

Dear Parent

The Session Report is intended to provide information for parents on the development work undertaken by the School during the school year. Additional information provided includes a summary of next session's improvement plan and staffing changes.

Able Pupils

In my last Session Report, I explained that a staff working group was in the process of formulating a policy on Able Pupils, and I can report that the policy was finalised in November 2008. Since then the Junior School and Senior School Faculties/Departments have been planning how best to implement the policy. 14 members of staff attended a Thinking Skills course which, as you might expect, provided a wealth of ideas relevant to Able Pupils. Standardised testing carried out this session (see below) has assisted with the identification of Able Pupils at various stages of Junior School and also in Senior I. Additional resources have been identified and lesson planning has begun to focus more effectively on the needs of Able pupils. Junior 5 classes have piloted the Edward de Bono "Thinking Hats" approach and this will be developed further next session and the SRA Thinking Skills Lab has proved to be very successful. The proforma used by members of the Management Team and Faculty Heads for reporting following lesson observations has been amended to focus on Able Pupils. Although good progress has been made, further work remains to be done and Able Pupils will continue to be on the Improvement Plan for next session with the aim of embedding its provision within the curriculum.

Language across the Curriculum

A group, under the leadership of Mr Calum Ure, Head of Languages, has worked this session to produce a policy on Language across the Curriculum. When fully implemented, it is expected that this will improve the teaching and learning of language and will, in due course, evolve into Literacy across the Curriculum, which is an integral part of Curriculum for Excellence.

Curriculum for Excellence

A review has been conducted of lesson planning in Junior School in order to ensure that planning takes into account assessments, appropriate differentiation and the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence.

In Senior School, Faculties/Departments have audited courses in Transitus, SI and SII against learning outcomes published for Curriculum for Excellence. Final learning outcomes were published in April 2009 and Faculties/Departments will now update their audits. In respect of the SIV, SV and SVI, the School responded to the national consultation on the outline proposals for SQA examinations. The School has also participated in recent national conferences. It is expected that syllabuses for new SIV qualifications will be issued in the coming session along with a new assessment structure.

Junior School/Senior School Liaison

Liaison this session has focused on Mathematics and Language with staff meeting regularly throughout the session to reflect on the range and quality of pupils' experiences. As a result the Mathematics curriculum for Junior 6 has been changed. The Transitus English course has been amended to achieve a reduction in the number of assessments required for the first term report so as to ensure that teaching is led by syllabus not assessment. Members of the Senior School English

Faculty visited Junior School to examine the standard of creative writing and have been impressed greatly by what they have seen. The Physical Education Department has examined the possibility of introducing exercises developed by the Institute for Neuro Physiological Psychology (INPP), but it was felt that it would not be possible to implement this development at this stage.

Standardised Testing

The School has once again used materials produced by the Curriculum Evaluation and Management Centre at Durham University to assess individual pupils and year groups. The Middle Years Information System (MidYIS) has been used to test pupils in Senior I while Interactive Computer Assessments System (InCAS) has been used throughout Junior School except for J1. The developments this session focused on the School's interpretation of data. Further in-service training was provided to members of the Management Team and Learning Support staff. Among other developments, patterns are being analysed for performance in English and Mathematics to help review the setting of pupils. It will also be possible to measure 'value added' by the School when, in years to come, it examines the results achieved in SIV examinations. Those whose vocabulary and mathematics scores are weak have been identified to inform decisions on learning support. Other developments include the identification of a number of pupils who are able to excel in individual subjects and, in Senior School, Heads of House have been provided with information on a confidential basis to help them identify potential academic successes, difficulties or under achievement for pupils in their Houses.

Support for Learning

Following the revision of the School's Support for Learning Policy last session, the focus this session has been on implementing new procedures particularly in the Senior School in order to ensure that all pupils who have been identified as requiring support are, indeed, effectively supported. This has involved class teachers and Heads of Faculty planning effectively how each identified child will be supported in the classroom. Each member of staff has been given a personalised folder containing information about all pupils with known additional support requirements and support booklets detailing teaching strategies for dyslexic pupils. One of the recommendations made from our internal self evaluation of Support for Learning was that Learning Support staff should meet parents more frequently. To that end, Mrs Scott has met parents of pupils in her Learning Support group to exchange views on progress and has provided feedback to all classroom teachers.

