

Grantown Grammar School

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Mrs Claire McGonigal, Headteacher



THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
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Headteacher's Report - October 2016

This term seems to have passed by in a flash. The S1 pupils have settled in well and are definitely not new anymore. The S6 pupils have run their first very successful disco and with the weather changing it's definitely time for the October holidays.

Since August we have been focusing on the message of "work hard, play hard." Thank you for your support on uniform, the vast majority of pupils are now wearing uniform and the school is looking very smart. All pupils have had assemblies with the theme of 'Using Student Planners and Target Setting' and teachers are working towards giving more effective feedback to pupils. Senior pupils have set initial target grades with their teacher, so please ask them how they are getting on with the steps they need to take to meet their targets. In the junior years we have had the 'Snapshot Jotter' week for S1 which always gives a very useful picture of progress across the school and, again, we are focusing on good use of Student Planners. Studies have shown that using planners is one of the most effective ways of improving learning outcomes, especially grades in the senior school so we are instilling good habits in the junior years.

SQA results overall were good and continue our upward trend. We are still ahead of our comparison schools. However, this year we are pushing for a big leap in attainment and I have every confidence that we'll get there in May.

When it comes to 'play hard', Grantown continues to excel way beyond our size. Becca Gilchrist in S1 is the Scottish Paraclimbing Champion and Henry Kerr in S5 was first overall in the British Junior Downhill Mountain Biking Series. In fact, Jamie Edmondson in S4 was 2nd and George Kerr in S5 was 4th so we dominated which is great. Our S1/S2/S3 girls had their first rugby game where they played with passion and determination, a very talented group and I expect great things in future. They are matched by our junior boys' rugby team who are also a fine, talented bunch! Our S1 shinty team were very successful in their September tournament and our senior boys' football team continue their drive to league success. The S4 netball team also had a super start to the season with a win over Nairn this week. This term we've even introduced Highland Games and held our first Interhouse competition. We'll be returning to this later in the year for the junior school as I think the seniors had fun trying the different disciplines and learning to toss the caber. All our sports men and women do the school proud. We have expanded the number of sports and other lunch time clubs so if your son/daughter would like to get involved in the rugby, football or any other sport they should go and see Mr Wilson in PE.

Rehearsals for the school show, The Addams Family are well underway and I'm delighted that we have more pupils taking part in the show than ever, both on the stage and backstage. I've seen some of the rehearsals and it's going to be exceptional so make sure you get your tickets early. Also on the horizon is Rock Challenge and Mrs Shearon has mustered about half the school to take part this year so that is going to be a whole lot of fun, and a few more grey hairs organisationally!

As we start the winter months, it's easy to get caught up in the excitement of Christmas and there are a large number of school events planned to celebrate the season. However, it's important to remember that there's a lot of coursework to be covered next term so try to make sure that pupils balance work and play. Also if there are any issues, concerns or suggestions then I'm available every Thursday from 4.30 to 6.00pm for a drop-in Headteacher's Surgery. If you can't make Thursday and want a chat then please contact the school and I'll be very happy to arrange a time to see you.

SQA Matters

There has been a lot of information in the press over the last few weeks about SQA courses and assessments. At the moment, we are awaiting further details on what will happen in the coming years but the key thing is there will be **no changes for 2016-17** so pupils must focus on what they have to do in order to succeed this year. Please keep up-to-date with SQA and exam matters by regularly looking at the school website. The main area for this is:

<https://grantowngrammar.wordpress.com/general-information/sqaexamrevision-information/>

In there, you will see some slightly older materials as well as updates for 2016-17. Many of the older materials are relevant for 2016-17 and will only be updated when the most recent versions are available.

