

# April Newsletter 2013



Dear Parent/Carer,

## A Message From The Head Teacher

Things are hectic with the S3 assessments and the start of the SQA exams. Can I begin by saying good luck to all pupils, who are taking their exams over the coming weeks? A huge amount of effort has been put into supporting pupils in their preparations, and we are confident they can do well! Please make sure you maintain your support - we are running 'The Day Before' revision classes - check the website or phone the school office for full details!

## Good News

New PT - Mr Matthew Hooper has started this week as the new Principal Teacher of PE in VoLA. Mr Hooper joins us from Stirling High School. We are delighted to welcome him, as the final member of the new team of middle managers to lead developments in VoLA in the forthcoming years.

There is further good news on the Nuffield Bursaries - Robyn Casey and Shannon O'Brien have also been selected for a Nuffield Scholarship this summer. Well done, Robyn & Shannon!!

We are in the process of selecting the next cohort for the SFA School of Football S1 intake. The trials will have taken place by the time you read this, and the final decisions will be taken in the next few weeks. A number of other sports are looking at the model of the School of Football....we hope to expand the project into other sports activities over the coming years.

The Charities Committee held a very successful quiz night before the Easter break. Staff, pupils, former pupils and parents made up the teams. Our regular host, Mr Stephen Halkett, entertained the crowd and ensured that the teachers didn't cheat too much! The purpose of the evening was to raise funds for the local charity - 'Vale of Leven Cancer Care Fund' - and over £700 was raised. Well done everybody!

57 S1 pupils and staff went to a Chocolate factory near Dumfries. (I am still waiting for samples!!)

## Music Department Good News

Our Musicians have been busy again.

A number of our Instrumental pupils were involved in the showcase day held in Glasgow last month at Music For Youth playing in the West Dunbartonshire Senior Wind Band. This same group have been invited again to perform with Music For Youth this term.

West Dunbartonshire's Spring Concert was a great success this year with pupils from VoLA being involved in The Youth Orchestra, Senior String Ensemble and The Senior Wind Band.

Those pupils were: Heather Fanning, Karen Shaw, Amy Fuller, Thomas Kinney-Nicol, Liam Walker, Kieran Oliver, Euan Priestley, Corrine Friel, Hayley Proudlock, Emma Anton, Samantha Oliver, Lucy Bolton, Tegan McKay and Angeline Friel.

Congratulations and well done to the pupils who have passed their Associated Board Grade Exams in Music this term: Lucy Bolton Grade 5 Clarinet, Lucy Cowen Grade 2 Clarinet, Lana Ritchie Grade 2 Clarinet and Louise Smith Grade 2 Flute.

## PE Department Good News

Heartstart - seven parents from Renton Primary School recently received a qualification in Heartstart. Miss Braid from our P.E. department delivered the first aid training, which had been organized by Pupil and Family Support worker Theresa Degan. All of the parents enjoyed the course and were interested to see part of the curriculum which is delivered to pupils in Vale of Leven Academy.

Ardlui Trip - 35 S2 pupils are participating in outdoor education at Ardlui Outdoor Centre at the end of April. They will experience canoeing, kayaking and mountain biking. Pupils had to fundraise for their trip and organised beat the goalie, crazy hair day and a bake sale. The bake sale was a huge success and raised £170 - well done!

Scottish Basketball Stars visit VoLA - S2 girls were very fortunate last month to receive a training session from the U16 National Women's Basketball Team. This was organised by Miss Braid with the Wellbeing Alliance. Representatives from the Wellbeing Alliance and Jackie Baillie MSP attended the visit and commented on the excellent levels of enthusiasm, ability and engagement demonstrated by all of our girls - well done!

Velodrome Visit - as a reward trip, 5 senior girls had the opportunity to cycle on the Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome track. This was a fantastic experience for the girls even though it was very hard work!

