



CURRICULAR FLEXIBILITY
S3 PARENTS' INFORMATION
EVENING
DECEMBER 2005
A SUMMARY

The purpose of this information booklet is to summarise some of the main points of information and advice given during the S3 Parents' Information evening on Wednesday December 7th 2005.

THE PURPOSES OF THE EVENING

- To explain the presentation policy for S3 pupils approaching SQA exams in 2006.
- To outline proposals for the combined senior school timetable for session 2006-07.
- To provide some insight into learning and teaching strategies.
- To provide some information on how parents can support their children's studies.
- To provide an opportunity for parents to ask questions.

SQA EXAMINATIONS: PRESENTATION POLICY

- All pupils will sit exams in all subjects unless there is a compelling reason not to.
- Pupils will be encouraged to continue with study in English and Maths into S4.
- Pupils who do not attain the equivalent of Standard Grade 4 in English and Maths will continue with these subjects in S4. The school is currently identifying courses which will deliver work-related English and Maths, for this group of pupils.

Expectations

- Neither the school, parents nor the children themselves should expect S3 pupils to attain at the end of S3 what they might have attained at the end of S4.
- The real test of the new curricular structures will be measured by what pupils have attained once they leave school.

PROPOSALS FOR COMBINED SENIOR TIMETABLE

- Pupils from the current S3, 4 and 5 will all choose subjects from the same option form.
- The aim of the new timetable will be to provide greater choice of subjects and levels across the three years of the new senior school. By this means, more children should be able to progress at a pace which is more appropriate for them and in subjects which are also more suited to their talents and career requirements.
- Some existing subjects will be offered at new levels or with new content, for example Int 1 Maths, Int 2 Geography, Chemistry, Physics, French and German.
- There will also be a number of new subjects delivered by Academy staff including, Fashion and Textile Technology, Retail and units in Art and Design.
- In addition, we hope to offer some new subjects to be delivered at the Academy but by staff from outside the school. Our plans include courses in, Psychology, Rural Skills and Managing Environmental Resources.
- Pupils will choose five subjects to be studied for five periods a week.
- Depending upon which year the pupil is in, the balance of time will be spent on a range of options including PE, RME, PSE/Study Support, food preparation, enterprise or WOSSTA (West of Scotland Sea Trades Association) courses.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

One of the main threads of the Curricular Change package at the Academy has been an increased emphasis on learning and teaching strategies.

Reading over notes is not "learning" – pupils should be encouraged to engage in active learning, that is – learning something by reworking the information in some way, for example:

- mind maps.
- mnemonics.
- story boards.
- cartoon strips.
- making up rhymes and jingles.
- practice questions.
- recording information onto disc/tape.
- teaching one-another how to do something.
- testing one another.
- explaining something to a parent.

SUPPORT IN SCHOOL

Various forms of support for your child are available in school, for example:

- Homework Club (Tuesdays and Thursdays 3.45-5.00 from Tuesday 10th January).
- Study Classes (Lunchtimes and after school from early January).
- Easter School (Two day revision school in Easter holidays).
- Subject Teachers.
- Guidance Teachers.
- Support for Learning staff.
- Friends.

Of course, **YOU** are your child's biggest source of support outside school.

SUPPORT AT HOME

Parents can support their children's learning in a number of ways including:

- Accept that children study in different ways.
- Encourage your child to think positively.
- Provide them with a space to work.
- Accept that they may wish to have music playing.
- They will need a five minute break every forty minutes or so.
- They may need to drink or eat.
- Ask your son/daughter to explain something which they have been studying to you.
- Encourage them to get at least eight hours sleep.

The Learning Kit

The following items should help your child to organise their study and to develop good learning habits:

- A4 folders.
- Subject dividers.
- Highlighter pens.
- "Post It" notes of different colours.
- Index cards and index box.
- Different coloured pens.
- Lined paper and plain paper.

FOOD, DRINK AND RELAXATION

Food and Drink

- Children should drink plain not flavoured water during the day.
- Fizzy drinks dehydrate children and the caffeine "hit" is totally counter-productive.
- Children should not drink "Red Bull" or any other so called "energy" drink – these products are full of caffeine and/or sugar.
- Pupils who eat a good breakfast in the morning are 15% more alert than those who do not.
- Pupils should not eat fatty or sugary foods at lunchtime – as this can make them lethargic in the afternoon.

Relaxation Techniques

- Children perform best when they are in a state of "relaxed alertness". If they are too stressed then their brain is flooded by adrenaline and it stops working.

- The school recently engaged Tree of Knowledge to teach pupils about the power of positive thinking, the importance of goal setting and some relaxation techniques. Parents could support their children by reinforcing these ideas.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The following questions were raised either before or during the evening:

- 1. Are there any problems anticipated in completing the syllabus, in the various subjects, on time?**
 - Most pupils are on course.
- 2. When will final decisions be made as to which exams each pupil will sit?**
 - All pupils will sit exams in their subjects unless there are pressing reasons not to. Decisions about which levels children will be entered for, will be taken in late February/early March.
- 3. Will Higher Mathematics be covered in one year by pupils who pass Intermediate 2 in S3.**
 - A limited number of pupils may opt to undertake a one year Higher in one or two subjects but most pupils will take two years to reach Higher.
- 4. What is going to happen in 4th year?**
 - Pupils in S3 will choose their subjects from the same combined senior school timetable options as those currently in S4 and S5.
- 5. Can other subjects be picked up?**
 - Yes, pupils may opt to continue with existing subjects to the next level or choose a new subject altogether.
- 6. Will Universities still accept pupils who do not sit 5 Highers in one sitting?**
 - The requirements for pupils to sit 5 Highers at one sitting relates to Medicine and Veterinary Medicine at certain universities, only. However, Edinburgh, for example, currently reserves a percentage of their places for candidates who do not meet this criterion. For a number of reasons, including the increasing number of schools that are changing their curriculum structures, the majority of medical schools will shortly announce the introduction of an aptitude test for applicants which will enable them to put all applicants on an even playing field in assessing potential.
- 7. Will careers meetings be held during the day so that parents can attend during the day?**
 - The S3 Parents' Evening will take place at the usual time but Guidance interviews, to which parents are invited, will be held during the day.
- 8. Will Drama be an option in the future?**
 - We are currently investigating the possibility of appointing a drama specialist to work with the cluster schools (Kirkcudbright Academy and its associate primaries). However, we would prefer to see specialist facilities in place at the Academy before we consider offering Drama as a certificated option.
- 9. How important is the prelim in determining the final grade?**
 - The prelim is one means by which information on performance is gathered. If an appeal were necessary, the Exam Board would also look for evidence of attainment in class. Because of the high levels of absence due to illness during the prelims, many subjects will be actively gathering evidence by other means prior to the exams in May.