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6<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Hello,

There are a series of updates that I would like to share with you- sorry the letter is so long but this is a very busy time in school. I hope you find the information helpful.

### **Christmas Dances**

We delayed a decision as long as we could in case there was sufficient relaxation to allow the dances to take place. There was no such relaxation in the national guidance and with the arrival of a new variant there is no hope of relaxation. It is with a heavy heart therefore that I write to confirm that there will not be any Christmas dances this year. Social dancing will continue in PE because we consider it a useful life skill and it is a long-standing part of our curriculum. Pupils have embraced the opportunity this year and the department are impressed by the enthusiasm of your young people.

### **Christmas decorations**

Christmas dances may be cancelled but Christmas decorations have not been. This Friday we will be asking pupils to spend two blocks making coloured paper chains to brighten up the school. We did this for the first time last year and it made a huge difference to how it felt to be in the school and I am very hopeful that it will have a similar effect this year also.

### **Christmas Dinner**

Our canteen are going to offer Christmas dinner next week spread over two days. We are dusting off the plates, knives, forks and spoons and will be inviting pupils down in year groups if they wish to have Christmas lunch. There will be details for pupils in the daily notices later this week. *Please note- parents can see the daily notices the evening before as they are always published on the website about 4pm. If you have not looked at them, please do so as they give a lot of information about events and opportunities within the school.*

### **Virtual Parents' Evening- opportunity to feedback**

Two weeks ago we had the S2 online Parents' Evening and this week we have the S1 online Parents' Evening. After this, parents of both year groups will be invited to give feedback on the experience. We would obviously rather be able to invite you in to see your child's school and meet the teachers but with that not being possible, this at least allows you to talk to your child's teacher.

### **Parents' Information Evening and Parents' Evenings next term**

In January we have the S3 Parents' Information Evening and Parents' Evening and in February the S4-6 equivalents. Based on the S2 experience, parents who attended both have found them helpful and below I have outlined what will be covered:

At Information Evenings, parents/carers of that year group are invited to email in questions that they would like answers to and these are incorporated into the presentation or answered directly at the end. The purpose of these events is to set the scene about your child's learning, explain how the whole school processes work and ensure that when you meet your child's teacher at the Parents' Evening proper, you can focus on their learning rather than general school information. Both Information Evenings will involve;

- Introduction to the Senior Management Team and Guidance Team of the school
- Presentation from the Year Head about expectations, attendance and our behaviour policy
- Explanation of the curriculum in S3 and beyond
- Explanation of the Choice of Course process and the options that your child has
- Explanation of the SQA system and what qualifications are available
- Explanation about how Additional Support for Learning works
- Answers to queries raised if they apply to a range of pupils

We believe that armed with this information, you can have a quite focused discussion with your child's teacher thereafter. Invitations to both events will be emailed to parents of the appropriate year group between a week and 10 days before each event.

### **Access to teachers at Parents' Evenings**

I discussed this problem at the last Parents' Council meeting. It has always been the case that some teachers in some year groups have more pupils than they have spaces to see them. The most extreme examples are probably my Gaelic teacher who has 200 pupils in S1 and my two drama teachers who have over 100 pupils each in S1 and S2 but more generally many teachers with very large numbers of pupils in a year group cannot provide appointments for every parent in the year group. There are three things that you can do to help with this- firstly, please do not book appointments with a particular teacher unless you really want the discussion. Secondly, if something changes and you know you will not be attending some or all appointments please let us know as we can reallocate them to someone who was unsuccessful. Finally, if you are unsuccessful in securing appointments please don't worry- we are committed to getting you the information you need to support your child's learning. In that case, please contact your child's Guidance teacher and ask for an update- some staff will offer alternative slots, some will provide feedback, no-one will be ignored. I hope this clarifies what can be a stressful situation for parents.

### **Uniform**

Uniform buy-in continues to be good and I am grateful for your support. Obviously we are strongly in favour of pupils wrapping up warm and wearing multiple layers to stay warm in these cold days but please continue to support us by ensuring that below the coats and hats worn for warmth, there is clothing which suggests that each and every one of us is serious about learning. Many thanks for your support in this- I remain confident that it makes a direct difference to the quality and quantity of opportunities and experiences we can offer our young people.

### **Masks**

Masks remain a part of our daily lives and there is no sign in the news that this is going to change anytime soon. Although it is the responsibility of pupils to bring masks, we have handed out 8,000 since the end of the summer holidays. Thankfully there was a very generous donation of 5,000 masks made in the summer but that has long since run out. Can I ask you to ensure that your child takes a mask to school each day- we are currently down to our final 50 and whilst I have another order in, there are delays with deliveries at this time.

**Vaccines**

Monday 13<sup>th</sup> December is the date on which NHS will be using our theatre to administer the first dose of COVID-19 vaccines to those pupils who submitted their consent forms by last Friday.

**Prelims**

Prelim exams will take place for S4, S5 and S6 pupils in January. Details of the timetable will be published on the school website this week and if your child is one of the very small number for whom there is a clash-please tell them to approach Mr Weafer directly and we will sort out an alternative arrangement.

It is my intention to write to you again in the last few days of term but in case events overtake me and that letter does not appear, I would like to end by wishing you a relaxing and enjoyable festive season.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Vance". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'J' and a stylized 'V'.

Dr J Vance

Rector