

Dear Parent/Carer

September 2013

S4 Advice, Information and Next Steps

Now that your daughter is in S4, she will be looking ahead to the new Scottish Qualification Award and (SQA) examinations in May/June 2014. I apologise that this letter is lengthy and detailed. However, it provides information, if followed, which will help assist your daughter achieve the very highest academic success this year.

I would be grateful if you would discuss the contents of this letter with her to ensure she is clear on the advice and information provided.

S4 SQA 'Prelim' Examination Diet Information

'Prelim' examinations are important and your daughter should prepare thoroughly for them. They provide her with the opportunity to gain experience of this formal SQA process and to demonstrate the required knowledge and skills to pass the new National examinations. Detailed timetables and expectations with regard to attendance, punctuality, and behaviour will be issued shortly before these examinations in January.

Unlike previous years, with the introduction of the new National qualifications, the format of prelim study leave for S4 pupils is changing and will be dependant on which level of course your daughter is studying in a subject. Pupils following a course a National 4 will not have a prelim exam, whilst those following a course a National 5 will have a formal prelim exam in January. Further details of revised arrangements will be communicated following the October holidays.

SQA Appeals

The opportunity for schools to appeal SQA results in August has now ceased. A new two-stage process has been introduced.

- [Stage 1 – The Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service](#). This will be applied at the time of an examination if the school considers that a pupil has been

disadvantaged, e.g. a close family member bereavement. In relevant cases, a medical certificate may be required.

- **Stage 2 – The Post-Results Service.** After results are published in August, the school can request an administrative review of a pupil's examination and/or request to have the marking of the script checked. There is an SQA charge for unsuccessful requests and a candidate's grade can go down as well as up.

This SQA change makes it even more important that your daughter is best prepared for his SQA examinations in May 2014.

National Courses – Unit Re-Assessments

All National courses are judged through a mixture of internal (school) assessment and, for National 5 courses, external (SQA) examinations. The required standards for both internal and external assessments are set by the SQA and the school will be scrutinised to ensure it is reaching them. For your daughter to receive an overall course award, she is required to pass all SQA assessments for that course.

It is, therefore, essential that your daughter is well prepared for internal Unit assessments. Any pupil who fails a Unit assessment will get one further opportunity to pass. Failure of this re-assessment will result in your daughter failing the overall course, regardless of how well she completes any other Unit assessments or, in the case of National 5 courses, the final examination in May.

Unit assessments take place throughout S4. Most courses have three Unit assessments. If your daughter fails any Unit assessment, a letter will be sent home to notify you of the seriousness of the situation in that subject and the re-assessment date. If you receive such a communication, it indicates that your daughter is underachieving and we are concerned that she will not gain an overall course award.

It is crucial that S4 pupils prepare well and treat Unit assessments as importantly as the final examination in May/June 2014.

Each year there are very upset pupils (and parents/carers) when they realise that a Unit failure means that their child cannot get an overall course award.

Academic Progress and Advice

This section in this letter provides good examples of how you can further support your daughter's learning. Following this advice will provide her with the very best opportunity to improve her potential attainment.

1. **Absence**

Pupils cannot help being ill, but it is essential that they take the responsibility to 'catch up' on missed work. This lost teaching and learning time can never be recovered. Please consider:

- ***Has your daughter been absent from class(es)/school? If so, has she caught up with missed work?***

2. **Lateness**

A small minority of pupils arrive late for school (missing the bus, sleeping in etc). This not only impacts negatively on their learning but may also be highlighted in a school reference. Please consider:

- ***Does your daughter leave home on time for the start of the school day?***
- ***Do you leave for work before your daughter leaves for school? Is she out of her bed in the morning?***

3. **Homework**

An important life skill is meeting deadlines. As part of all S4 courses, your daughter will be set homework tasks with specific completion date deadlines. Details of these are available on "Show My Homework" via our website, with further information being available by using the log-in details you received last week.

In addition your daughter has also been issued with a School Planner to further assist her in the completion of her homework, target setting and revision. Please check this regularly to ensure she is using it appropriately and challenge her should you find blank pages, as everyday there are things she should be noting down from her teachers and at the end of lessons.

As part of our school learning strategy, your daughter's class work and homework will be assessed in a variety of ways. These include: traditional teacher assessment (which may or may not include comments or grades), self evaluation (pupil marking their own work) or peer assessment (pairs or groups of pupils evaluating class work/homework). All these strategies are equally valuable in contributing to your daughter's overall progress.

4. **Revision**

As your daughter will be aware, all pupils are expected to continue their studies at home. Listed below are some key questions you might want to raise with her.

- ***Does she regularly spend time each school evening revising and/or completing homework tasks?***
- ***Practical subjects like Technical or Art and Design may have practical tasks to be completed. Does she work on these also?***
- ***What about part-time work? Whilst part-time work can provide meaningful work experience, this is often one of the greatest reasons for students academically underachieving.***

I trust you take this opportunity to discuss these questions and advice with your daughter.

Thank you for your ongoing support in ensuring she reaches her full potential and level of academic attainment this session.

Yours faithfully

Evan L.Ritchie
Head Teacher (Acting)