Racism Policy

During the course of this session, Heads of House led the process of establishing a policy on Racism. The main benefit of the policy will be an improved awareness of racial issues amongst pupils and staff. The policy also established procedures to be followed in the event of any racist incident.

Career Education

The Guidance Faculty has identified the need for the careers programme to be updated and the delivery of class lessons to be improved and this has led to a new programme being prepared for next session. A questionnaire has been prepared for pupils in SII, SIV and SV for completion during the month of June so that pupils' views can be taken into account when finalising the revised arrangements.

The Careers Library has been updated and now includes occupational information. Careers prefects have been appointed for the first time and SII to SVI pupils have had library inductions. Two Careers Forums were held in September 2008 for Senior VI pupils in advance of their UCAS applications. These were opportunities for external speakers to address SVI on a range of careers with SVI having the opportunity to ask questions afterwards. Speakers included Rolls Royce trainees, a surgical trainee, investment banker, geography undergraduate, educational psychologist, lawyer and veterinary surgeon. Feedback data from Senior VI was very positive. As a result of this a further Careers Forum was held in June after the SQA Examinations for SV as part of their SVI induction.

EcoSchools

The main thrust in the Junior School EcoSchool Project has been the development of a travel plan which has been carried out in conjunction with Inverclyde Council. The Junior School Eco Committee has been involved in regular meetings in order to develop the plan which is nearing completion. The committee has also been involved in planning the Walk to School week in conjunction with the national initiative. Groups of pupils have been formed to develop gardens with potatoes, corn, tomatoes and cucumbers currently being grown in areas round the School. Bird houses and feeders have been placed and a "twitchers' club" has been formed for children making up birdseed cakes to hang around the grounds.

In Senior School the Eco Committee was established with representatives from each year group holding monthly meetings. Senior School assemblies were addressed by the committee in October and January and collections were established for batteries, mobile phones, used Christmas cards and printer cartridges so that these items could be recycled. 'Switch off' signs on light switches have been placed in all Senior School rooms and the initiative was taken to ensure that all computers are switched off over-night in Senior School. The committee has also prepared a draft Eco Code. The impact on the wider school has been a greater awareness of the need to minimise waste and minimise energy consumption.

Both Senior School and Junior School Eco committees are 'on track' to achieve Silver Eco status by the end of this session.

Accessibility

Initiatives in Learning Support and Able Pupils reported above form an integral part of the School's drive to improve accessibility this session. In respect of physical access, the wheelchair stair climber has been put to use for the first time and a decision has been taken to purchase a wheelchair to keep on site in case of need.

School Website

After extensive consultation with staff and members of the Parents' Association, a new website has been launched featuring a new design, improved navigation and functionality. By allowing former pupils to update personal details on-line, it is hoped that the new facility will improve the accuracy of the School's database and lead to FPs staying in touch with the School.

Communications

The School is in the early stages of designing a new prospectus with publication scheduled for late 2009. The School newsletter, the Columban, continues to provide an effective means of communicating with the entire School community, updating readers on academic and extra curricular activities as well as showcasing the successes enjoyed by many of our pupils. We continue to offer former pupils and parents the option to receive the Columban electronically by providing us with a current email address.

Investors in People

As you know, the School was delighted to be awarded IiP status in June 2007. A number of issues were raised in the report and the School has worked this session with an external consultant to develop an action plan to address these issues. A number of items on next year's Improvement Plan have emanated from this report.

China

Following my visit to China in March 2008, the School has requested that the British Council supply St Columba's with a Chinese, English speaking teacher from August 2009. The hope is that such a teacher would spend 12 hours per week in School for a period of nine months. Our plan is to provide a basic introductory course in Mandarin and Chinese culture for all Senior VI pupils next session and the Chinese teacher would also support the teaching of topic work in all SII Humanities subjects (Modern Studies, History, Geography, Business Studies) which have been developed this session. It is also anticipated that a stage of Junior School will introduce a topic on China.

Visits Policy and Procedures

In the autumn term Mr McLaughlin, Senior School and Mrs Hecht, Junior School, held a series of meetings in which they produced a revised set of procedures to be used by staff organising off site visits. These procedures have been fully implemented.

