

March Newsletter 2012



Dear Parent/Carer,

A Message From The Head Teacher

The Spring Term is always the busiest of the year, as final preparations for exams are made. The Easter break is not really a break for senior pupils - but rather an extended study period! Staff will be providing revision classes throughout the Easter break (see enclosed timetable) - please ensure that your sons and daughters use these opportunities! In addition, this year, we will be offering a general study facility in the school library. This will be manned by teaching staff throughout the school day for the whole two weeks of the holiday. If there is no available study area at home, or if they just fancy a change of scenery, youngsters can come into school to study.

Please note that the school closes at 2.30, on Friday 30th March and reopens at 9.00am on Monday 16th April. Have a great holiday - we look forward to seeing everyone back on the 16th!

Good News

Mrs Kean has updated me on the wonderful achievements of our music pupils! The pupils listed below are members of the West Dunbartonshire Wind Band. They are performing in London on Sunday 1st April at The Royal Academy of Music in the National Concert Band Festival, having qualified from the Scottish event. They have also taken part this month in the Scottish Concert Band Festival in Perth on the 18th March having qualified from the Glasgow heat. The pupils are: Beth Stern, Euan Priestley, Liam Walker, Corrine Friel, Tegan McKay, Angeline Friel, Kieran Oliver, Emma Anton, Samantha Oliver, Hayley Proudlock and Lucy Bolton. Good luck with the festival!

Remy McCumesty's dance group 'Fear of the Unknown' put in another great performance at the final of 'Got to Dance' recently. Whilst they didn't win, they were in the last three! The competition included dancers and dance groups from all over the British Isles. Well done Remy!

Still on the topic of dance, West Dunbartonshire's first all-boys contemporary dance group, Dimension, is set to take to the stage in London this summer after securing a place at the high profile youth dance event, U.DANCE 2012. Our own Jordan Rae is involved! Jordan became involved in dance last year, as part of Matthew Bourne's Lord of the Flies project. He was selected to appear in the stage show at the Theatre Royal in Glasgow. We wish him well in London!

Well done to teacher Mrs McFall who took part in the Sport Relief - One Show 1000 event. She was sponsored by pupils and colleagues in VOLA, and she completed the run last Saturday. Film crews were out in force, and she was seen on The One Show smiling and waving as she ran along the A82!

Congratulations to Ruairidh Taggart who has been successful in obtaining a Nuffield Scholarship for 6 weeks in the summer. Ruairidh is going to be doing research with gold at Strathclyde University. Well done Ruairidh!!

Fifteen S4 boys attended the National Science and Engineering week at Dalmeir Library on 9th March. This was a very exciting opportunity for pupils who are interested in a career in Science or Engineering and we were very pleased that Vale of Leven Academy was asked to participate in this event. All boys were a credit to themselves and the school! Well Done!

Ghana visit

Things are beginning to become more real for our travellers to Ghana - it is now only three months to the expedition. Fund-raising continues - the recent evening repeat of the Christmas Talent Show raised £680. A staff-pupil football match is planned just before Easter. All the pupils involved successfully completed a training expedition in Perthshire at the weekend. Despite freezing overnight temperatures, a great time was had by all! As well as the training for camping, pupils are also receiving basic first-aid training, whilst trip leader Mrs Hunter has been on an advanced first aid training course.

S3/4/5/6 Preparation for Exams

- **Easter Revision School** - Enclosed for all pupils in S3/4/5/6 is a copy of the school's Easter Revision Programme - classes will be offered in most subjects/levels over the course of the two weeks of the holiday. A copy is enclosed for you - please note that full details are also on the school website. This year we are providing a quiet study area in the school library - this will be manned by staff so that pupils have somewhere to study where peace and quiet will be guaranteed. However, please note that this is not a social arrangement! Please make sure your youngster attends as much as possible - these classes are very worthwhile!
- **S3 Exams** - enclosed is a letter for S3 parents, giving detailed information about the S3 exams, which start on Thursday 26 April. Also enclosed is a copy of the exam timetable.
- **Equipment** At the recent S4 prelim exams staff alerted me to a major issue. This was the number of pupils who turned up for exams without any equipment such as pencils, pens, rulers etc. A particular concern was the number that turned up without calculators for maths, science and technical exams, where these are vital. As you may know the modern scientific calculators that pupils use are fairly complicated machines. In an exam situation when the adrenaline is running having a calculator that doesn't work the way you think it should, is enough to push you into real panic!! We want to avoid these situations at all costs!
- **SQA Materials** - All S4/5/6 pupils should now have received their guide to the SQA exams as well as the Scottish Candidate Number cards - all pupils must put their Scottish Candidate Number on each exam paper that they sit - it is vital that they keep the card safe and bring it to each exam. All pupils will receive an individual exam timetable after the Easter break - but please remember that you can obtain a copy of the full exam timetable at the SQA website (www.sqa.org.uk) or on the school website.
- **The 'Day Before' Revision Club** - Some subject staff will be taken off timetable the day before each exam, to provide support for pupils coming in to revise. Some departments may run actual revision classes, whilst others will provide support with any issues pupils may have.
- **A Parent's Guide to Survival** - a pamphlet is enclosed for S4, S5 and S6 parents giving advice on how to support youngsters through the SQA exams. Thank you for all your encouragement and support.
- **Exam Letter** - enclosed is a letter with further details about the exam arrangements for the parents of all S4, S5 and S6 pupils.

