

June Newsletter 2014



Dear Parent/Carer,

A Message From The Head Teacher

I am quite amazed that we are at the end of another very successful session. We have had a very busy few weeks. There has been the Senior and Junior Awards Ceremonies, Sports/Fun Day, Primary Visits, the Leavers' Dance, and the Summer Concert. The French Water Sports trip left on Saturday. There are two trips leaving to go to London - one a Seniors' Art Trip and the other to Harry Potter Theme Park. Next week we will also be having our Activities Programme with everything from Fishing to Alton Towers and 'Hair and Nails'!

On Thursday 26th June, school will close at 1.00pm. I hope you all have a great holiday - it will be over in a flash! Can I thank all parents for their support over the last session. Together we can achieve so much! I will write again at the beginning of August with all the information you will need for the beginning of the session.

Good News

The last few weeks have been all about celebrating good news, with the Senior Awards Ceremony, the Junior Awards Ceremony, the School Sports and the Summer Concert. We feel it is vital to support the great majority of youngsters, who work hard day in and day out to do their best for the school and for their families. This can be academic success, but we also recognise wider achievement too! We know that not all youngsters can be included in the awards ceremony, but this does not mean we do not value them and their hard work!! We are really proud of them all!!

Many of our senior pupils are going to have a busy summer!! A record number of sixteen pupils will be participating in the University of Strathclyde Summer School. Each of these courses lasts a week. Three more senior pupils have been successful in attaining Nuffield Bursary Awards, which will involve them working in the Universities in research projects for over four or more weeks. Furthermore some senior pupils have already spent a week working at Universities as part of the REACH programme, which prepares them for applications to the Medicine, Dentistry, Vet Medicine and Law Faculties. A number of pupils have also been on very prestigious work placements including Medicine at the Victoria Infirmary, Architecture with Cooper Cromar Architects, Accountancy with Ernst Young and Law with the Faculty of Advocates in Parliament House in Edinburgh. Wow!!

Business Studies Curricular Visits

On May 14th, 40 pupils and 4 staff travelled to Edinburgh to visit the Edinburgh Dungeon and the Hard Rock Café, with a stop off at Krispy Kreme on the way. This was an event that the S3 Admin and IT pupils had chosen, organised and booked entirely on their own as part of their course. Pupils had to make travel arrangements, book venues, calculate costs, correspond with parents, prepare itineraries and carry out evaluations as part of their project. A wonderful (but terrifying) time was had by all!

FairTrade

VOLA has been awarded the Fairactive Award from the Fairtrade Foundation for the work that the staff and pupils of the Fairtrade Committee, and the work of the different departments within the school, do. Some of the Fairtrade activities that the Committee are involved in are:

Mrs Chatterton and a group of S1-6 pupils organise the running of the School Fairtrade Committee - the senior pupils have been responsible for the running of the Fair Trade Tuckshop for the last 5 years as they have continued with their job from S2. In doing so, the group of pupils are raising money and also awareness of how Fairtrade ensures that disadvantaged farmers and workers in developing countries get a better deal.

S1 pupils were involved in presenting to S1-6 year group assemblies during Fairtrade Fortnight, and raised awareness of the "Help Foncho" Fairtrade Foundation campaign!

Senior pupils deal with stock control, cash handling, supervising of S3 pupils, who serve at the Pupil Tuck Shop and Staff Tuck Shop which goes round the different staff rooms twice a week.

The Senior pupils have taken raising awareness of Fairtrade a step further this year by trying to get other secondary schools in the authority involved in opening a Fairtrade tuckshop. They did this by delivering a presentation and offering support to pupils in Clydebank High and Our Lady and St Patrick's High School.

Mrs Chatterton would like to thank the following pupil members of the Committee, who have put in so much work in over the last few years - Karen Shaw, Thomas Kinney-Nicol, Ailsa Roddick, Bethany MacIntyre, Kate Thwaites, Amy Fuller, Shauna MacNicol, Melissa Hamilton, Abbie Robertson, Holly Muirhead, and Aimee Brown. The Fairtrade Committee intend to work towards gaining the Fairachiever Award (the Final School Fairtrade Award) next session.

S1 Champions Programme

Over the last few months, some S1 boys have been working with Ross McFarlane in the 'Champions In Schools' programme. Ross is a wrestler who will be representing Scotland in the Commonwealth Games. He is currently in Italy and will be heading to Moldova in a few days, before returning to Glasgow for his final preparation camp before the Games. Ross took the time this week to write to the First Year about how his preparation is going, and to remind them of the things he has said to them during the project. He wrote:

"Do you remember my last visit when I spoke about attitudes? It is your determination and commitment as well as respect for others that will help you through the challenges in your lives. Whether you want to be a paleontologist as one of you mentioned or your goal is to get a new bike or you want to become a pilot. All these things will have their own challenges, but there is no reason you cannot overcome them. You are all capable of working hard and applying yourself to achieve your goals. The hardest part is realising what your goal is!"