Faculty Weeks

One of the most successful ventures of this session in Senior School has been the introduction of Faculty Weeks. The first two Faculty Weeks, Music and English, have taken place with the intention of stimulating pupils' interest in these subjects and extending them beyond the classroom. The Music Faculty Week benefited from the visit of a woodwind quartet. There was also a professional singer master class, a sambo workshop and busking by staff and pupils. Live lunchtime music was played in the dining hall and in the staffroom. During the week, funds were raised for the charity "The Music Therapy Centre".

English Faculty Week included visits from four writers – Alex Gray, Christopher Brookmyre, Liz Lochhead and Joan McAlpine. There was a writing competition for all pupils, a poetry recital competition and a staff literary quiz. One of the highlights was a lunchtime debate involving mixed staff and pupil teams with the motion "Classics has taught us more than Science" which was resoundingly defeated. Both the writing competition for Senior School pupils and the Poetry Recital competition will become annual events.

The impact of these Faculty Weeks has been exceptionally positive with the School Council requesting lunchtime music in the dining hall to continue. This will be considered by the Music

staff for next session. Another success perhaps could be claimed in that seven of our pupils successfully auditioned for the National Girls and the National Boys Choirs of Scotland.

Cashless Cafeteria

The introduction of the cashless cafeteria has proved to be very successful in Senior School and, perhaps to a lesser extent, in Junior School. There is considerably improved ease of use for pupils without the need to carry cash. It is hoped that, in future, Parent Pay, an internet system, will be developed to allow parents to credit their child's account remotely; the 'revaluer' in Senior School makes this more straightforward for Senior School pupils.

Yearbook Concert

Mr Andrew Macgregor produced and directed the Yearbook Concert in December 2008. The show was an eclectic mix of song and dance interspersed with some humorous 'Monty Python' sketches. All of SVI participated and raised almost £2000 for their Yearbook.

Charities

It was another busy year for charity in the Senior School with well over £5,000 being raised for a wide variety of causes. The main focus for the year's fundraising was St Ignatius' School in Guyana for the provision of a computer suite in memory of former pupil Pamela McCarroll. Over £4,000 of the total raised will go to support this cause.

Junior School have also been busy collecting for charity with £1,576 raised for St Ignatius' School in addition to our weekly collections which totalled just over £1,600. This money will be distributed at the end of the year according to the votes of the children.

Tours and Excursions

Tours and excursions this session have included

- Junior 6 to Newlands (outward bound)
- SVI teambuilding weekend to Ardeonaig
- SVI motivation weekend to Drymen
- SI to Paris
- Debaters to the International Independent Schools' Public Speaking Competition
- SII to Ardeonaig
- SIII to Classical Italy
- SIII to the Battlefields
- SIV to Lagganlia (outward bound)
- SV to London (theatre trip)
- SVI to the Ardeche (watersports)
- Pipe-band to New York

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award has had another extremely successful session with 57 participants at Bronze, 34 at Silver and 36 at Gold. Not all participants have completed their award programmes yet, but will hopefully do so soon.

National Honours

The following pupils have been awarded Gold Honours for representing their country:

Kirsty Wilson	SVI	Under 18 Scottish Hockey Team
Becky Marshall	SVI	Under 18 Scottish Hockey Team
Megan Girdwood	SV	Scottish Schools' Debating Team
Andrew McAlpine	SV	Scottish Schools' Cross Country Team
Stephanie McCabe	SV	Scotland & Northern Ireland ATC Cross Country Team

SUMMARY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2009-2010

Learning & Teaching

- Able Pupils: developing planning and resources
- Language across the Curriculum: finalisation and implementation of the policy
- Curriculum for Excellence: responding to national developments and piloting the introduction of the Scottish Baccalaureate in Languages and Sciences
- Junior School and Senior School liaison: ensuring the transition arrangements from Junior to Senior School meet the social and emotional needs of pupils
- Support for Learning: developing the use of electronic forms and transfer of information and developing a system to assist pupils who have difficulty with transfer of notes and homework between School and home
- Standardised testing: to improve the learning experiences of pupils through an analysis of areas of strengths and weaknesses
- China: introducing the teaching of Chinese culture and language for SVI.