Good News from the English Department!

Erin Denny (S2) has won a 'Pushkin Prize' for her writing. Erin takes part in Mrs Gallagher's very successful creative writing club. To enter the Pushkin competition Erin had to submit a folio of her work. There are only ten of these awards made in the whole of Scotland each year, so Erin has done exceptionally well. She will receive her award at a prestigious ceremony in Edinburgh on Monday 30th April. Her prize is to spend a week at the Pushkin Writers' Centre near Inverness. Well done, Erin!!

On Monday 19th March five pupils were out of class in the afternoon to complete our school's online heat of the Times Spelling Bee. These pupils are: Abby Morrison 1A1, Molly McDonald 1F1, Jack Brough 1A1, Katrina Fraser 1C1 and Kirsty Young 1C2.

On Friday 23rd March pupils will be involved in the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs Debating Competition. The pupils concerned are: Karen Shaw S4, Rebecca Pope S4, Sandy Perrie S1 and Adam McNabb S1. Good luck everybody!

A group of S1 and S3 pupils were recently successful in a Young Writers' Creative Writing Competition. The competition entitled "Mini Sagas" selected work based on imagination, perception, expression and creative use of language. Each pupil received a certificate and their work will appear in a book entitled "Mini Sagas - Swashbuckling Stories of Scottish Adventures". The school will receive a free copy of the book which is scheduled for publication on 31 May.

The editorial team responsible for the competition are in the process of selecting school winners and cash prizes will be awarded for the best schools across the series. So, watch this space... And the winners are: Lewis Glen, Kayleigh Wood, Rebecca Morris, Jordana Stanmore-Malcolm, Cameron Wardlaw, Kieran Oliver, Samantha Dunion, Ross Manning, Lauren Evans, Rachel Farren, Sandy Perrie, JJ Cameron, Sean Welsh, Jack Martin, Calum Deverill, Elisa Ward, Kirsty Young, Cameron McKenzie and Dean Murray

MP Gemma Doyle Visits Modern Studies Classes

The Social Subjects Department was thrilled to have Gemma Doyle MP visit S4-6 pupils studying Modern Studies. The Standard Grade, Intermediate 2 and Higher pupils welcomed the MP for West Dunbartonshire on Friday 16th March 2012 when she joined them for an afternoon of questions about her role in the UK Government. Gemma Doyle MP is one of the youngest women MPs ever and having been born and raised in Dumbarton is a great inspiration to our pupils. She spoke about her role in the Shadow Cabinet as Defence Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans and the challenges faced by meeting the demands of her role as MP in her constituency and in parliament. VoLA is very grateful to Gemma for taking time out from her very busy schedule to deliver an inspirational and educational afternoon.

London 2012 Olympic Torch Relay

Congratulations are in order for Jenna Law in S6 who has been selected to carry the Olympic Torch as part of the relay round the country prior to the opening of the 2012 Olympic Games in London!! Jenna was nominated by the Tulloch Trust as a result of all the voluntary work she does with youngsters outside school. We are very, very proud of her!!

Football Good News!

The closing date for applications for the VOLA SFA School of Football has now passed. Many Primary 7 pupils from our associate primaries have applied, and arrangements for the trials will be issued shortly!

Existing pupils and former pupils continue to perform well in football - both boys and girls! Kimberley Brown 4C1 and Roseanne Wardlaw 3C3 have both been signed by St Mirren. Ross Leebody, a former pupil, returns to Seattle shortly for another season with the 'Kitsap Pumas' soccer club.