Ross is an inspiration and we want to wish him the best of luck in the games. We will be cheering him on!

Commonwealth Baton Relay

We had a very successful baton relay as part of our celebration of the Commonwealth Games. On Friday 13th June S1 pupils ran from VOLA to all nine associate Primary Schools, carrying batons made in the Technical Department. The event was organised with our Active Schools Coordinator, Katie Clucas. A great time was had by all! The S1 pupils arrived at the primaries to visit school assemblies and sports days. I believe the whole of Christie Park primary school greeted our pupils in the Christie Park. It was a brilliant day and even the sun showed face for it!

Scottish Baking Awards

The Scottish Baking Awards is a competition that is held every year and covers a wide variety of events. Our school was asked to take part this year as part of the 'Young Aspiring Bakers' section of the competition. Four S2 pupils - Caitlin Kane, Rhys McGowan, Connor Morgan and Victoria Robertson - all took part. They had two hours to make and present a cake. All four got through to the final! The final will be held in Mar Hall on the 28th of September. The pupils will meet all the other contestants, celebrity chefs and bakers at the prestigious 5 star hotel. Our school is one of nine schools and colleges to be represented in the category and one of our lucky four could win the overall prize. It has been a great opportunity for the pupils and they are all looking forward to the final in Mar Hall.

Scottish Able Pupils Network

Six of our pupils recently represented the Academy in a joint project with Glasgow University and the Scottish Network for Able Pupils (SNAP). Katie Allan, Anna McKenzie, Simone Mullen, Miruna Popescu, Kate Thwaites and Gary Wood had researched an area of Science they found interesting and created a scientific poster which they were able to display and talk about at Glasgow University. The event was a resounding success. The pupils were fantastic ambassadors for the school! They all wore their blazers and staff from the university commented on how smart they looked. They were exceptionally enthusiastic, motivated and responded well to the staff from the university. They were put on the spot to talk about their projects, which they had not prepared, and were all confident to deliver this in front of pupils from other schools as well as teachers and university staff. Also University/SNAP staff commented on the high standard of the posters produced - stating they looked of the same quality produced by University students! On the day of the visit pupils were also given the opportunity to visit the Anatomy Museum, the Hunterian Museum and have a tour around some of the University grounds. It was a very successful and very interesting day all round!! Well done!

Parent Council – New SQA Qualifications

The Parent Council has been approached by the Scottish Parent Teacher Council to find out parental views on the new qualifications, and have asked for the following to be included in our newsletter.

"If your youngster has been taking the new qualifications this year, how has it been? The Government has set up a working group to review how the experience has been, what can be learned, and parents are asked to feed in their views. The 3 questions are:

1. Based on your experiences what perspectives would you offer on the 2013/14 academic year?
2. From this, what areas would you suggest are a priority for reflection and action for session 2014/15?
3. What actions would also be of benefit in the longer term?

You are asked to email your responses to the Scottish Parent Teacher Council at sptc@sptc.info.

Alternatively your responses to the 3 questions should be sent to Iain Ellis, Chairperson, National Parent Forum Scotland at chair@npfs.org.uk "

Please take the time to email your views and whilst too late for this year they may help to shape things for the youngsters in the next few years!"

Defibrillator

As you know the S6 Charities Committee have done a fantastic job this year and their main focus was to provide a Defibrillator for our school. It has arrived!!! The defibrillator is easy to use and semi-automatic (it actually talks you through every step of the way). Because of the way the machine is set you are only able to 'shock' someone if they are in cardiac arrest. The machine checks everything for you.

We are carrying out familiarisation training for staff during the In-Set Days in August. Many parents are involved in voluntary work with Football teams, Badminton etc., using the Academy facilities. Do you think it would be worthwhile for us to set up a training event for you? Please let me know what you think!

Youth Philanthropy Initiative

This is the second year we have completed the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative with all of our 3rd year RME classes. Pupils researched and delivered presentations on small charities in the local area including Lennox Childrens Trust, Gareloch Riding for the Disabled and Tulloch amongst many others.

Our judging panel had a tough job deciding on a winning group due to the professional and passionate presentations our pupils made! In the end the panel selected the entertaining presentation by Liam Walker, Sandy Perrie, Cameron McKenzie, Ewan McElroy and JJ Cameron, awarding the Haldane Youth Services £3000 from the Wood Family Trust on behalf of the school.

The boys did a great job, but it is far from over, as the boys aim to keep in contact with the charity. They also attended the YPI National Event in Perth last week, where they had inspirational talks, networking opportunities and a performance from Scottish singer Nina Nesbitt as a reward for their achievement!

