

# November Newsletter 2011



## Dear Parent/Carer,

There are many good things happening in the Academy at the moment, with the focus squarely on teaching and learning. This happens in all sorts of ways, not just within the classroom. In the last few weeks we have had authors' visits to first and second years, a motivational speaker from Live 'n Learn talking to fourth and fifth years as well as pupils from third year doing the Fire Reach course with the local Fire Brigade. A number of pupils have been on work placements in a variety of types of employment and others have attended special courses run locally by Community Education and Development staff. Supported study is running very well and things are getting serious, with the S4 prelims beginning shortly. National Assessment Bank (NAB) tests are also ongoing for a lot of senior pupils at the moment.

## Good News

As usual there are lots of good things happening for pupils past and present! Morven Bain in third year has been selected for the SSFA West Region team and will be going to play in a tournament in Ireland in 2012. This is a great achievement! A number of pupils have made the qualifying times for the Scottish Schools Swimming Championship 2012. A number of pupils competed at the recent qualifiers. Caitlin Moore swam a qualifying time for 100m backstroke and 100m freestyle. Ewan Currie swam a qualifying time for 100m butterfly. Thomas Fraser, Rachel Farren, Louise Smith and Beth Stern also took part in the competition. Well done everybody!!

Molly MacDonald in first year competed in the Castlemilk Festival of Dance on 25<sup>th</sup> November. Chloe Black and Emma Atkinson are missing some school over the next few weeks as they are starring in Peter Pan at the Theatre Royale. Former pupil Rachel Skelding has been home recently, after spending much of the last year writing and recording her first album in London. Rachel has taken the stage name Rachelle Rhiene after being signed last year by the record label STAMRA. We will be looking out for her album when it is released!

What talented pupils we have!

## Fund Raising

A number of fund raisers have taken place over the last few weeks. Two representatives from CHAS came to the First Year Assembly on Friday 18th November to receive a cheque for £1700. This staggering amount was raised by first year pupils in Modern Languages. This is the highest amount since the project started a number of years ago. The top fund-raisers were Samantha Duncan 1C1, who managed to raise £96; Peter Stewart 1A3, who raised £100 and Ross Graham 1A1, who raised £70. Colleen Wotherspoon won the poster competition which advertises CHAS. Well done all those involved!

Alice Fletcher and Kirsty Shaw from the Vale of Leven Academy did a sponsored walk to raise funds for Castle View Care Home in Dumbarton. Alice and Kirsty walked the local walk known as the Horseshoe and raised the grand sum of £241.00. The sum raised will be put into the Patient Comfort Fund.

## Fire Reach

Over the past few months some of our S3/4 pupils have participated in the **Fire Reach** course organised by Strathclyde Fire and Rescue. The purpose of the scheme is to provide training and development opportunities to young people in West Dunbartonshire, principally through Fire Service related activities. This programme is also designed to raise young people's awareness of the role of the Fire Service and

other agencies within their community. One of the main aims of the course is to try and change attitudes and perceptions of young people by showing them life skills and responsibilities. This is achieved by providing a programme, which includes the essential elements of First Aid, use of operational equipment such as hose and ladders, all within a disciplined environment. Other essential elements of the course are punctuality, good attendance, general appearance and demeanour. All pupils who have attended this course have really enjoyed it and feel they got a lot out of it. The pupils involved have all displayed maturity, good behaviour, responsibility, good timekeeping and attendance. Well Done!

### **Authors' Visits to the English Department**

As part of the English Curriculum, authors are invited into school to talk to pupils about their novels. These are very useful visits for a number of reasons. They give pupils an understanding of how creative writing is carried out at a professional level, as well as helping them with their essays. Three visits have been arranged this term.

- Jonathan Meres came in on Wednesday 23rd to talk to some S1 pupils.
- Bali Rai came in on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> to talk to S2 pupils.
- Keith Gray is coming in on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December to take an S1-3 Writers' Workshop

These events help bring creative writing alive for our young people. A number of our former pupils have had success in writing - we may be creating the next JK Rowling!!

### **Young Carers Group**

The Young Carers group are organising a Christmas Fayre on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December, 11am -3pm at the Concord Centre in Dumbarton.

The Fayre is a chance for the young carers to sell homemade food and drink items, and homemade Christmas gifts and decorations to raise money for respite trips next year. There will also be - Santa's Grotto, Face Painting, Raffle and Tombola stalls, DVD, Book, CD & Games Stalls. Tickets are £2 - Free hot drink and Christmas biscuit with ticket. Under 16's - free entry.

The Young Carers need help with donations. They need prizes for the tombola & raffle on the day. They also need books, games, DVDs and CDs. If you have any old books, CD's or DVD's, or Games Console games that you would like to donate, that would be great for them to sell at a stall.

### **Duty Periods**

In the Academy, SMT have 'Duty Periods'. Senior Managers go round classes, and this means that we are monitoring pupil behaviour and effort at all times. However it also means that we get to visit classes to see all the wonderful things going on! Whether it's watching the senior pupils in art produce some amazing work, or hearing a bit of 'Harry Potter' in English...or even doing a bit of tasting in the Home Economics classes, it is a great way to find out what's going on! Recently we have been checking on the use of Study Planners. We have also been visiting the S2 doing the new Curriculum for Excellence courses. Staff and pupils are enjoying the new courses, which provide pace and challenge for all pupils.