Quiz Night

On Thursday 29th March the Senior School Charity Committee is holding a Charity Quiz Night for the Beatson Oncology Unit. Tickets are £3 for this event. Tickets are available from Ms Mooney, Ms Meldrum or the School Office. Please support this event - it was a great night last year...except that my team didn't win!!

Non Uniform Day

There is a 'Non-Uniform Day' on Friday March 30th - proceeds from this will go to the School Fund.

S4 Cameron House Career's Day

On Thursday 8th March, 26 staff from Cameron House arrived 'en mass' at Vale of Leven Academy to carry out a variety of workshops. The purpose of the day was to give an insight into the vast and varied Hospitality Industry. All of S4 spent the day in sessions ranging from Golf lessons to Marina life to Spa treatments to Cocktail making and even Practical Cookery lessons with the Executive Chef of Cameron House and the Head Chef from the Carrick, both of whom are former Vale of Leven Academy pupils. The day was a fantastic success, with the Cameron House staff emailing to thank us:

'My team were really impressed by the VOLA. We all enjoyed a hugely professional welcome and great support from everyone we encountered (very 5*!). The conduct of pupils all day was exemplary. Many comments from everyone in terms of the most pleasurable business/education exercise we have ever been involved with!'

Cansat Project

Our Advanced Higher Physics class have been continuing their preparations for the Cansat project. They have had to design and build a system that can take measurements when fired into the high atmosphere in a rocket! The system can be no bigger than an Irn Bru can. The group will be making their presentation at the finals in Edinburgh at the Royal Observatory on Wednesday 28th March. The judges include the Director of the European Space Agency. If they win, they get to go to Norway to see the rocket launch. Wow! What a prize. We wish them all the best on Wednesday!!

S4 Hospitality Event - Tuesday 20 March

On Tuesday 20 March six of our S4 pupils co-hosted an event at the Skillseekers Facility in Dumbarton. Melissa Byars, Adam Devlin, Siobhan Hopper, Dylan Murray, Danielle Shepherd and Jordan Woodford worked together with pupils from Dumbarton Academy and staff from Anniesland College to plan, organise and cook for the guests. They were also responsible for the 'Front of House' arrangements! Great thought was put into the menu and all the food was very healthy. Mrs S Robertson sampled the food and even brought back samples for the SMT meeting! Mrs Robertson thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon, especially the food! Congratulations to our pupils!

Lost Property

Can I remind parents that we have large quantities of property in the school office. We have clothing, jewellery and mobile phones, as well as shoes and bags. If your son/daughter has lost anything, please let us know. We will have a clear-out in the summer, so please phone in if you want to check if we have anything of yours!

Parent Council

On Friday 9th March the Parent Council held a 'Race Night' to raise money for the Parent Council funds. Despite the low numbers that attended, we raised a fantastic £315. It was also a very enjoyable night! Thanks to all those who helped with the organisation.

The next Parent Council event is a 'Bag-Pack' at Morrisons in Dumbarton on Saturday 21st April. We will be looking for volunteers from pupils and parents to help out on the day. Please support this event. All the monies raised go back in to supporting events in the school. All pupils benefit! Please contact the school office if you are able to help!

The next parent Council meeting is on Thursday 19th April at 7.00pm.

Can we also recommend the Scottish Government's Parent Website 'Parentzone'? The address of the website is: www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk

School Website

The school website is including more and more information for parents. The website address is: www.scottishschools.info/valeoflevenacademy

The website has recently been updated to include Study Skills materials which have been issued to all S5 and S6 pupils. There is also a copy of the SQA timetable as well as the VOLA Easter Revision School timetable.

Important Dates in the Summer Term

Friday 30th March: School closes for Easter break at 2.30pm

Monday 16th April: School reopens

Monday 23rd April : SQA Exams begin!! S4 Study Leave begins

Thursday 26th April: S3 Exams begin

Monday 7th May: May Holiday - school closed

Friday 11th May : S5/6 Study Leave Begins

Thursday 31st May : In - Service Day

Friday 1st June - Tuesday 5th June inclusive : May weekend (including Jubilee Holiday)

Wednesday 6th June : S4/S5 pupils return to school

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

Yours sincerely

Catriona M. Robertson

Enclosures

1. S4/5/6 - The SQA Process - A Parent's Guide to Survival
2. Easter Revision programme (S3/4/5/6/pupils only.)
3. S3 Exams letter and S3 exam timetable
4. S4/5/6 Exams letter