

Dear Parent/Carer

September 2013

S5/S6 Advice and Information

Now that your daughter has settled in to her new courses, I write to offer advice and information which I hope will help her achieve academic success this session. I apologise that this letter is lengthy and detailed. However, it provides information, if followed, which will help assist your daughter achieve her very best academic performance.

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.

Looking at recent national and local media reports, ensuring your daughter reaches her academic potential is more important than ever. In the current economic climate, next year, Colleges and Universities are again expecting a large increase in applications for even more limited places. In addition there may well be fewer employment opportunities across Scotland. Inevitably this may result in some school leavers being unsuccessful in their plans for further education or employment.

S5/S6 'Prelim' Examination Diets

'Prelim' examinations are important and your daughter must prepare thoroughly for them. Again they provide her with the opportunity to experience this formal SQA process and to demonstrate the required knowledge to pass Intermediate, Higher Grade and Advanced Higher courses.

All S5/S6 students will be on Study Leave during the S5/6 prelim examination diet, which will be from Monday 27th January to Friday 7th February 2014 (inclusive).

National Assessment Bank (NAB) Assessments

All Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher courses have NAB assessments. These assessments are set by the SQA and sat under examination conditions in school and it is essential that your daughter is well prepared for these assessments.

Any student who fails a NAB assessment will get one further opportunity to pass. This information will be intimated to parents/carers in a 'Failed NAB' letter and will indicate the re-sit date. Failure of this re-assessment will result in a student failing the overall course, regardless of how well he completes any other NAB assessments or indeed the final examination in May/June.

It is also essential to note, that passing a NAB does not indicate your daughter will definitely pass the final exam. Passing a NAB only indicates that she has passed a test equivalent to a C award in the relevant subject and level. To ensure an A, B or C award, she will need to sustain a high level of commitment to her studies throughout the course and not get complacent in a subject because she has passed a NAB in it.

It is crucial that S5/6 pupils prepare well and treat NAB 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 NAB failure means that their child cannot get an overall course award.

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.

Academic Progress and Advice

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

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?***

Lateness

A 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?***

Homework

An important life skill is meeting deadlines. As part of all S5/6 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.

Revision

As your daughter will be aware, the academic requirements of S5/S6 SQA courses, particularly at Higher and Advanced Higher levels, far exceed those at Standard Grade. The main changes in academic demands relate to:

- Study time
- Time management
- Knowledge
- Skills
- Homework
- Shorter length of course

Listed below are some key questions you might want to raise with her to assist her adjust, to the increased demand levels:

- ***Does your daughter regularly spend between half and one hour per subject per school evening revising and/or completing homework tasks in each subject she is studying?***
- ***Does she have a quiet area to study at home?***
- ***Practical subjects like Technical or Art and Design may have practical tasks to be completed. Does your daughter 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)