### **S4 Prelims**

The S4 prelims will start shortly. You should have already received a letter and a timetable outlining all the arrangements. Can you please put the timetable on the kitchen wall, or keep it handy. We are working very hard with all pupils to ensure they are properly prepared for their exams. Supported study has been on over the last few weeks in many subject areas. A number of Fourth Year Pupils also received advice this week from 'Live 'N Learn', an educational motivation company. Feedback from the session was very positive! We wish all the pupils well in their preparations for the exams.

### **Uniform**

Thank you for all your continued efforts with school uniform. Almost all pupils are still looking very smart. This month's plea is regarding trousers. Black jeans/leggings are not allowed - neither are joggies. Pupils should only be wearing black skirts or tailored school trousers. I realise that as the bad weather comes in it can be difficult to keep clothes clean and dry, but please continue to support us.

### **The Academy's Talented Musicians!**

The pupils listed below represent the school in West Dunbartonshire's Wind Band, which recently took part in the Scottish Concert Band Festival. The Band achieved a GOLD Award at the Festival which is the second highest award.

Beth Stern	Euan Priestley
Liam Walker	Corrine Friel
Tiegan McKay	Angeline Friel
Kieran Oliver	Emma Anton
Samantha Oliver	Hayley Proudlock

Well done everybody!! Some of them will also be performing in the up and coming West Dunbartonshire Council's School Christmas Concert on 8<sup>th</sup> December. I know they will perform very well!

These pupils are also members of VoLA's Wind Band which will be performing at the Christmas Concert on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> December at 7.30 p.m. Tickets will be available shortly at a cost of £2 for adults, £1 concessions.

### **Severe Weather Arrangements**

As you will remember, last winter, there were difficulties contacting parents when the school was being closed due to severe weather. The providers of our automated messaging service have improved the service they provide. While we hope that we will not have any need to close the school, please be assured that we will ask pupils to contact parents directly before they leave the school, as well as sending messages through the automated system. Please be assured that pupil safety is our first concern at all times!

### **Pupil Council**

The Pupil Council has been meeting and discussing topics such as the school lockers and school uniform. I met with them recently and talked about a number of issues regarding uniform, from blazers to ties to skirt length. It was agreed to issue a questionnaire about this to pupils and parents! You will shortly receive a questionnaire asking your views. I will keep you up-to-date with developments!

### **Remembrance Day**

A number of senior pupils represented the school at the local Remembrance Day service at Christie Park memorial. The School Captains laid a wreath and helped give out the orders of service. During that week all assemblies were taken by the school captains to ensure pupils were thinking about the sacrifices made by British men and women. Given that some of our former pupils are now in the services, it certainly brings home the ideas of remembrance. The school also held a two minute silence at 11.00am on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> November.

### **Samye Ling Visit**

The senior school Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies class recently visited the Buddhist Centre and temple at Eskdalemuir in support of their World Religions unit. They were shown around by Marianne, a lay Buddhist, who has lived there for many years. She was able to explain how the site has developed over the last 30 years as well as how she managed to secure funding for the Stupa. Pupils were impressed by the colourful beauty of the temple and were given an opportunity to take part in a short guided meditation. The visit was a great success and was enjoyed by all the pupils and staff involved.

### **Auschwitz Visit - S6 pupils**

On Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> November Aden Ritchie (S6) and Alistair Gilmour (S6) joined a group of 230 young people and teachers on a day long visit to Auschwitz. The visit was arranged by the Holocaust Educational Trust. The visit aims to raise awareness of young people of what happened during the holocaust so that this type of atrocity never happens again. The day began with a flight to Poland at 6am. The boys visited two camps - Auschwitz 1 and Auschwitz 2. They visited a museum where there were valuables taken from the prisoners on display. The whole day was very moving and thought-provoking for all the young people. The boys will also attend two seminars and complete a folio based on their experiences.

### **Parent Council**

The Parent Council needs you! We are trying to increase the number of parents involved in the school. We realise that people have so many commitments these days, but any support you can give us would be gratefully received. Parent Council members will continue to attend Parents' Evenings, so please speak to them about your thoughts regarding parental involvement, or contact the school for more information.

All meetings are held in the School's Conference Room and start at 7.00pm

Can we also recommend the Scottish Government's Parent Website: Parentzone. The address of the website is: [www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk](http://www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk)

The Parent Council have arranged a Race Night in the Alexandria Masonic on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2012. Further details will be issued in newsletters nearer the time. The next Parent Council meeting is Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> January.

### **School Website**

The school website is including more and more information for parents. We now include all newsletters and letters home so that you can check that you have all the information you will need. The website is: [www.scottishschools.info/valeoflevenacademy](http://www.scottishschools.info/valeoflevenacademy)

We have investigated putting the newsletter on the website rather than sending out a paper copy. However the information we have on the numbers of 'hits' on the website suggested that this would not reach enough parents. Therefore whilst we will put the monthly newsletter on the website, we will still send out copies by post or by issuing to pupils.

### **Important Dates**

Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December: S5/6 Reports issued

Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December: S4 prelims begin (S4 Study Leave begins)

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December: S5/6 Parents' Night 4.00pm - 6.30pm

Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> December: Primary Orchestra Tour

Friday 16<sup>th</sup> December: S4 Prelims end and study leave finishes

Monday 19<sup>th</sup> December: S4 pupils return to school

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> December: Christmas Concert

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> December: Panto Trip

Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> December: Science Centre visit

Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> December: Christmas Disco

Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> December: Non-uniform Day

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> December: Christmas Service

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> December: School closes for Christmas

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2012: School Reopens

If you have any concerns/questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on the new school number - 01389 777000.

Yours sincerely

Catriona M. Robertson