### **Easter Revision School/ Higher Masterclasses**

The school was a busy place throughout the Easter Break. Revision classes took place for most subjects and the library was open too so that all youngsters had access to a quiet study environment. VOLA also hosted the WDC Higher Masterclasses this year for pupils from VOLA, Our Lady & St. Patrick's High School and Dumbarton Academy. Pupil evaluations were very positive! Lauren McIntyre S6 VOLA Captain said "Having attended the Masterclass for Higher Mathematics has reinforced the structure of the exam. I have learned how to approach the exam in a way that will give me the best chance of executing my skills and knowledge to the very best of my ability. Overall, all of the Masterclasses I have attended have been exceptionally, beneficial as they have all increased my confidence in giving insights into how best to approach the exams." Lewis Burt S5 Dumbarton Academy said "The Masterclass was very informative and has helped me greatly understand the structure of an exam paper. The teacher was also very good at explaining questions. I would give the Masterclass 10/10 and would recommend it to a friend." Thanks to all staff for their involvement as well as to all pupils supporting the revision classes and working hard!

### **Fairtrade in Science**

All S2 Science pupils took part in a 'Go Bananas' lesson as part of our whole school 'Fairtrade Fortnight' event. Pupils were encouraged to think about the unfairness in the world and discuss how they believe this has happened. The objective of the lesson was to open the eyes of our young people and allow them to gain an insight into the life of banana growers in developing countries. Pupils were given a copy of the 'banana chain'. The journey bananas take from the grower to the retailer and eventually to the customer. The average banana costs 30 pence and our pupils were asked to decide where they thought each penny of that should go. Most of our S2 pupils believed that the banana growers were entitled to the biggest majority of the 30 pence as they had the difficult job of growing the fruit. When it was revealed that the growers actually received the least in the 'banana chain', our young people were shocked at the injustice. Fairtrade bananas were the next topic of discussion and pupils were pleased to hear that the grower of the bananas earns approximately half of the 30 pence paid for the banana. Then they watched an inspirational video showing the difference that Fairtrade has made to banana growers in the Dominican Republic. At the end of the lesson our young people were able to 'Go Bananas' and enjoy a lovely, guilt free, Fairtrade banana, half of which were kindly donated to the school by our local Asda and Morrisons stores.

### **Communication Base - Games Consoles**

Mr McDonald from the Communication Base has arranged to borrow games equipment from 'The Game Gear from LT Scotland/Consolarium'. The equipment will arrive shortly and we have it till the end of session. We can also bid again for next session. The equipment includes an Xbox 360, a PS3, 15 Nintendo 3DS consoles, and a selection of Games for each console. The equipment will be used during some class times as well as during intervals and lunchtimes - I am sure it will be very well used!

### **Procedures if Pupils Feel Unwell**

There have been quite a few occasions recently of parents phoning or turning up at school saying that their child has phoned/texted from class saying they are unwell. Office staff have then had to find the child, and in some circumstances they may be difficult to locate, if classes are displaced.

Can I remind parents that we have set procedures for when a pupil feels unwell, that all pupils should know? When a pupil feels unwell they should immediately speak to their teacher and let them know. If a pupil feels unwell between periods, they should go to their next period class to register their attendance and then tell the teacher. The teacher will make the decision to send the pupil to the school office. They can also assess the level of illness, and could, if necessary, get immediate first-aider help. The office will then contact the parent by phone. If pupils miss out this step then teachers do not know and there is a possibility a pupil could go to the toilets and faint and we would not know anything about it!

Please ensure your children follow the procedure - they are designed to keep our pupils safe! These procedures are for all pupils S1 - S6!

### **Primary Secondary Science Transition**

VOLA Science teachers recently visited Jamestown Primary School and Christie Park Primary School to teach P6 and P7 pupils about light, lenses and colour. These visits provided pupils with an opportunity to use equipment and carry out experiments to enhance their understanding of Science and to discuss their transition from Primary to Secondary School. Pupils really enjoyed the experience and commented:

"I thought it was very exciting when the secondary teachers came, because they showed us lots of interesting equipment and I learned a lot. My favourite part was when we got to use the periscope and go under the table but still see everything above!" - P6 pupil, Jamestown;

"I enjoyed today's lesson because it's something I've not done before."- P7 pupil, Christie Park.

