

Summer 2018 Update

As we approach the summer holidays, I would like to share with you my Prize Giving Speech as this captures some of our key achievements this year. Also, I will cover some key information in relation to staff appointments and ask for your support in maintaining high standards of dress (uniform). I will be writing to you again in the new session and asking for your thoughts on our new School Improvement Plan (SIP). For now, I wish you a very happy and enjoyable summer.

Staff news

We have four members of staff retiring this summer. Mr McLean and Mrs Philip from the Mathematics Faculty; Mr Brooks from the Art, Design & Technology Faculty and Mrs Thom (Principal Teacher Pupil Support, Byron House). I am sure you will join me in wishing them a long and happy retirement.

Miss Malone (Biology) and Miss Cook (Business Studies) are moving on to new schools and we wish them well for the future.

I am pleased to say that following a successful recruitment process we will be fully staffed in August. We welcome the following new teachers to our staff.

Mr Boni, Mr Fraser, Miss Tang (Mathematics)
Miss Ali, Mrs Murison, Miss Kennedy (Science)
Miss Speedie (Art & Design)
Miss Robb (Business Studies)
Mr Henderson (Modern Studies)
Mr Stuart (Drama)

The Byron House Team led by Mrs Bell as Depute Head Teacher will have two new Principal Teachers of Pupil Support. Miss Norrie will take over from Mrs Thom. Miss Bruce has already started in post and has taken over from Mr Allan.

Uniform

At Aberdeen Grammar School, we are keen to set and maintain high standards and an important aspect of this is adhering to our school uniform expectations.

Our school uniform comprises of:

- SCHOOL BLAZER WITH BADGE
- SCHOOL TIE
- WHITE/GREY/BLUE SHIRT/BLOUSE
- BLACK/NAVY TROUSERS OR SKIRT
- GREY/NAVY PULLOVER WITH OR WITHOUT SCHOOL LOGO
- BLACK SHOES (NOT TRAINERS)

We have seen jeans and trainers being worn and we really want to encourage all our young people to follow the dress code and maintain our high standards. Thank you in advance for your support.

Prize Giving 2018

“Ambition, Growth, Success” Opportunities

Good afternoon

The inspiration for my address today is from a lovely note I received from a parent. In this she thanked us for the support and encouragement her daughter had received over her six years at Aberdeen Grammar School. She went on to say “she has been given so many fantastic opportunities and been so well supported, you really have been her cheer leaders.”

The sentiment expressed really chimes with my own philosophy regarding education. I truly believe that schools must continue to provide opportunities for young people to grow, develop and work towards achieving their ambitions. We have summed this up in our core values of Ambition, Growth, Success (AGS).

We are committed to continuing to provide and increase the opportunities our pupils experience and learn from. In this address, I will share with you the experiences our young people have benefited from this session.

Opportunities In the classroom

I will start in the classroom as strong attainment and leaving school with an excellent set of qualifications is crucial. As we all know, qualifications open doors and open up opportunities.

As school leaders, ensuring high quality learning, teaching and assessment is our key function. This year, we have increased our quality improvement activities and have just completed 91 class visits. From this we can see that our provision in the senior phase is very good.

You may ask, what is the evidence of this? I will provide you with some of the evidence from the collated findings. In classes, we observed young people using SQA criteria effectively when planning their work and revision, they had a clear idea on how to reach their target grade. We saw independent learning being supported through the use of Google classroom. Pupils appreciated materials now being available on Google classroom as well as hard copy.

We observed high quality direct teaching and skilled questioning. Our pupils enjoy being challenged as this allows them to think more deeply and make progress in their learning. It is clear that teachers know their pupils well and provide support and challenge through a range of feedback strategies. We witnessed pupils accessing pupil support boxes for materials to support their learning.

Moreover, there is increased use of digital technology. For example, in some subjects, young people use iPads to analyse their performance and set next steps in learning. Our strong examination results come from the hard work taking place in classrooms each and every day by teachers, pupils and support staff.

