

Dumfries Academy Parent /Carer Update **1 December 2023**



Dear Parent/Carer

Sixty of our S2 pupils travelled to Belfast this week and had a fabulous time exploring the city's culture and History. We also provided another chance for our prospective S1 pupils and their parents to come along and have a tour of the school if they missed the opportunity on 10 October. Our current parents also attended the school on Wednesday evening for a parent and player netball event – which was great fun. Our Christmas Dance Dress Exchange and launch of our Army Cadets Programme also took place on Thursday afternoon. Some of our pupils have also represented the school and our local area in synchronised skating, football and basketball, with some fantastic performances. You can read all about these on our Facebook page. Well done to all! As well as these events, we have had school photographs and flu vaccinations. It has been a very busy and productive week in and out of school.

Dates for the Diary

Monday 4 December – Friday 8 December – S3 Assessment Diet, Main Hall and Classes

Monday 4 December - Breakfast Club, Minerva, 8.30 AM – 8.50 AM

Tuesday 5 December – Rotary Club Kids' Christmas Party, Cairndale Hotel, 10.50 AM -2.30 PM

Wednesday 6 December – S6 Assembly, Main Hall, Period 5

Thursday 7 December – S4-6 Parents Meeting, Main Hall, 4.30PM – 6.30 PM

Friday 8 December – Breakfast Club, Minerva, 8.30 AM - 8.50 AM, Bake Sale (Senior Netball Club), Minerva, 1.30 PM

Website Launch

We have recently developed a new school website. This is an important source of information on policy and procedures. It also contains useful links to other sites and, in particular, our school Facebook page. Our domain address remains the same:

www.dumfriesacademy.org

Respectful Relationships

We are running a series of assemblies on respectful behaviour and relationships around the school. This week we held an S1/2 Assembly and this will be followed up with S3/4 and S5/6 over the next 2 weeks. Thereafter we will be sending out a summary of the principles of our policy to parents/carers in January.



Tim Propp Bursary

We have just launched the above Bursary to our current S6 pupils. We are deeply grateful to Mrs Propp-Shaw, for donating a bursary of £1000 each year to be awarded to an S6 pupil who may face significant barriers to accessing Further or Higher Education. Mrs Propp-Shaw is the widow of Mr Propp, our former Social Subjects Teacher, who sadly passed away in January 2021. Applications can be made via the link below:

<https://forms.office.com/r/sWBWHiYGxj>

A copy of the criteria for application is attached to this update. Applications close on Friday 12 January 2024.

Religious Assemblies

We are fortunate to be able to run our Christmas and Easter Assemblies in St George's Church in collaboration with our School Chaplain, Rev. Campbell. These assemblies focus on Christian beliefs, but also reinforce our school values, which we hope are applicable to all faiths represented in the school. However, if you wish your child to opt out of these assemblies, can you please complete the form at the link below. Please only complete if you **do not** wish your child to attend.

<https://forms.office.com/e/JA84Rs0U19>

Alternative arrangements are made for pupils within school if parents/carers have advised that they do not wish their child to attend.

Winter Weather Arrangements

As the weather has definitely taken on more of a wintry feel, it is important for all parents/carers to be aware of procedures to deal with adverse weather. As weather conditions can vary across our region, you are best placed to make the decision as to whether it is safe for your child to travel, depending on your own circumstances. Please let the school know if your child is unable to attend school, or is required to be sent home due to change in weather conditions in your area during the school day.

In the case of severe weather, or for any other reason, that necessitates full or partial school closure, you would be notified in the normal way by SMS, on the Dumgal website (www.dumgal.gov.uk), our school app and website (www.dumfriesacademy.org), and on WestSound Radio. Please await these messages from the school rather than reacting to social media posts from members of the community, or phone calls from your child (as they may not have the correct information at that time).