Pastoral Care

- Communication: improving communication between Heads of House and staff and reviewing the policy on Confidentiality
- Evaluation: increasing pupil evaluation of guidance work including PSE courses and lessons
- Careers education: revised teaching programme fully in place

The Wider School

- Professional Development: producing a consolidated learning development plan for staff
- Improvement Planning: establishing and enhanced self evaluation and improvement planning cycle
- Investors in People: developing the induction process for new staff in Faculties and Departments and establishing a Staff Development Group in each School
- Leadership: developing aspects of leadership within Faculties and Departments
- Marketing: publishing a new prospectus for the School and establishing a marketing database which will allow the School to communicate more effectively with FPs
- Faculty Weeks: extending this to a further three Faculties

STAFF CHANGES

- Mrs Kathryn Paterson will retire from Junior School (Junior 6) following six years of service to the School. Mrs Paterson first came to St Columba's almost fourteen years ago to provide absence cover and has been with us off and on ever since. We wish her well in her retirement.

New Appointments

- Mrs Jennifer Wallace, Senior Depute Rector, has now assumed a new role within the School as Business Manager. She will lead and coordinate all non-teaching work within the School including Finance, Estates Management, Health & Safety and Human Resources. Mrs Wallace will continue in her post as Senior Depute Rector.
- I am delighted to announce the appointment of Mr Eric Milligan to the post of Director of Physical Education and Sport. Mr Milligan will take over from Mr Manson who will continue to teach PE on a part-time basis and will have new responsibilities in Whole School administration.
- Mr Alan Tait has been appointed to the post of full time Teacher of Physical Education from August 2009. Mr Tait is a graduate in Sports Science of Stirling University (BA) and in Physical Education of Edinburgh University (BEd). A native of Edinburgh, Mr Tait is completing his probationary year at Kirkwall Grammar School, Orkney.
- Miss Susan MacLean has been appointed to the post of full time Classroom Teacher. Miss Maclean is a Psychology graduate of Glasgow University (MA). She then completed a Counselling Certificate before completing her teaching qualification at Strathclyde University. Miss MacLean has been working at St Columba's during this session as a supply teacher for two periods of prolonged absence cover.

PRIZEGIVINGS

Junior School Prizegiving	Wednesday 24 th June 2009 St Columba Church, 10.30am
Senior School Prizegiving	Thursday 25 th June 2009 St Columba Church, 10.30am

MEDICAL ROTA

I am grateful to those medically qualified parents who are on the Saturday morning rota providing care for injured rugby players but, as always, we need new names each year. If you are able and willing to join the rota, I would be very pleased to hear from you (secretary@st-columbas.org).

HOSPITALITY ROTA

Hockey refreshments – any parents wishing to help on the hockey rota should contact Mrs Diane Wood on 01505 874321. Similarly, anyone willing to assist with the rugby refreshments should contact Mrs Cawte on 01505 614274.

SCHOOL UNIFORM

It is always a pleasure to welcome pupils back to School for the start of a new session. The summer holiday is often the time when parents buy new blazers, trousers and kilts and pupils look

very smart in their new school wear. The summer holiday is often a time too when some pupils experiment with alternative hairstyles and hair colour. With that in mind, I would remind you of the School's Dress Code and ask for your support to ensure that the session gets off to a good start.

- Hair colour – **hair should be of one natural colour.** If hair is streaked or dyed green or red (or any other colour!) for the summer holiday it must be returned to one natural colour for the start of session.
- Girls' shoes – the maximum permitted is 4cm at its highest point. Stiletto heels are inappropriate for school.
- Girls' make-up – the school rules allow **discreet** make-up to be worn by girls from **SIII to SVI only.**

I should be grateful for the co-operation of parents in ensuring that all items of clothing are named.

PARKING CODE

I am grateful to parents for their continued support of the School's parking code, a copy of which is attached.

SESSION DATES

I enclose further copies of session dates for 2009-2010 and 2010-2011. **Please note the change to the 2010 summer mid-term holiday from that originally published last year.**

I look forward to welcoming pupils back to School on Wednesday 19th August (at 8.40am Senior School, 8.50am Junior School). On entering the Senior School, Senior I pupils should go to the Assembly hall where they will be met by a member of staff.

I would like to stress to Senior V and Senior VI, the importance of their appointments with Heads of House on the morning **Thursday 13th August.** I shall also hold a meeting for Senior VI at **11.00am on Thursday 13th August.**

With best wishes for a most enjoyable holiday.

Rector