**HT Update December 2017**

Dear Parent/Carer

As we approach the end of term, I would like to thank you for your support and highlight some of our work this term.

Our school show “All Shook Up” was a great success with fantastic performances from all involved in this production. All the months of planning and rehearsals really paid off. Our Performing Arts Faculty also led with the organisation of our Carol Service this week at St Machar Cathedral. Our choirs, concert band and string orchestra made this a very special evening in the run up to Christmas.

This year our chosen charity is CLIC SARGENT (YOUNG LIVES vs CANCER). As a school community we are very committed to this cause as all funds go to supporting young people and their families. We have already raised a significant sum and on behalf of the Charities Committee, thank you for your ongoing contributions.

Our World Challenge Team are busy preparing for their summer expedition and held a very popular fundraising event, “Grammar’s Got Talent.” The assembly hall was full every lunchtime, the acts were great fun and there was much audience participation! There may be a similar event scheduled next term! Our Art & Design Faculty ran an exhibition for the first time to show assessed pieces at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher. The quality of the work was inspiring and again much appreciated by all who attended.

As I often say during information evenings, our most frequent request from you is for advice on how to support your child’s learning. As such, we have expanded our “Planning for Success” evenings. This term we introduced S1 parents to ways they can support their child with literacy, numeracy and wider study habits and skills. The Senior Phase Planning for Success evening provided more specific details on study techniques, Google Classroom and dealing with anxiety.

In our school we place a high value on extra-curricular activities and broader learning experiences out with the classroom. I am very grateful to staff for giving up their own time to run various groups and activities across the school. All subject areas are to be commended for this high level of commitment. This has been more formally recognised in terms of sports. We have achieved the Gold Award for Sport and Secondary School of the Year for Sport. Please continue to encourage your child to opt in and take part.

Our new library is now up and running. A reminder that this is open for study before and after school, 8:00am to 4:30pm. It is a very busy space and well used by our pupils.

It is important to us that we recognise pupil achievements and celebrate success. As such we run achievement and colours assemblies every term. We have amended the criteria for achieving colours. It is still challenging to achieve colours but we have included a category to recognise performance and commitment beyond sport and the arts. Pupils can now receive colours as part of a citizenship award. They have been briefed on the new criteria within school.

As part of our own self-evaluation procedures to secure further improvement, the Senior Management Team and Principal Teachers have been visiting classes. Class teachers are also sharing ideas through peer visits. I have mainly been in senior classes and it has been a pleasure to speak with our young people. Most of them talked to me about their target grades and the specific steps they are taking to achieve these.

Moving on to next term, our Senior Phase pupils (S4, S5, S6) have their Estimate Examinations starting on Monday 15th January. They have been issued with their examination timetables and assemblies were held with them to go over arrangements. The Estimate Examinations are important and solid revision for these really helps when it comes to the final examinations. We invest a lot of time in setting up, running and then marking the examinations to give our pupils the very best feedback and exam experience.

Next term, a lot of information will be issued regarding course choice. For this year, it will still be paper based and the booklets will appear on the main school website. We will also have course choice and learner pathways evenings involving employers, further and higher education providers. Last year, parents and pupils commented favourably on the opportunity to talk with people from a variety of sectors. You can see this work in our School Improvement Plan (SIP) under the initiative “Developing the Young Workforce”, commonly known as DyW. Next year, we will have in place a new Learner Pathways website which will include all course choice and careers information. The aim being to provide easily accessible information to support our pupils in making informed and well researched subject choices.

I have touched on some of our work this term but if you would like more information, please visit our website and see our Standards & Quality Report and our School Improvement Plan (SIP).

With best wishes for 2018.

Ms Murison

Head Teacher