

Nicolson Institute Newsletter

The first term of a new session is always a busy time in schools. This one was no exception with a fresh intake of pupils coming into S1 and S3 as usual and into S2 as a result of rural school closures. Staffing has been in a state of flux with Mr C Maclean (English), Mrs H McCafferty (Chemistry), Mr D Macleod (PE), Mr K Smith (Gaelic 2 days) and Mr I Gillies (Science 3 days) joining us from other schools within the authority. A number of appointments were made over the summer: Mrs MI Anderson (PT Guidance, Addison House); Mrs B Smith (PT Modern Languages and Classics); Mr D Macleod (Social Subjects through the Medium of Gaelic); Mrs K Sharpe (English); Mrs CJ Macrury (Maths); Miss L Macdonald (Technical) and Mr K Coulter (RME).

We hope that both pupils and staff have settled in to the school satisfactorily and that they will enjoy their time here.

Academic Achievements

As the rush to start the new academic session began, it was very rewarding for all school staff to see so many pupils returning with solid achievements in their Higher results.

4 pupils distinguished themselves by achieving 5 Highers at grade A; they are Andrew Hay, Sean Gilligan, Bethany Smart and Calum Stark. All the school community extend congratulations to them.

Several pupils rejoiced in achieving 4 Highers at grade A out of their total of 5. The successful students were Kathleen Smith, Malcolm Macleod, William Broe, Daisy Macdonald, Christina M Mackenzie, and Laura Stewart.

Others are to be congratulated for achieving 5 Highers at one sitting: Robyn Bradley; Molly Downes; Shona Marie Mackinnon ; Sky Macphee; Calum Morrison; Rachel Craig; Calum Angus Macdonald; Gemma Macdonald; Helen Mackenzie ;Matthew Macarthur; Beth Gilbert; Robyn Hall; Joseph O'Hagan and Jamie Sullivan. Scott Duncan went one better and came out with 6 Highers!

Po Yi Law of S4 continued his remarkable progress by achieving As in Advanced Higher Maths and in Higher Physics.

These results mean that as Seniors work on college and university applications many pupils are in a strong position to achieve places, despite competition for university and college entry being fiercer than ever.

Award Nomination:

The new building has been nominated in this year's Civic Architecture Awards Competition and a panel of judges have visited the school.

8:50am Start:

All teaching classes begin at 8:50am with Registration taking place at the end of period 2. This change was implemented in order to counter a serious problem with late coming and ensure that pupils arrive in school before 8:50 so that they do not hinder the work of others.

Pupil Attainment:

We are pleased to be able to report that the current S3 pupils who sat Progress in English (PIEs) and Progress in Maths (PIMs) at the end of last session have performed above average in both areas. PIEs and PIMs are similar to the Cognitive Ability Test (CAT) which pupils used to sit in Primary 5, 7 and Secondary 2.

In future pupils will be tested as follows:

P3 – PIEs & PIMs

P5 – CAT

P7 – PIEs & PIMs

S1 – CAT

S2 – PIEs & PIMs

The school has also volunteered to participate in trialling PIE tests with all S4 and S5 pupils in Nov. Such tests provide staff with invaluable data which will be used for diagnostic purposes, and to review pupil progress, course and teaching methodology.

Lionel School:

Lionel Secondary Department has now come under the management of The Nicolson Institute SMT. The Rector and Mr A MacLennan visit the school on a weekly basis.

Focus Groups:

Members of the Senior Management Team are currently meeting with focus groups of parents to focus on issues such as pupil voice, curricular issues and reporting systems. Brief reports of findings will be posted on the school's website in the near future.

Bog Slog:

A Nicolson tradition which had been in abeyance for a number of years was resurrected on the 11th of September this session when approximately 700 pupils and staff took to the moor to undertake an 11 mile bog slog for school funds. The weather was reasonable and owing to a great deal of effort on the part of the organising committee, the exercise went off without a hitch. The pupils behaved in an exemplary manner and a good time was had by all.

All pupils benefit from the School Fund in one way or another as all cultural or sporting trips to the mainland are supported. Refreshments are purchased for inter-disciplinary activities such as dances, sessions at the end of term, socials etc.

In these times of financial constraints all contributions to the School Fund are greatly appreciated.

Lockers:

There are still a number of S2 & S3 pupils who have not been allocated a locker. This is regrettable but due to a problem with faulty locks; none are available. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is currently liaising with FMP over the matter and lockers will be allocated once the locks have been replaced.