We are a dedicated team and we have a strong work ethic, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our staff for supporting our young people so well.

Leadership Opportunities

We have extended the range of leadership opportunities our young people can access. For example, our S6 pupils have provided in class support for younger pupils across S1-S3. Our S6 Science Ambassadors have been working in our feeder primaries and received very good feedback from the Primary HTs on their work.

New S5 and S6 pupils have just received two days of training on how to be an effective mentor and support younger pupils with more challenging issues. For example, the safe use of social media.

Many of our pupils across all year groups lead extracurricular opportunities within school here and in the primaries. For example, they take on coaching roles in netball, volleyball and football. Clearly, our younger pupils benefit from this work and the support given as do those taking on leadership opportunities. It adds substance to their UCAS applications and it also means that when they are in an interview setting, they can talk about work they have led and the impact of this. However, the most important aspect is that such work really adds to the ethos of our school where we all work together and make a difference. Our young people have a real sense of pride when they talk about the work they have been involved in.

Increased employability skills and positive leaver destinations

I have talked before about the Scottish Government initiative “Developing the Young Workforce.” This centres on increasing opportunities for young people to develop their employability skills to support them achieve a positive and sustained leaver destination whether that be in the workplace or in further and higher education. We have extended our business contacts and established a new business partnership with Ernst and Young.

Our careers programme has included more of an employability focus as has our learner pathways and course choice information events.

Next session, you will see a new learner pathways website which will contain information on all aspects of careers and course choice. Our aim is also to provide opportunities for more relevant work placements through our increased business contacts, the work experience unit and our former pupils.

Opportunities in the wider life of the school

I will now highlight some of the other wider opportunities we continue to offer our pupils.

In Music, our triple Platinum winning Concert Band continues to thrive and competes successfully at the highest level.

Our school show last year “All Shook Up” was a great success and we are now working on the new show “We Will Rock You.”

We have achieved the Gold Award from Sports Scotland for Physical Education and Secondary School of the Year for Sport. Again, this is all about working together and we receive great support from our FP Sports section. We achieved this due to the vast range of extra-curricular sports we offer and the high rate of pupil participation. Our netball, hockey and volleyball teams have been very successful this year.

Our charity work this session has been second to none. We are now supporting Clic Sargent and have raised just over £18,000. This is a charity that supports young people going through treatment for cancer. We presented the cheque last week and Clic Sargent were overwhelmed with the amount raised and stated that the funds will make a significant difference.

We have a group just about to embark on a World Challenge expedition to South Africa, Mozambique and Swaziland. This will mark the school's 6th expedition through World Challenge. Previous trips have been to Uganda, Costa Rica & Nicaragua, Tanzania, Peru, and most recently Vietnam and Cambodia. Again, a fantastic and challenging opportunity for our young people.

Before I conclude, I would like to touch on parental engagement and give my thanks. I said earlier that attainment comes from hard work each and every day in our classrooms. However, parental support is equally important. Support from home is an essential piece of the jigsaw when we talk about attainment and achievement. The support you give us and crucially the support you give your sons and daughters cannot be underestimated. We thank you for that and look forward to working with you next session.

Please look out for our new school APP, this will be launched very soon and will increase our communication with you. Thank you to the PTA and Parent Council for their continued fundraising, encouragement and support. Also to Gillian, Alan and John from the FPs. The Canadian FPs provided us with much needed funds to finish our Library refurbishment. On behalf of all of our pupils, thank you.

To conclude then, I am sure you will agree that our young people have had a successful year, full of opportunities. Look at our pupils in receipt of awards, they exemplify everything I have talked about today. They have set themselves high standards and taken advantage of every opportunity. Well done, I am proud of you.

I know, that with the support of the whole school community Aberdeen Grammar School will continue to offer these outstanding experiences and opportunities. We will not settle for mediocrity, excellence is the only standard worth striving for.

Ms Murison
Head Teacher