Full school closure is rare. The following steps are usually taken to ensure that closure happens smoothly and safely:



- Pupils from outlying areas are usually called to leave first.
- If buses are running, these pupils will be advised to get the first available bus home and we will let parents/carers know by SMS text message this is happening.
- However, if buses are not running, the school will get in touch with those families directly to ensure that there is an agreement on how and when those pupils affected will travel home safely.
- Pupils who normally walk home from school/travel a short distance by bus (which is still running) will be released to travel home only if we are certain that a parent/emergency contact/adult will be there expecting their arrival. Consideration will be given to the age of the pupil and the distance travelled to reach home/identified safe place.
- If pupils/parents cannot confirm that a child will be able to travel home safely and be met by a responsible adult, the child will remain in school, supervised by available staff until safe collection from school or travel home can be arranged. It is expected that parents/carers will make this arrangement as soon as possible so that all pupils and staff can avoid staying in school any longer than is necessary.
- A date for school reopening will be posted on the Dumfries and Galloway Council website and all of our other communication platforms listed above.

A reminder to ensure your child is appropriately dressed for the weather conditions, as we begin to see cold and wet weather creeping in. Outside jackets should be worn and can be removed when indoors, black cardigans or V neck pullovers can be worn under blazers to provide an extra layer. PE kit should be appropriate for the activity undertaken, whether indoors or outdoors, and kept in a suitable bag.

Army Cadets – Link Detachment

Our Cadet Link Detachment was launched on Thursday. This fantastic opportunity for young people to build skills and self-confidence through Cadets will now be available as an after-school experience for pupils in S1-6 from 3.30 - 4.30pm in T24. Pupils can sign up via the form on the BGE and Senior Team or be seeing Dr Gordon.

More information about the opportunities that Cadets have to offer your child can be viewed at

<https://youtu.be/smuOQp-3roM>

Dumfries Academy Refurbishment Plans

We are currently working with our Parent Council to gather views on how to ensure that we come up with priorities to put to our local elected members. These include our toilet facilities, our PE facilities and our digital infrastructure. We intend to work with our whole school community to ensure that costed options for Dumfries Academy represent the needs of our pupils, staff and parents and that we receive the level of refurbishment that we deserve, and have waited so long for.



Social Areas

Please remind your child of the following arrangements for social areas:

- S1 - Cafe (indoor); rear of school (outdoor)
- S2 - Cafe (indoor); front of link corridor (outdoor)
- S3 - Main Hall (indoor); front of main building (outdoor)
- S4 - Main Hall (indoor); front of main building (outdoor)
- S5 - Minerva (indoor); front of Minerva building (outdoor)

S6 - Minerva (indoor); front of Minerva building (outdoor)

S1 on site at both break and lunch

S2 -3 on site at break, but allowed off at lunch

S4 -6 allowed off site at break and lunch

We are seeing an increasing number S1 pupils going off site at lunch and S1-3 pupils going off site at morning break. This is not permitted.

Meeting with Staff

A reminder that parents/carers who wish to meet with a member of staff to discuss matters regarding their child's welfare or progress should telephone the school office to make an appointment. We are seeing an increasing number of parents/carers arriving in school requesting to see staff immediately. Whilst we are delighted to welcome parents/carers to the school, the nature of the working day for staff means that unarranged meetings are usually not possible.

Save the Date

S4-6 Parents Meeting – Thursday 7 December, 4.00 PM – 6.30 PM

S4-6 Parents Meeting – Tuesday 12 December, 4.00 PM – 6.30 PM

School Christmas Lunch – Thursday 14 December, 1.05 PM- 1.45 PM, School Café (£2.00)

Senior Dance – Thursday 14 December, 7.30 PM to 10.30 PM, Main Hall

Junior Dance – Wednesday 20 December, 7.00 PM to 9.30 PM, Main Hall

Attendance

A reminder to report pupil absences via the pupil absence line below. You should state the pupil's name, Tutor Group, reason for absence and expected duration of absence.

Pupil Absence Line: 01387 274356

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1 December 2023



All previous updates will be archived on our new website. You will be able to find reminders about school uniform, social areas, health and safety and other key school information

Joanne Dillon

Headteacher