Ri Cheile:

Anns an t-Sultain, chaidh dithis sgoilear à Roinn na Gàidhlig, Peigi Ann Scott agus Iain Boyd, a Bheal Féairt airson pàirt a ghabhail ann an *Ri Chèile*: co-fharpais bhliadhnail aig Comann na Gàidhlig. Bha sgoiltean à Alba agus Èirinn an làthair agus, le sin, fhuair na sgoilearan deagh chothrom coinneachadh ri sgoilearan bho chèarnaidhean eile aig a bheil Gàidhlig. 'S e turas air leth a bh' ann a thug sealladh dhaibh air cultar na h-Èirinn agus an t-àite a th' aig Gaeilge taobh a-staigh na dùthcha. Mar phàirt den cho-fharpais bha aig na sgoilearan ri òraid a' libhrigeadh ann an Gàidhlig no Gaeilge na h-Èireainn air beulaibh bhritheamhan. Rinn an dithis sgoilear oidhirp mhath taisbeanadh èifeachdach, misneachdail a bha puingeil agus proifeiseanta a thoirt seachad. Choisinn Peigi Ann an duais airson an òraidiche a b' fheàrr à Alba. 'S math a rinn iad!



Mr A Tuffery:

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr A Tuffery, Depute Headteacher, on his appointment to the post of Headteacher of Kirkcudbright Academy in Dumfries. We wish him all the best for the future. He will be taking up the post at the beginning of December.

Interact Club:

The Nicolson Institute Interact Club is part of Rotary and is open to any young person aged between 12-18 years old. Each year we undertake to support both local and international community projects through volunteering our time and engaging in fund raising activities to assist charitable projects. This year we are supporting three international charities: Old Macdonald's Farm – an orphanage run by Lewis couple Don and Christine Macdonald; Literacy Box – an International Charity that provides a box of essential educational materials to children in Zambia; Shelter Box – an International charity that provides emergency shelter and lifesaving supplies for families affected by disasters around the world.

Our most recent event was held on 28th September. This involved a school Open Day where the public took tours around the new school building and bought tea, coffee and cakes once the tour was completed. Overall we raised £233.55 which will go towards one of our charities. If you are interested in finding out more, find us on Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/TheNicolsonInteractClub>



Kakatsitsi Drummers:

The Music Department was delighted when the Kakatsitsi Drummers from the Ga tribe in Southern Ghana visited the school. Kakatsitsi gave the pupils the opportunity to experience a taste of West African drumming with their infectious rhythms, chants and dance. All S1 pupils and Music pupils from S3-S6 were involved.



Royal National Mod 2013:

Final preparation for the Royal National Mod 2013 in Paisley is currently underway with lots of practice for The Nicolson Institute Gaelic Choir and many soloists. The school would like to wish the best of luck to all pupils participating at the Mod and hope their hard work is met with success.

UHI Traditional Music Students:

Pupils responded very positively to a visit by students and tutors from the Music department of the UHI Campus, Benbecula, on Tues 24th September. Following sessions with Music classes, the group along with The Nicolson Institute pupils, played in the canteen area during lunchtime. The impromptu eightsome reel which took place was enjoyed by both participants and the large audience.

Scottish Schools Track and Field Championships:

Connor Maclean, Alasdair Rigby and Jonathan Morrison travelled to Grangemouth in June to represent The Nicolson in the Scottish Schools Track and Field Championships. The boys faced tough competition against the highest ranking young athletes in Scotland over the two day event.

Connor ran a strong race in the U17 3000m, finishing in 5th place and achieving a new personal best time of 9m16. Alasdair and Jonathan both competed in the U15 100m and 200m events. Alasdair ran an impressive semi-final in the 100m and secured himself a place in the final. He finished 8th place in a tight race. For Jonathan, this was one his first experiences of competing at national level and he handled his races extremely well. This was a great performance from all three boys. The school is justifiably proud of their achievement.

Newsletter article - Scottish Youth Theatre workshops:

Scottish Youth Theatre (SYT) provides opportunities for young people to explore their creativity and performance through various workshops, summer schools and pre-professional training. SYT are a Glasgow-based organisation who visits a number of schools across Scotland as part of their "Road Show". We were extremely lucky to have a visit from Sharon and Stuart from SYT on Friday 20th September. The S4 class were involved in a Page to Stage workshop which focused on Macbeth. This was appropriate as the class is staging Macbeth after the October break and other pupils are studying the play in English. Pupils worked in pairs and individually with an extract from Macbeth. The focus was development of character and portrayal of character through movement and voice. Emma Macleod commented, "The workshop helped to broaden my knowledge and understanding of Macbeth."