Further visits to other cluster primary schools are planned during this term as part of VOLA Primary Secondary transition.

### **Lead 2014 - Commonwealth Games Project**

On 21<sup>st</sup> March, eight S3 pupils attended a Lead 2014 conference at University of Stirling. They attended workshops on organising and leading an event to promote the Commonwealth Games. The pupils will organise an event in the autumn term for the new S1. The pupils involved were: Angeline Friel, Corrine Friel, Olivia Haggarty, Amanda McLaughlin, Stewart MacLachlan, Lewis King, Caleb Jones and Mathew Lees. The pupils who represented Vale of Leven Academy were commended for being a credit to the school. Well done!

### **Enquire - The Scottish Advice Service For Additional Support For Learning**

Enquire offers free, independent, confidential advice and information on additional support for learning through:

- a telephone helpline - 0845 123 2303
- an email enquiry service - [info@enquire.org.uk](mailto:info@enquire.org.uk)
- an online enquiry service
- two websites - [www.enquire.org.uk](http://www.enquire.org.uk) (for parents, carers and practitioners) and [www.enquire.org.uk/yp](http://www.enquire.org.uk/yp) (for children and young people).

Enquire also provides a range of accurate, clear and easy-to-read guides and factsheets explaining everything from 'additional support in the early years' to 'what planning should take place for moving on from school'.

### **Fun Run for Eilidh**

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> April dawned clear and sunny - a perfect day for a fun run! This was the VOLA 5K in memory of Eilidh Kennedy. About 150 pupils, former pupils, staff and friends and family took to the paths of Balloch Park. Eilidh's husband and daughter also took part. Many of those taking part were sporting the Scottish Association for Mental Health T-shirts and running vests. The overall boys winner was Jack Lamont of S6, who completed the run in just under 21 minutes. Mr Derek Smith was the first male staff member home in just over 21 minutes. Holly Burnett and Mhairi Rennie used their School of Football training to lead home the girls, with Miss Karen Moore (formerly of our Home Economics department) the first female member of staff. Thanks go to Ms Julie Milner and Mrs Linda Page for all their work organising the event with the assistance of Maurice Donahue and staff from SAMH. The final tally of monies raised was over £1200. Well done everybody!! There is a 5k every Saturday at Balloch Park - Maurice says he would be delighted to see you again!

### **School Uniform**

As fashions change, so do the issues with uniform. Can I remind parents that black jeans, leggings and shorts are not allowed? Blazers are reappearing!! **Can I thank the very many parents, who make sure their sons and daughters are always properly kitted out for school.** I will next month give you arrangements for the purchase of blazers for next term. We are using the same suppliers and they will again be coming into school to allow measurements to be taken. If your son or daughter is leaving school, perhaps you could hand in their blazer? I am sure we could find a good home for them, so that all our pupils get the opportunity to wear the school blazer.

### **Lost Property**

As I mentioned in the March Newsletter we have large quantities of lost property in the school office such as New Look, Next, Cabrini, Crosshatch, Helly Hanson and Everlast jackets.

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! None of the clothing has any names on them!

### **Parent Council**

The Parent Council are always delighted to welcome new members. The date of the next meeting is Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk)

### **School Website**

The school website is including more and more information for parents. All newsletters are on the website. The website address is: [www.scottishschools.info/valeoflevenacademy](http://www.scottishschools.info/valeoflevenacademy)

The website contains a great deal of information about events in the school - and there are lots of photographs!

### **Important Dates in The Summer Term**

Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> April: last day of S4 attendance before the SQA exams

Friday 26<sup>th</sup> April: SQA Exams begin!! S4 Study Leave begins

Monday 6<sup>th</sup> May: May holiday - school closed.

Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> May: Last day of S5/6 attendance

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May: S5/6 Study Leave begins

Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> May: In - Service Day.

Friday 24<sup>th</sup> May - Monday 27<sup>th</sup> May inclusive: Holiday weekend.

Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May: S3 Health Day

Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> 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