Fr. Kevin as we celebrated our Patronal Feast Day as a school community. Thanks are extended to our RE and Music staff as well as those pupils who participated in the liturgy. The level of respect demonstrated on the day was wonderful to see and we look forward to gathering again as a whole school community for Mass with Bishop Dougan and our chaplains.

### **East Ayrshire Spring Concert**

Rachel, Chloe, Erin, Latita, Penny and Marylin all performed at East Ayrshire Council's spring concert event at Grange Academy. The girls' participation reflects ongoing engagement across a range of Music events. Well done to all girls, your performances were wonderful.

### **School Football**

Our S2 U14 School Football team progressed to the quarter finals of the SSFA Scottish Plate competition after a win away to Trinity High School, Edinburgh. The boys will play their quarter final tie at home against St. Andrew's High School, from Carntyne, Glasgow. It is a fantastic achievement for a school of our size to have a team competing in the latter stages of a national competition for the second successive season. The quarter final will take place at 4pm on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April. Should we progress, both the semi-final and final will be played at a neutral venue. The winners of our tie will play the winners of Inverkeithing HS v Knightswood Secondary.

## **Prayer and Pancakes**

As part of many Lenten activities, Fr. Kevin, Mrs Devine and Mr Brown, alongside many of our senior pupils, led Prayer and Pancake mornings. We thank all staff and pupils for participating in each event as we prepared for Easter.

## **NET Ministries**

Throughout March, we were delighted to welcome NET Ministries back to St. Joseph's Academy. The team were very complimentary of our school, the ethos and our young people. Class groups participated in daily faith-based input and the team accompanied pupils in prayer throughout Lent. We value highly the work of NET Ministries and look forward to welcoming next year's team.

## **Young Composer Concert**

The re-arranged Young Composer concert was held at St. Joseph's Parish, Kilmarnock in early March. The Cumnock Tryst produced a video where you can hear from our Higher and Advanced Higher Music pupils. The video can be accessed here.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= 2NKv5Jsq3g>

'Over the course of 10 weeks, our Artistic Director Sir James MacMillan and Ayrshire composer Gillian Walker worked with the Higher and Advanced Higher Music classes at Kilmarnock's St. Joseph's Academy, teaching pupils how to compose their own work. No fewer than 22 world premieres were presented at a concert in February 2024, with the compositions performed by a professional ensemble of musicians. This concert was a wonderful celebration of the hard work and musical talents of the students at St. Joseph's.'

## **Easter School**

Thanks are extended to the staff who offered Easter Revision sessions during their annual leave. While conscious of the impact of holidays and allowing for the fact that staff already run many additional supported study sessions outwith the school day, overall pupil uptake was lower than anticipated. Where at all possible, we encourage families to support Easter School, as lower numbers make it less likely that staff will give up leave with their own families in future years to deliver sessions. Thanks too to those pupils that did attend.

In addition, Mrs Howie and Mrs Ferguson held a full day rehearsal for our School Show. Thanks again to all attendees and participants.

## **School Magazine**

Thanks to Joseph in S6 for leading on the production of our pupil led school magazine. The Easter version can be accessed here.

[https://issuu.com/stjosephsacademy/docs/easter\\_edition\\_magazine](https://issuu.com/stjosephsacademy/docs/easter_edition_magazine)

## **S6 Final Day**

Thanks to Mrs Shearer in particular, for the colossal amount of additional work and time invested in our final day events, and to all staff who contributed in any way to another fantastic final day for our outgoing S6 cohort.

Pupil conduct was impeccable, which is evidence of pupils putting into action the values we stand for and foster.

The programme was as follows:

8.40am – 10.30am

Community Hall

We heard from our Head Boy, Caleb, and Head Girl, Sarah, on what life at St. Joseph's had meant to them, and of their gratitude and plans for the future. Staff and pupils shared memories and 'funnies' from over the years and shirt signing, yearbook signing, some food and photographs were all part of the morning session. Mrs Shearer led on staff input and shared many memories of the great times she enjoyed with this group as Year Group Head.

10.45am

Pupils, staff and parents/carers gathered at St. Matthew's for our farewell Mass. Pupils had selected the hymns and readings. Refreshments were served in the hall. It was imperative that as a faith community, Mass and faith remained central to the experience offered to pupils right up to the final day of school.

