

Newsletter –December 2020

Welcome

As we approach the end of a long, challenging but highly productive term I wanted to write on behalf of all of our staff within the school to thank you all for your continued support in ensuring that our young people continue to turn up every day with a very positive attitude to learning and that they remain fully engaged in their studies.

Of course, the rich variety of activities that we would normally offer such as extra-curricular clubs, trips and exchanges, dances, competitions, shows and so on has been inevitably compromised throughout the term due to COVID restrictions. Our S2-6 pupils are more aware of what we normally offer, whilst our S1 pupils may be less aware of the breadth of opportunities and experiences that we usually provide beyond the classroom. Hopefully as the year progresses we can open up more opportunities for our pupils to engage in the wider life of the school beyond the classroom.

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Arrangements for Monday 21 December

In line with East Dunbartonshire Council guidelines, we will be operating in a different way on Monday 21 December. This is to minimise close contacts and thus reduce the need to carry out track and trace procedures that may arise during the winter break. On Monday pupils will not follow a normal timetable but will be in **one** classroom throughout the day, including interval and lunchtime. We will ensure that all pupils are two metres distanced from one another and we will provide meaningful work for pupils, though this will not be their normal timetabled classes. As pupils will be in a class for the duration of the day it is important that they bring a packed lunch with them. Pupils in receipt of free school meals will be catered for through a grab bag lunch the will be accessed from our school canteen.

Staffing

We welcomed Ms Emily Reid to our school in November. Ms Reid has joined the English department from Whitburn Academy and has already settled in well. Ms Reid is already proving to be a great addition to the school.

As intimated in a letter issued a couple of weeks ago, Ms Lynne McCosh a member of our Mathematics department and a principal teacher of guidance who had worked in the school since 1999, passed away recently, aged 52. Ms McCosh's influence upon the school and for many of our families has been a long and very positive one. It was because of this that many parents/carers wrote in or sent cards to the school. We have passed messages on to Ms McCosh's family. On Wednesday 2 December many of Ms McCosh's colleagues both present and past attended her funeral in Ayr and as a school we held a two minute silence as a mark of respect for Ms McCosh's contributions to the school over two decades. This was impeccably observed and for this we thank all our pupils and staff.

School Captains and House Captains

Our school captaincy team was selected in September and I explained how we had decided upon our eight S6 who would form our captaincy team. We had a final round of interviews in late October to select our two school captains. The interviews from all eight pupils was of a very high standard and we would have been happy to have appointed any of the eight as school captains. The school captains for 2020-21 are:

- **Captains** - Emily Giffen and Kiendi Searle-Mbullu
- **Vice captains** – Helena Crofts, Nina Logue, Alex Marshall, Clare Yule, Murray Seggie, Samuel White.



Our House Captains for 2020-21 are:

Fleming House – Lois Coulter and Connor Fergusson

Inglis House – Scott Keenan and Drew Cruikshanks

Mackintosh House – Isabella Fraser and Calum Smith

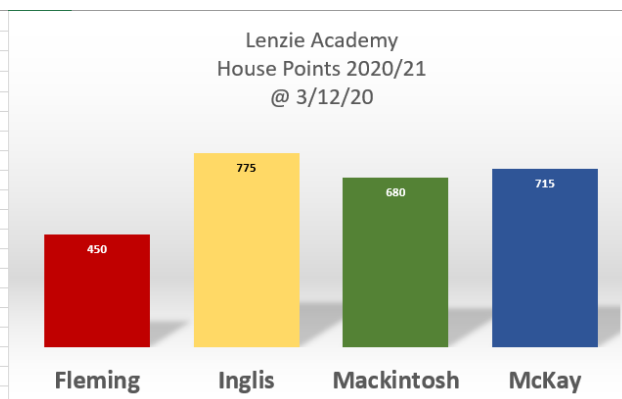
Mackay House – Emily MacDonald and Louise Norris



House Update

Despite not being able to hold as many inter-house challenges as we have in previous years, there have been some innovative ways for pupils to earn points for their house. The latest points accumulated by our house groups' show that Inglis house (guidance groups WR/MB) are in the lead. Below show the results with McKay house (MC/CN) in 2nd place, Mackintosh house (RA/SL) in 3rd place and Fleming house (CO/MC) in 4th place, with the results of the current challenge; Race to the North Pole – still to be finalised things could easily change.

	Fleming	Inglis	Mackintosh	McKay
Total Points	450	775	680	715
Position	4	1	3	2
Event				
Aug-Sept Merits	25	100	75	50
S6 Halloween		25	25	25
October Merits	25	50	75	100
S1 SOTM October	15	10	15	20
Odd Socks Day (Staff)	50	50	75	100
Odd Socks Day (Pupils)	25	100	75	50
PE Role Model September	10	30	10	0
PE Role Model October	10	20	20	0
Book week Quiz	100	75	75	25
Shoe box appeal	75	100	25	75
S1 SOTM November	15	15	10	20
November Merits	25	100	75	50
Art Christmas Cards	25	75	50	100
PE December competitions	50	25	75	100



Rugby Pitch

After a couple of delays, due to hold ups at planning and environmental services, the work on the new pitch begins on Monday 4 January. This means that there will be no vehicular access from the Myrtle Avenue entrance when the school starts back on Wednesday 6 January. The bottom car park will be used as a site compound for the contractor so will not be available for any parents/carers. As advised in my letter issued earlier this term, parents/carers are advised to agree a pick up point well away from the school to reduce traffic congestion in and around Myrtle Avenue.