Furthermore, pupils in the S2 drama elective thoroughly enjoyed an energetic afternoon where they were learning how to devise drama. Small groups created and rehearsed short freeze frame scenarios using a stimulus. Each group was given the chance to direct another group. This was a great chance for pupils to become responsible for their own learning. Skills such as cooperation, collaboration and listening were important so everyone had a chance to contribute to the finished piece. The workshop received positive feedback. Andrew Mackay commented, "I thought the workshop was amazing. It was nice for SYT to take the time to come and see us." James Maciver thought the afternoon was great. "I enjoyed making the freeze frames



It's Debatable

The English Department has recently put out a call for senior pupils (S4 to S6) to sign up to a school Senior Debating Society. Debating is good for skills' development in public speaking, development of persuasive and argumentative techniques, effective use of rhetoric and thinking on your feet, as well as being great for confidence building and learning to accommodate and promote the views of others. It is also good fun and looks great on their Record of Achievement. Two Sixth Year pupils - Krisell Macdonald and Catriona Campbell - will be representing the school in a national debating competition entitled 'The STV Scottish Referendum Schools' Debate', which will take place in Inverness on 6th November. As well as this, it is hoped to have teams for The Scottish Law Society Donald Dewar Memorial Debating Tournament, The Big Green Challenge and a speaking competition run by the English Speaking Union. Even if you are not interested in trying out for any of the big national competitions, weekly debates on topical issues will be held which all seniors are welcome to attend.

Book Returns:

Every year many books disappear from school because pupils forget to return them - or perhaps because they love them so much they are reluctant to give them back! But books are expensive to replace. If you have any school books at home, or have older siblings, cousins or friends who have recently headed off to work, University or College without returning their school books, please get these books back into school as soon as possible.

Marcus Sedgwick Visit:

In September, pupils had the pleasure of receiving a talk from the popular children's author, Marcus Sedgwick. Mr Sedgwick has written over 30 novels for children and teenagers and is renowned for his fast-moving, intense storylines. He travelled from the south of England as part of The Scottish Book Trust's 'Authors Live' campaign and delivered a talk to a selection of pupils, many of whom were studying one of his novels in English. Mr Sedgwick's talk had an interesting format, where he projected a photograph of his writing desk on the board and invited students to ask questions about anything which they thought looked interesting. This led on to some great questions from pupils and some rather unexpected answers.

Students who were studying one of his novels in class stayed behind for their own Q&A session. This was a great privilege as it is not often that students get the opportunity to grill the authors of texts studied in school.

There was also an opportunity to buy books and have them signed at the end of the session to which there was an overwhelming response. The poor lady from the Scottish Book Trust had to lug in an extra load of books from the van after the first batch sold out in ten minutes!

This was a fantastic author visit which gave students an insight into the life of a highly successful writer.

Scottish Book Trust:

The English Department is committed to promoting the importance of reading for pleasure as well as raising standards in literacy. As a result, a group of S3 pupils – under the tutorage of Ms Law – will be participating in the Scottish Children’s Book Awards. The chosen group will read, discuss and review the shortlisted books from new authors, and may have the opportunity to create a book trailer in order to promote the books for a competition organised by the Scottish Book Trust. The group will finally get to vote for their favourite book in February and become involved in this ‘national celebration of Scottish Children’s fiction!’

Representing the School – Protocol:

In order to encourage pupils to work to the best of their ability and set high standards in terms of dress, discipline and attitude, the school’s management team has drafted the following protocol for those who represent the school as individuals or as team members.

- Representing the school is a privilege which has to be earned.
- Team coaches should reiterate that a place on a team is not a right.
- All staff responsible for teams should email a list of participants to teachers as soon as it has been finalised (i.e. when the paperwork goes into the office) in advance of any fixture.
- Any member of staff who has a concern about the effort, application, behaviour or attendance of a team member should bring this up with the relevant Head of House and copy in the PT Guidance and the staff member with responsibility for the team immediately.
- The pupil will then be interviewed by the Head of House. This may lead to a warning about the possibility of participation or withdrawal from a team, competition or event.
- Parents and carers will be made aware of this protocol and their support in implementing it will be much appreciated.

Bethesda Coffee Morning - Friday 4th October:

Many thanks to all those parents and carers who contributed lovely cakes to help make the annual Bethesda Coffee Morning a very successful event once again. Most of the 1000- plus pupils in the school had the opportunity to attend. As well as doing planning and shopping beforehand, on the day S6 pupils worked valiantly to serve drinks, restock tables , and clean up afterwards. They were assisted by volunteers from the community and from Bethesda staff. Seniors also organised some side stalls such as a Lucky Dip, whilst background music was provided by members of Faram and by S6 pupils. The total raised for Bethesda is £1400. A cheque will be presented next term.

CRY Presentation:

Pictured below are Mrs Macleod (School Cook), Dr F Murray (Rector) and Head Boy & Girl for last session, Alasdair Macleod and Annabel Macleod.

Alasdair and Annabel were handing over a cheque for £1250 which was raised by last year's S6 pupils and parents in support of the Andrew Macleod Memorial Trust. Proceeds will go to the national charity CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young).