Other groups have also made a fantastic commitment to their charity: Megan Miller, Morgan Dornan, Natasha Hearne and Niamh Murdoch chose the West Dunbartonshire Mental Health Forum and they attended one of their events to deliver a presentation on YPI. This was a fantastic opportunity for the girls and they made a very positive impression on the Forum members!

YPI is a rewarding and exciting opportunity for our young people and the local community. We can't wait for next year's S3 pupils to get involved!

Good News from the Music Department

Leah Brown and Chirsty Harkins from S1 took part in the Enterprise Music Scotland Conference which took place in Glasgow in May. They played clarinet in a workshop being delivered by Paul Harris one of the UK's leading educationalists and composer of woodwind repertoire. Once again VoLA musicians represented the school in various ensembles at the recent WDC Summer Concert.

Members of our Ukulele Orchestra joined together with pupils from Clydebank High School and Dumbarton Academy to perform a World War 1 Medley. At Senior School level Lucy Bolton and Samantha Oliver, who successfully auditioned for the West of Scotland Concert Band, spent a week at their residential course. All the hard work rehearsing resulted in a concert at St. Andrew's in the Square, Glasgow on 13th June. Congratulations also go to Samantha Oliver who has been offered a place at The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's Junior Conservatoire to enable her to further her studies on Trombone.

Summer Concert - the Summer Concert took place on Tuesday 17th June with over 50 pupils involved in 6 different musical ensembles. The pupils had been working hard for months rehearsing a variety of pieces in different musical styles. As well as our usual groups, Wind Band, String Ensemble, Brass Group and Wind Ensemble the Ukulele Group reprised their World War 1 Medley.

Our soloists/duetists for the evening were Amy Fuller, Miruna Popescu, Keiran Oliver, Euan Priestly, Abby Shaw, Laura Shaw, Ben McColl and Georgia Clark who all performed with flair and confidence. It was a great evening and we are very proud of all our participants!!

Uniform 2014/2015

Academy Uniforms have now made two visits to the school to allow fittings for blazers. Over 200 blazers were sold on one evening! Parents can still order blazers on-line or by phone. **They will also come into school on Wednesday 25th June from 3pm - 4.30pm for a final visit for ordering/measuring blazers; you can buy them there and then, order them, or order on line. All blazers cost £28**

The Academy Uniforms web address is: www.academyuniformsmpc.com and telephone no. 01355 244 879. Order forms are available from the school office, as are a selection of blazers for sizing. All orders received by Academy Uniforms on or before 10th July will be delivered free of charge to the school for pick-up on Thursday 7th August. Parents can collect orders between 10.00 and 11.00 on that day. If you purchase a maroon blazer elsewhere, school badges are available for purchase from the school office at a cost of £4.50!

SFA School of Football

From August we will welcome our third cohort of pupils to the SFA School of Football. Twenty pupils have been selected from over forty applicants, from a series of trials, to become the latest cohort within VOLA. When they start in August they will have the equivalent of five periods per week of football/sport-related activities. This will be on top of their regular studies - they will be expected to do the same coursework and homework as everyone else! Gerry McPartlane, from our PE department, will continue to head up the project within the Academy.

The School of Football pupils will study how to keep themselves healthy and free from injury, whilst taking on an increased participation in sport - warm ups, warm downs and nutrition are just as important as skills to a sportsman or sportswoman.

Free School Meal/Clothing Grants

Application forms for Free School Meals and Clothing grants can be obtained from the One Stop Shop at the Housing Office in Mitchell Way, Alexandria, G83 0LW. The opening hours are 8.30am - 4.15pm every weekday apart from Thursday when it is 9.30am - 4.15pm. If you have any queries regarding a clothing grant or free school meals please telephone the contact centre on 01389 738282.

European Week

The week beginning 2nd June saw all S1 pupils learning European facts in all of their normal classes. In their German periods for example, pupils studied Italian - Ciao! The greetings in the tannoy announcements were in a different language each day (the HT's accent did leave a little to be desired on some days!!) All S1 pupils completed a homework project on a European country and some pupils created amazing 3D models. The winner of the model competition was Eilidh Lumsden of 1F1 with her model of the Eiffel Tower.

European week culminated in a multimedia interactive quiz in the hall on Friday 7th June, which was attended by the whole of S1. Each registration class was represented by a boy and a girl - these were eventually whittled down after a very close sudden death buzzer round between Emma Ross, 1C1, Kieran Ashton, 1L2 and Ewan Nicol 1C2. The winner of the quiz was Ewan Nicol of 1C2 who remembered absolutely everything he had learned during the week, well done! As a result Arden and Cameron houses both received 100 house points!!