EDC Annual Review

This year's annual review was very different in nature and did not focus on the school's attainment profile, for understandable reasons. The focus for this year was on the school's recovery plan and how we are dealing with learning loss. The meeting also focused on our contingency planning in the event of a requirement to move to a 'blended' learning model in the event of another lockdown. There was also discussion of our assessment plans for senior phase pupils as well as the usual review of the school's positive destination figures. It is fair to say that officers of the council were highly satisfied with the school's plans and how we are taking them forward.

Senior Phase Assessments

As you will be aware by now, the Deputy First Minister, John Swinney MSP, has now called off the Higher Grade and Advanced Higher Grade examination diet for 2021. As a consequence of this decision we will be amending our approach to senior phase assessment to try and make sure that all of our S4-6 pupils have the best possible opportunity to maximise their potential. The changes we have made / will make are:

1. In the expectation that this eventuality might arise all departments were asked to review their assessment regime in August and make changes to ensure we had more regular and robust evidence available. This has already been put in place and implemented.
2. In light of the decision to cancel National 5 examinations made earlier in the session we have pushed our S4 assessment block back from January to March. This will allow more time for revision and consolidation of course work prior to sitting assessments.
3. The decision to cancel the H Grade AH Grade diet means that we will push their assessment block back from the beginning of January towards the end of January. This will allow all departments to have more time for revision for 2-3 weeks once we come back from the winter break. The pupils will not sit a full preliminary examination, as would normally be the case. Instead they will sit a shorter assessment in late January / early February and they will have another opportunity to sit a final assessment after we come back from the spring break in April. Allied to their October assessments and some small scale additional assessments that have already been put in place we feel confident that this approach gives our pupils the best chance to demonstrate their potential when we engage with SQA about pupil estimates.

The key issue that we have made clear to all of our Senior Phase pupils is that **ALL assessments this year matter**. It is important that this message comes from parents/carers as well and we thank in advance for your cooperation in this matter.

Supported Study

We have had good attendance at our supported study sessions across November and December. We will continue these throughout January to March to ensure that we give additional opportunities for our pupils to consolidate key areas of their learning. It is important in light of pupil performance that they attend the subjects where they need most support and when the focus is on areas where they need to improve upon most. Pupils should engage with their class teachers if they are unsure about any aspect of their learning.

UCAS

This year we have 129 of our senior pupils applying for university/college places through the UCAS system. Of these 17 were for early entry courses including Oxford, Cambridge, Medicine, Veterinary Medicine and Dentistry. Of the remaining 112 there are a wide variety of areas that our pupils want to progress to after school including – engineering courses, business courses, law, primary teaching, nursing, science related courses, architecture, psychology, journalism, English literature, modern foreign language courses, computer games design, maths, accountancy, economics, social sciences, product design, Film/TV studies, PE / sports related courses and much more besides.

We support our pupils through the UCAS process in a variety of ways:

- Our guidance staff ensure that they help pupils with their personal statements.
- Our guidance staff, who know pupils best, write a detailed reference for pupils and base this on their knowledge of the individual pupil and from academic feedback from subject staff.
- Our admin staff ensure that the forms are completed accurately.
- Our DHTs offer pupils mock interviews and provide extensive feedback and further interviews if pupils feel they would benefit from this.
- We offer mock interviews for college courses after January when pupils start to apply for college places for NC/HNC and HNDs.
- We get outside experts to assist our pupils where we can do so.
- We facilitate buddying systems with former pupils e.g. this year one of our pupils has applied for Law at Oxford and we have buddied him up with an ex-pupil who is currently in her third year of a law degree at Oxford.

Contemplation Area

In late October this year we unveiled two benches for former pupils who passed away in October 2018. The benches were among the eight that had been donated by Craig Murie, Managing Director of SJS Ltd. We are eternally grateful to Craig for his kind donation and to Mr Gary Logue, former vice chair of our parent council who facilitated the link with SJS. Both Craig and Gary attended the unveiling of the benches in a very moving ceremony in October.

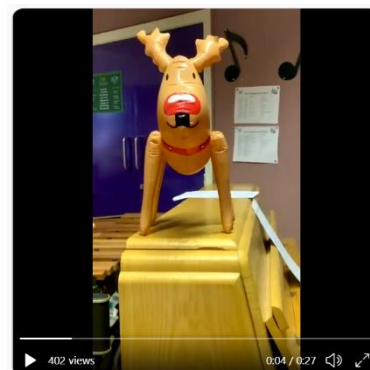
The benches are the first part of the development of a proper contemplation area within our quadrangle. Mr Farquhar, DHT for S4, has been working with East Dunbartonshire Council to try and secure funding to develop a contemplation area for the school. This work is ongoing and we will update as and when we can.

Twitter Concert!



