



Portlethen Academy
Bruntland Road
Portlethen
Aberdeen AB12 4QL
Telephone 01224 782174
Fax 01224 782076
portlethen.aca@aberdeenshire.gov.uk
www.portlethenacademy.aberdeenshire.sch.uk

20 December 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

As I write, it is the end of another busy term for pupils and staff. We are always exploring ways to let you more easily see the activities our young people and staff are involved in. This term, two means of communication stand out.

The first of these is the latest newsletter. One of our S6 pupils, Laura Reid, is planning a career in journalism and has taken the lead in producing this. It can shortly be accessed on the school website and highlights some of the many activities pupils take part in. Laura and her team have done a great job.

The second method of communicating achievements and successes has been our various school Twitter feeds. We started over a year ago with @PortyAcad, the main school feed, and it now has over 930 followers. It has been joined by a variety of Faculty and House feeds. All aim to highlight achievements, learning activities and links to resources that can help young people to achieve their very best and support their wellbeing. We hope you enjoy them and we would love to achieve the magic 1,000 followers.

School Closure and Building Works

The various communications for parents around the closure are available on the school website in the Letters for Parents section. We understand and echo the concerns of parents, pupils, staff and the wider community about the safety of the building coupled with the inconvenience and worry caused by closure. Robertson Construction Eastern are now working closely with ourselves and Aberdeenshire to ensure there is no repeat of the situation that arose on the evening of 6 December 2017. This involves an accelerated programme of remedial works and daily liaison with school staff. We are assured that there will be a prompt flow of information from Robertson Construction who have put in place clear procedures to facilitate this. We will continue to update you as information is made available to us.

Prelims Session 2017/18

Please note that Prelims with Study Leave for S4-6 pupils will run from Monday 15 January to Friday 26 January 2018 (inclusive). The Prelim Timetable has been issued to pupils this week and is available on the school website from Tuesday 19 December.

A limited programme of learning activities linked to subjects will run for National 4 pupils. Details of this programme will be issued in due course and the prelim timetable has been issued to pupils to allow them to plan their revision.

We strongly advise that young people have a study plan which they follow between now and the prelims and a key element in this should be practice at past papers. A revision support booklet is available to all pupils at the following link. <http://portlethenacademy.aberdeenshire.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Study-Skills-Booklet.pdf>

Where young people identify gaps in their knowledge they should ensure they seek support from staff both in class time and in the various support classes run after school or during lunchtimes.

Parents Evenings and the Parent Survey

As those parents who attended either of the Senior Phase Parents Evenings will know we ask our persuasive senior pupils to encourage you to complete evaluation surveys at all of the various year group evenings. They are lengthy surveys with over 30 questions and we really value the time and effort you put into completing them. They always provide great feedback and give us areas to develop. We are able to act on some of these straight away while we build others into the School Improvement plan. The actual questions that we ask are from Education Scotland and are the same as will be issued to you when the school is next inspected. We also add a few specific questions of our own to follow up on areas raised by parents and pupils. Thank you for your help in this. If other ideas and points come to mind at any time please do not hesitate to contact us through the usual school email portlethen.aca@aberdeenshire.gov.uk The office staff will direct this to the appropriate person.

Staff Changes

We have a number of changes in staffing over the holiday period. Ms Clare Stewart, who joined us in the summer as a Drama teacher has been able to secure a post closer to her home. We have been successful in recruiting a replacement and Miss J Conway will join us in the second week of the new term. We are currently recruiting for a Physics teacher and hope to have made an appointment soon. With the school role increasing, we are planning ahead and have recently recruited Miss Pointet to the Modern Languages faculty as a teacher of French and Spanish. Also looking to the future, we are currently advertising a Mathematics post.

Within the Senior Leadership Team we have some changes. Mrs Miller returns from her maternity leave in January. She is returning 3 days a week, Monday to Wednesday, as a job share with Mr Liversedge. Mrs Miller will share S1 and S4 Year Head duties with me until the summer. Although Mr Liversedge is part of the job share we have been able to allocate 3 additional days to ensure he remains fulltime as DHT until summer, as such he will remain as Year Head for S3 and S6 until then. Ms Robertson reverts to her fulltime post as Principal Teacher of Expressive Arts from the beginning of February. Until then she will be Acting Depute Head for one day a week. She has done a tremendous job as Acting Depute Head Teacher so far and we thank her for that. While Ms Robertson has been in post, Mrs Duncan, Drama teacher, has been Acting PT Expressive Arts and she will continue this one day a week until the beginning of February also. We owe her many thanks for the hard work and conscientiousness she has brought to the role. Mr Morrison is now phasing back to work after surgery and expects to be back full time by mid January. I will continue as Acting Head Teacher working with Mr Morrison through the period of the phased return.

Key Dates

Next term sees the prelims and a range of other activities for parents and pupils. The main events are highlighted below and we will send out further information on many of them nearer the time. Please do not hesitate to contact the school office if you require clarification around any of them.

Friday 22 Dec Last day of term, school closes 3.30pm

We keep our focus on Teaching and Learning until the very end of term and the last few days are not a wind down to the holidays. The National courses are very time intensive and it is essential that pupils make the most of all the learning opportunities available to them if they are to achieve their best. Learning in the Broad General Education has a greater element of flexibility and gives more scope for festive themes but it provides the basis for future learning and also keeps a clear focus on learning. As such pupils will be working until the end of term, this includes participating in our Christmas assemblies on Friday where our Senior House pupils will take a lead.

2018

Monday 8 Jan	First day of term
Wednesday 10 Jan	Youth Philanthropy Initiative Grand Final 7.00-8.30pm Theatre
Thursday 11 Jan	Parent Council meeting 7.00pm, Staffroom
Monday 15 Jan	Prelims and Study Leave begin for S4-6
Friday 26 Jan	Prelims end
Monday 29 Jan	S4-6 return from Study Leave
Tuesday 30 Jan	S2 Parents' Evening
Thursday 1 Feb	Careers' Fair for Pupils
Tuesday 6 Feb	S3 Parents' Evening
Thurs 8 - Mon 12 Feb (inclusive)	Holiday
Tues 13 and Wed 14 Feb (inclusive)	In Service Training (Pupils not in school)
Thursday 15 Feb	Senior Phase Options Evening
Wednesday 28 Feb	Parent Council Meeting 7.00pm, Staffroom
Wednesday 14 Mar	S1 Parents' Evening
Thursday 29 Mar	Last day of term

In summary, it has been a great year with many highlights. I never cease to be delighted by the outstanding achievements of our pupils and staff. Your support for them and the school is a key factor in making this happen. As we all know, in working together we can get the very best for all our young people. Thank you and I wish you a happy and safe festive period. We look forward to seeing all our pupils back rested and focussed in the New Year.

Yours faithfully



Mary O'Brien
Acting Head Teacher

Twitter @PortyAcad