CSI Day

S1 pupils had a fabulous Inter Disciplinary Learning day on Monday 12th June when they had to become detectives and forensic scientists for the day and investigate the murder of ...the Head Teacher!!! The day began with a tannoy announcement calling all S1 pupils to the Assembly Hall after the announcement 'There's been a murder!!'. Suspects were questioned, fingerprints taken and DNA samples tested as part of the day. I am slightly concerned that there seemed to be no shortage of volunteers to be the murderer, including Depute Head Teacher, Mrs Sandra Robertson!! Not only that, but she was eventually identified as the culprit!! I am delighted to say that the news of my demise was greatly exaggerated, and I am now back in post! Can I thank particularly Mrs Evette Milne and Mr Joe Keegan of the Science department who lead the development of this activity - they put in a huge amount of work on this initiative. Thanks to all involved!

SQA Results

The SQA certificates will be posted to pupils to arrive on Tuesday 5th August. Pupils who have registered on the 'mySQA' website will get their results by text or e-mail the same morning. There is still time to register for this service. You can register with MySQA until 5pm on Tuesday 8th July and activate your account by 5pm on Wednesday 16th July. The website address is www.mySQA.org.uk Sending texts and e-mails to everyone who is signed up to MySQA is a massive task. It is possible your text/e-mail will be received very early on the morning of 5 August. This is because results are released in batches and delivery is determined by your telephone/e-mail provider.

Remember, National 4 Courses are awarded as either 'Pass' or 'Fail' and have no overall grade. You will probably know the result from your teacher prior to the summer holidays and the text/e-mail you receive will simply confirm the result.

S5/6 Option Renegotiations

Every year a number of pupils coming back into S5 or S6 want to renegotiate their options based on their SQA examination results. This process will take place before the school officially reopens. Staff will be available on Thursday 7th and Friday 8th August for this purpose. Please phone the school office to make an appointment if your son/daughter wishes to make use of this process. (Due to the numbers involved, phoning in advance is vital!)

P7 Visit/P7 Parents Night

We had a very successful P7 visit on Tuesday 10th June. Pupils from all the associate primaries attended and the new intake discovered which classes they would be in! Our new pupils were well behaved and very enthusiastic about being in VOLA and taking part in new classes and subjects. They made their own way to the academy, and followed a timetable throughout the day similar to the one they will follow in August. In the evening, parents and P7 pupils attended the Parents' Information Evening. Around 200 parents and P7 pupils attended - it was a very busy but successful evening. P7 pupils also had the opportunity to be measured for their blazers or indeed purchase them. We look forward to welcoming the new S1 intake in August!

Parent Council

The Parent Council has again agreed to present ties to all the new S1 pupils to welcome them to the Academy. I am in the process of visiting the leavers' ceremonies to present the ties on behalf of the Parent Council. Unfortunately a lot of the events are on the same day at the same time, so the Depute Head teachers are helping out! I know you will make them very welcome!

Hopefully some of the new S1 parents will want to join the Parent Council. We are always happy to welcome new members. Even if your child is further up the school and you haven't been involved before, we would be delighted to welcome you! The first meeting of the new session is 7.00 pm on Thursday 28th August 2014. The AGM will be held on Thursday 18th September

Sports Day 2014

Sports Day 2014 was a huge success and our pupils produced some outstanding athletics performances in the sunshine! We also enjoyed a barbeque, bouncy castle, face painting and sponge the teacher to name but a few stalls. The overall individual champions were:

S1 Girls - Charli Munley (Fruin)

S1 Boys - Ruairaidh Stark (Cameron)

S2 Girls - Lauren Patrick (Fruin)

S2 Boys - Paul Gallacher (Cameron)

S3 Girls - Rebekah Moffat (Fruin)

S3 Boys - Reece Pollock (Fruin)

Senior Girls - Eilidh Sinclair (Cameron)

Senior Boys - Joshua Berry (Arden)

Mrs Sandra Robertson was delighted because, for the fifth year in a row, Fruin were crowned overall Sports Champions!

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

The website contains a great deal of information about events in the school. The text of the latest version of school handbook is now available on the website.

Important Dates

Please note that all the WDC school holiday information is on the WDC website. If you google WDC you will find links to all the school holiday information for next session.

Thursday 26th June - School Closes at 1.00 pm

Tuesday 5th August - SQA certificates arrive

Thursday 7th and Friday 8th August- S5/6 pupils can renegotiate options

Tuesday 12th August - teachers return

Thursday 14th August - pupils return

Thursday 28nd August - Parent Council Meeting

Thursday 18th September - Parent Council AGM

I hope you all have a great holiday. We will send out a mailing in August with all the relevant details for the new session. If you have any concerns / questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on the school number - 01389 777000.

Yours sincerely

Catriona M. Robertson