Staff and pupils have been busy creating Christmas performances in class and at home. We have some Christmas music from the Higher and Advanced Higher classes, a Wind Ensemble from Mrs Brown, a Junior Choir and Senior Vocal Ensemble too! All items have been uploaded to our Lenzie Academy Performing Arts Twitter Page @lenziepa. You don't need to have a Twitter account to see the items – enjoy!

We look forward to next year when hopefully we can perform our Music to you again at our annual Christmas Concert – we miss our live audience. Thank you all for your support over the years – we hope to see you next December 😊





Young Musician of the Year



We held a digital Young Musician of the Year last week and asked pupils to upload a video of their performance to TEAMS. The Music Staff enjoyed all the performances – thank you to all 15 pupils who took part, especially our younger candidates in S3. Congratulations to Ross MacRitchie for winning the Popular Music Category on drum kit, Verna Lai and Ross Donaldson for jointly winning the Classical Music Category with cello and French horn, and Lauren O'Hare for winning the Vocal Category. All round marvellous musical masterpieces!



Composing Competition

A reminder to all pupils looking to participate in the Composing Competition – audio needs to be uploaded before the end of term! This will be judged upon our return in January. Good luck to all and thanks for getting involved!

Follow the Performing Arts department on Twitter @lenziePA

S6 Ethics Ambassador's 2020

The following pupils: Heather D, Christie B, Moira P, Lordina K and Rachel H have been selected to become Lenzie Academy's new Ethics Ambassadors after giving some impressive presentations on what ethics means to them, in front of a panel in the History department. This was a new S6 leadership role that was introduced last year with the purpose of having a group of S6 pupils who display a genuine interest in issues of ethics and moral issues, to uphold the school values of 'tolerance', 'respect', 'inclusiveness' and 'compassion' and act as role models and mentors to younger pupils. Last year, the ambassadors were involved in leading the schools' annual Holocaust Memorial Day assemblies in January, assisting younger pupils with S1 Bounce Back Day in November and leading the S1 Holocaust Exhibition in February to name but a few. Despite obvious challenges this year, we are hopeful that our new ambassadors will have the same opportunities as well as a chance to develop the role, working closely with other groups across the school, including the Equalities and Diversity group.

J Byres



Retrieval Practice

The Learning and Teaching committee are focusing on Retrieval Practice during the 2020/21 session. Many studies have shown that Retrieval Practice is one of the most powerful learning strategies and it works equally well in the classroom or as a study strategy for individual students at home. It is beneficial beyond its use as a revision strategy for exams and, as such, is considered a skill for life.

Due to the Covid restrictions on staff meetings the Learning and Teaching committee have created an online video course for all staff to learn the fundamentals of Retrieval Practice and how to use it effectively in the classroom. We are also providing resources that allow staff to begin using Retrieval Practice strategies in their classrooms straight away.

In early December the Learning and Teaching committee hosted an after-school seminar for staff with Kate Jones who broadcast live from Abu Dhabi to Lenzie Academy! Kate Jones is recognised as one of the leading Retrieval Practice experts in the world having written two acclaimed books on the subject.

At home you may hear pupils mentioning Retrieval Practice as it is being used in every department in the school. All S1 and S2 pupils have completed a 6 week elective on memory and study skills which included lots of opportunities to use Retrieval Practice strategies. The Learning and Teaching committee is currently developing resources to send home to parents and carers of selected year groups that demonstrate how they can engage with Retrieval Practice at home to help their child study and develop this very beneficial life skill.

School events / updates

- We raised over £1200 for Children in Need in November through our dress down day.
- We had an 'odd socks day' in November as part of mental health awareness week.
- Our S3 Mentors have been chosen for this year and will work with P7s and collect questions before making a video about what life is like being a pupil in Lenzie Academy.
- Our school captains have been making a video to facilitate a 'virtual open evening' for P7 pupils and their parents. This involves them going round all departments and filming some of the work that takes place before editing a video for P7 pupils.
- We have embarked upon 'Strava Challenge' (with the PTA). This involves our pupils walking, cycling or running the equivalent of to the North Pole and back. We would hope to raise nearly £1000 for the school through this venture.
- Some of our S6s have set up an 'Operation Shoe Box' appeal which is going well.
- We had a Christmas Fayre on 11 December, which was a huge success. Thanks to Ms Quearns in Business Education and the Retail class for organising this.
- Our Christmas Tree appeal for staff, organised Ms Marshall in PE, enabled lots of presents to be purchased for distribution to children for whom Christmas doesn't necessarily bring a lot of joy in terms of presents/gifts. Well done to all staff who participated and purchased gifts for children to bring a little joy into their lives.
- Many of our staff have engaged in a competition to 'decorate your door'. There are some outstanding examples on show. There are house points at stake so let's hope we get a worthy winner.

Art Christmas Card competition winner

As mentioned earlier, one of our house challenges was for our S1 pupils to design a Christmas card and the winner was Sophie in class 1.10



**WISHING YOU A HAPPY AND
PEACEFUL CHRISTMAS
FROM
ALL OF THE STAFF AND PUPILS
AT
LENZIE ACADEMY**

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