



St David's High School

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Dear Parents and Carers

Another tremendous, busy term is rapidly coming to an end as we all get ready for Christmas, so what has been happening at St David's?

When we returned to school back in August, we were delighted to welcome our largest S1 intake since 2010 and 11 new members of staff into the St David's community.

Once again we were extremely proud to be able to celebrate the outstanding performance of our senior pupils in their SQA examinations. This year even more of our fourth years achieved 5 or more National 5s than in 2017 and every one of the year group gained at least 5 National 3s, a remarkable achievement. Our fifth years repeated the exceptional results of the previous year, with over a fifth of year group gaining 5 or more Highers and over half gaining 3 or more! The challenge for our students this session is to match or better these exceptional standards in May 2019. Preparation, of course, is the key to success and the Prelim exams, which start on Monday 14 January, will give students the chance to see how they are progressing in their courses and what they need to do to achieve their target grades in May.

In October we welcomed staff from the local authority and colleagues from a number of other schools into St David's for a review of our work. The review looked at learning and teaching and the support available for young people. This was an enormously helpful process to help identify areas of strength, but most importantly confirm where we need to improve. The key messages were:

Strengths

- The positive relationships between staff and pupils.
- The positive learning environment in classes, strongly underpinned by the school's values.
- The whole school work on restorative practice, inclusive and nurturing approaches.
- The school's commitment to improving attainment and achievement for all including those who face barriers to learning.

Areas for development

- Develop more opportunities for parents/carers and partners to be involved in planning for school improvement.
- Further refine current systems for tracking and monitoring attainment and achievement to allow it to track and monitor specific targeted groups.

This term also saw the launch of our new ASPIRE Positive Behaviour Policy, with a focus on 'first attention to best conduct'. Teachers have been using our merit system to recognise and celebrate **A**chievement, **S**ervice, **P**erseverance, **I**nclusion, **R**espect and **E**xcellence in the classroom and across the school. This culminated in our first recognition ceremony on Friday 7 December, with 3 of the Gold Merit winners in each year group striking it lucky in the cinema tickets draw. Congratulations to all of our Bronze, Silver and Gold award winners this term.

Giving our students the opportunity to achieve and lead changes in the school continues to be a priority for us and the launch of our ASPIRE Leadership Academy has given students the chance to become even more involved in making the school better. Our weekend trip to Dalguise Outdoor Centre gave staff and pupils the chance to set out a vision for building leadership and driving forward improvements. One of the main outcomes was the establishment of 12 joint student and staff led committees including Anti-Bullying, Eco-Schools, Equalities, Literacy Leaders, Sports and Music Ambassadors and Tech Wizards. The committees have already started discussing how they can make the best impact and next term we will be working with CANI Leaders who will provide training and support for our aspiring leaders. Exciting times ahead!

Of course we are already blessed with a great number of students ready and willing to lead, or to simply give their time and energy in service for others in the school. It is most pleasing, for instance, to see so many seniors giving up their own time to support junior classes and individual pupils in our Complex Needs Base. Additionally, 63 fifth and sixth years have also volunteered and been trained to deliver the Mentors in Violence Prevention programme. They are now working with groups of first year pupils to build a greater understanding of how we can all play a part in avoiding conflict and helping one another.

Sport continues to play an important part in the life of the school and this term pupils have represented St David's in netball, basketball, football and notably, skiing, where our girls' squad took a magnificent Bronze Medal in the recent Boyd Anderson Ski Race at Hillend. It was also most encouraging to see our senior basketball team respond so impressively to taking part in the Scottish Cup and go on to qualify for the knockout phase of the competition from their group. Our School of Football now includes pupils from S1 and S2 and they are benefiting from not just the additional skills coaching but also some very interesting and challenging sessions looking at equality and diversity from organisations such as the Fair Play Foundation. This, together with ongoing input from Guidance, means that the key aim of developing 'the person not just the player' is being delivered consistently.

Finally, as we get ready for a busy final week including our Christmas Concert and Joint Carol Service, I would like to pay particular tribute to our S3 Modern Studies pupils. While learning about poverty in Britain they decided to try and do something to help by collecting foodstuffs for the Trussell Trust Foodbank. Initially they were quite nervous about what kind of response they would get from the rest of the school, but they have been overwhelmed by the generosity of pupils, staff and parents/carers, particularly on last Friday's Christmas Jumper Day. A truly fantastic effort from our community, thank you to everyone for contributing.

Have a wonderful, peaceful Christmas and very Happy New Year.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Donny MacDonald', written in a cursive style.

Mr Donny MacDonald
Headteacher