1pm

Traditional 'whole school' guard of honour, whereby pupils are piped into school, and walk up and down the street to applause from all staff and pupils, before being returned to their families waiting outside.

4pm

Most pupils, Fr. Kevin and around 12 staff gathered at Airthill, East Kilbride for the penultimate event of S6's time with us.

The number of parents/carers expressing thanks for the time their child(ren) spent with us was heartwarming for staff, and parental support in terms of expectations on the day is much appreciated. It should also be noted that Fr. Martin, and memories of his time with us, were shared throughout the day at various points.

## **S6 Leadership Team – 2024/25**

The election of our S6 leadership team will take place in June. As has been tradition for a number of years, a member of the Parent Council and our School Chaplain will sit on the recruitment panel. We are extremely grateful for the extensive leadership demonstrated by S6 pupils annually.

However, we are also aware of the inevitable challenges when recruiting a new pupil leadership team. With a finite number of positions, and particularly high interest in some positions, the school cannot offer each pupil the role they seek. For this reason, and to aid with preparation for life after school, the process is competitive. Understandably, but regrettably, there is an inevitability about acute disappointment that immediately follows the process. Staff will be sensitive to this, and we ask for parental support in this respect too.

## **SQA Deadlines/Verification**

February to May is incredibly busy in terms of SQA logistics in school, with a variety of SQA deadlines, and SQA verification tasks and visits. Other than in the case of unit entries and completion of National 2 to National 4 awards, all SQA processes are now complete. Thanks to Miss Quigley and all curricular Principal Teachers and teaching staff for their work in this area.

We understand that for pupils, particularly those in S5/6, the volume of focus on SQA matters is challenging. Unfortunately, we are not at liberty to alter any SQA dates in terms of verification, course completion, exam preparation or estimates.

## **SQA – AAA/AAR**

At the time of writing, all pupils and families are in receipt of draft timetables where SQA AAA/AAR is in place for SQA exams. The process is incredibly challenging logistically, as no two pupils are the same in terms of provision. We thank pupils and families for their attention to double checking timings and arrangements. Should there be any outstanding queries, please contact Mrs Hoy in the first instance.

In cases where evidence gathered did not meet SQA thresholds, families were informed directly via phone call or meetings in both weeks prior to the Easter break. The school handbook contains a summary of the SQA guidance we are duty bound to follow. In cases where we were unable to proceed, it is because of no established need against SQA guidance or because providing AAA would contradict one or more of the four principles stipulated by SQA. Even where the ultimate decision is not to provide AAA/AAR, school staff are bound to gather and assess evidence where there is potential need before coming to a determination against policy.

Full SQA Guidance – <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/74922.html>

School Handbook (contains a summary) -

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/ea/public/stjosephsacademy/uploads/sites/2043/2024/04/03141224/SJA-Handbook-2425.pdf>

## **SQA Exam Diet and Study Leave**

SQA exams started this morning and all timetables have been shared. We rely on families to work with pupils to ensure attendance on the day in question.

A copy of the SQA timetable can be found here: [https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files\\_ccc/nq-2024-exam-timetable.pdf](https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/nq-2024-exam-timetable.pdf).

S4 – S6 pupils are now on study leave, but those with outstanding unit assessments or N2 – N4 components to complete will be invited into school to complete work that has not been completed. Deadlines are in late April into early May.

## **Study Leave Study Sessions**

Various Study Leave revision sessions are running throughout the exam diet, with details shared via email and the school app last week. Some staff may also run additional sessions but will contact pupils directly via email to advise of when these will take place. On a daily basis, Miss Quigley will email pupils a summary of revision sessions and any exams that are taking place the following day. There is an expectation that pupils will attend all study session where possible.

## **Timetable Change**

In total, staff processed 2,587 individual option choices across all stages, and 2,525 were met at the first time of asking, which is 97.6%. In the context of a free choice model, this return is incredible. In cases where choices were not possible, backups were considered first. If backups were also not possible, then prior learning has priority in that we would never recommend 'crashing', particularly in S4. This meant that for a very small number of pupils, alternatives were limited.

Sadly, and regardless of the school in question, it is never possible to offer 100% option choice satisfaction. Every effort is made to consider the professional advice of staff when finalising replacement choices, in that where staff report a good chance of success, this is prioritised over alternatives with less chance of success.