A very important link to be aware of is here:

<https://grantowngrammar.files.wordpress.com/2014/12/2016-17-sqa-key-dates-for-pupils.pdf>

This details the deadlines for upcoming SQA and exam matters. It contains deadlines that pupils *must* meet in order to complete courses. As you will see in the heading, some departments may set the deadline earlier than that indicated. This is to avoid pupils having deadlines for every subject in the February-March period when such a bottleneck can cause considerable strain on pupils. Pupils need to be aware that if this is the case in a subject they are studying, they must meet the **department** deadline.

ROCK CHALLENGE 2017 UPDATE

After our entry for the Rock Challenge 2016 GGS is really fired up for 2017. We have over 140 pupils signed up to take part either on stage or behind the scenes which is just fantastic. We also have over 70 dancers which is so exciting. The dancers in charge of the choreography have already got going and we have planned the plot and music for our dance. All rehearsals for dancers will begin in January. Planning for set design will start in November. Letters will go home after the October break outlining all the dates and information about the Rock Challenge. The letter will also be available on the school webpage.

Rock Challenge Costumes

Would you like to help with the making of the costumes? We will be working with the Great Grantown Sewing Bee - coming soon, watch this space - to make the costumes we need for the dancers. If you would like to be involved and help out please keep an eye out for posters about town and posts on Facebook and the school webpage.

Rock Challenge 2017 Fundraising

Fund raising has already begun for the Rock Challenge. The Fund Raising Committee have lots of ideas for further events and opportunities. The first of which is:

Christmas Body Shop Party, Tuesday 1 November, 7pm, School Hall

Come and buy some lovely Christmas presents for the ladies and men in your life! There will be refreshments, hand massages and live music, plus a fantastic raffle.

If you would like to come please email: ggsrockchallenge@gmail.com

If you are unable to come that evening but would still like to order some gifts please email and we will organise a catalogue for you. Every order generates some money for the Rock Challenge.

S2 SONG COMPETITION

All S2 pupils have been busy writing their songs for this year's Song Competition. The competition will be held on Friday 11 November. It will be in the Main Hall and it starts at 12 noon. All parents are welcome to come and support their son/daughter. This is a great event and all pupils who have previously taken part have many fond memories of the day. If you would like to come along please sign in at the school office and make your way to the Main Hall.

Mandarin

I am delighted to report that we now have a Mandarin teacher in the school. Lily Zhang arrived from Southern China in September and started teaching classes in the junior school this week. Lily is being supported in her teaching by Mrs Mackintosh and Miss Forrest in Modern Languages. All S1, S2 and S3 classes will have one lesson of Mandarin on a fortnightly basis and seniors will be offered Mandarin during their study classes. We hope to start a lunchtime club for staff and an after school club for interested members of the community in due course. Lily is with us as part of a volunteer teacher programme organised by CISS, the Confucius Institute for Scottish Schools, who organised my trip to China in April. The school has also been given funding to resource the Confucius Classroom for Lily so, hopefully, the pupils will gain a great deal from this excellent opportunity.

Severe Weather

As with previous years, weather forecasts point to a cold winter filled with snow and ice - although how much snow and ice remains to be seen. Please make sure that you know how to access school closure information. Details can be found on the school website and, in addition to the usual MFR and local information points, in the case of a school closure due to inclement weather, we will post information on the website and school Facebook page.

Dates for the Diary

Tuesday 1 November	Christmas Body Shop Party
Thursday 3 November	Whole School Halloween Disco
Wednesday 9 November	S4 Parents' Night
Thursday 10 November	Parent Council AGM
Monday 14 November	Employer Engagement Evening
Monday 14 - Friday 18 November	S3 Residential (2 groups, 2 nights each group)
Tuesday 22 November	S5/S6 Parents' Night
Tuesday 29 November	Careers Fair
Thursday 1 December	S1 Parents' Night
Monday 5 December	Junior Christmas Dance (S1-S3)
Friday 9 December	Senior Prom (S4-S6)
Tuesday 13 - Thursday 15 December	School Show - The Addams Family
Friday 16 December	Santa Fun Run
Wednesday 21 December	Christmas Concert

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