## **New S2 to S4**

Timetables were issued on Friday, and all pupils are aware of the fact that they should report to the P1 class shown on Monday morning. In a very small number of cases, the timetable will be slightly different during Study Leave and again in June. This is because the timetable is generated against our staffing for session 2024/25. Staff will communicate this to classes impacted by any changes on Monday.

It should be noted that lunchtime for all pupils is 1.15pm – 2.00pm from Monday until the end of term in summer.

## **New S5/6**

As communicated previously, the new S6 cohort will attend school on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> May for their S6 Induction Day and should report to school as normal.

The new S5 cohort will be sent their timetable via glow mail over the exam diet and should report directly to their P1 class on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

## **New S1**

We have already had an extensive transition programme throughout the year. However, five formal visit days will take place in May/June. Arrangements are being double checked and finalised against proposed dates for the non-statutory transport trials. Final communication will be sent to primary schools and families shortly.

Where meetings have been deemed necessary against advice from primary schools, all transition meetings with staff and families are almost complete.

## **School Trips/Excursions**

Study Leave provides slightly more opportunity for BGE pupils to participate in trips and excursions. Various events are running between now and summer. Given that study leave has now started, it is anticipated that further communication will follow in the coming weeks. Some S3 pupils are due to visit Edinburgh Zoo this week, and there will be a meeting for those attending Generation Hope in the next fortnight.

## **PEF Planning, Improvement Planning and School Calendar for session 24/25**

As we move beyond our timetable change and the start of SQA exams, our focus shifts to planning for next session. The school calendar is created against various guidance and forms part of the wider working time agreement which is negotiated with professional associations.

Draft improvement and PEF plans will take cognisance of the wider local authority planning process for next session.

At the next Parent Council meeting in June, draft PEF and School Improvement plans will be shared. If possible, we will also share draft dates for Parents' Evenings, Information Evenings and reporting.

### **Non-Statutory Subsidised School Transport**

EAC Transport has provided for Parents/Carers an overview of the non-statutory school transport pilot exercise. It can be found here:

<https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/EducationAndLearning/TravellingToSchool/Schooltransport/school-transport-pilot-exercise.aspx>

We encourage all parents/carers impacted by the above to read the content contained therein. The site provides an overview of the timescales that Transport is working to, as well as a section devoted to frequently asked questions.

We are aware of plans to run various 'pilot walking days' as follows and as shared with Parent Council chairs and HTs.

#### **Wednesday 19th June: 10:00-12:00**

Hurlford  
Crookedholm

#### **Thursday 20th June 10:00–16:00**

AM  
Shortlees  
Riccarton

PM  
North and Northwest of Kilmarnock

We have been asked to consider staff and pupil participation co-ordinated by school staff i.e. permission slips, class cover where required, appropriate staff/pupil ratio. Thoughts of the Parent Council are strongly welcomed. There are challenges, that while not insurmountable are a concern, mainly around releasing staff from core business to match the staff pupil ratio, ensuring PVG checks for all adult participants, and the length of some of the proposed events. The proposed walks fall under the same legislation as a school trip if occurring during school hours.

## 2. Staffing

Mrs Jasmen Flanagan has been appointed to the post of PT Technologies and is due to take up her post in June. Mrs Flanagan is well known to us, having spent the totality of her career here until she took on an Acting PT post at Loudon Academy in September of this year. My sincere thanks are noted for the excellent work of Mr Iain Tomb, who has held the PT post here for over five years.

Deep thanks are also extended to Mr Colin Barbour, who retired in the last week of term before Easter, having served our school as PT Physics and a Physics teacher for what totalled 34 years. We wish Mr Barbour every happiness in his retirement.

Our Senior Technician, Mrs Janette Fergusson, is due to retire in a few weeks, and we thank Janette for many years of service to our community, and again wish Mrs Fergusson every happiness in her retirement.

For session 2024/25, we have four teaching vacancies, and all are out to advert.

- Full Time Permanent Teacher of History
- Full Time Permanent Teacher of Music
- Full Time Temporary Teacher of Business Education
- Full Time Temporary Teacher of Support for Learning

Interviews for the above posts are likely to take place in mid to late May.

In addition, we have submitted our return in terms of requested NQTs and have expressed that we would like to receive one NQT for next session. Decisions around NQT allocations are confirmed by early June.

Decisions around Classroom Assistant allocations usually follow in early June.