**Parent/ Carer Update – September 2023** 

Dear Parent/ Carer

I would like to congratulate our young people in the senior phase on some very good individual exam results at S4 to S6. Overall we maintained our progress at S4 and had our best ever results at S6 for overall Nat 5 and Higher passes. Our S5 result dropped from the normal trend and we have carried out a closer analysis of the results at this level to inform future work. The school will hold the School Prizegiving event on Thursday 12 October 2023. This event was previously in June and invitations to the parent / carers of student receiving awards will be sent out shortly. We look forward to this celebration of young people’s attainment and achievement across last session.

The following items are a few reminders and some updates from the school at the start of session.

**Uniform**

We have had a very positive start in terms of the overall Uniform standard and I would like to thank parents/ carers for their work in supporting this facet of school life.

***The uniform is as follows:***

* White shirt or blouse
* Black V neck jumper or cardigan (top must be black)
* **School tie –** these are now charged for at £5.00 but no student on free school meals or any family who requires financial support needs to pay.
* Black trousers or skirt
* Black shoes
* School Blazer – if purchased. A further order period will be set up after the October break for winter.

**We will be regularly checking uniform to ensure compliance** and also look at appropriateness. Outdoor clothing must be removed in all classes including headwear. Football scarves and colours are not allowed in school. Clothing should not have any offensive logos or wording. Leggings (except for PE), ripped/torn jeans and skirts and crop tops **are not permitted as normal uniform**.

Students who do not have the correct uniform with good reason, should have a note from their parent / carer excusing the uniform aberration and indicating the requested length of the exemption. Continual disobedience over uniform will be raised with parent/ carers.

Financial support for uniform is available through the Council clothing grant and or the school. **Please contact the school in confidence if you need any financial support.**

**Break and Lunchtimes**

**Break time:** Students from S2-6 are currently allowed out of school at break. This was agreed at the Student Parliament last year but may be subject to change if there is continual lateness and littering in the community.

S1 must remain in school at break time and can use the Bite Site or recreation area just outside the Bite Site where there is also outdoor seating.

**Lunch break-** Only S2-6 may leave the grounds at lunchtime. S1 must stay in school but we are considering letting them out in the summer term this session.

S1 may use the Bite Site for lunch inside or the safe area outside the Bite Site where there is outdoor seating. Seniors – S6 may eat lunch in their common room. S4/5 may use the Green Seat area. If students leave the building at lunchtime they must return on time for Period 6 (1:50 pm)

**Going home for Lunch- S1 students:** Parent / carers may request permission in writing for their child to go home for lunch. As we have a duty of care we must have this consent or we will not release a student. N.B. This permission IS NOT to just go to the shops – students must go home or to a relative’s home as arranged.

**Reminders- Attendance and Late Coming Procedures**

This session, with the removal of registration, attendance for students is calculated from Period 1 and Period 6 registration. The current procedures are as follows:

* Students should be in class and seated for 8.40am in the morning and 1.50pm in the afternoon.
* If a student arrives after 8.40am they must sign in at the school office as “Late” and collect a “Late“ slip which should be given to their class teacher. After 1.50pm they will be marked as “late” by the class teacher.
* If a student arrives late without the slip (AM) they will be sent to the office to sign-in.
* Students who arrive late 3 times or more in the week without explanation will be issued with a Time Back.
* If there is a genuine reason for lateness parents/carers are requested to inform the school office and this will be taken into account when issuing Time Back sanctions.
* Attendance is monitored by Guidance staff and they will be in contact with families with regard to any attendance issues.
* If students do not arrive at class or leave without permission, parents/carers will be notified by either phone call or Group Call text depending on the individual situation of the student. This is fundamental to student safeguarding.
* If parents/carers are having issues relating to their child’s attendance please contact the relevant Guidance Teacher and they will work with you to support in any way possible.

**Duty Head System**

Every period in the school is covered by a senior staff member who is known as the Duty Head. They carry a walkie talkie and are in communication with the Senior Management team and office staff. In the main, the calls are for behavioural issues in class or truancy /lateness. Where we feel students have broken clear rules they may be given a time back sanction at a lunchtime and you will be informed by text. This is part of a system that is designed to maintain a good standard of behaviour throughout the school.

If students are not in class the Duty Head will look for them in school and if they are not located a text or phone call will be made. We make every effort to ensure that you are notified and we also have a vulnerable student list that escalates communication. On some occasions, a student may be in school or are found later in the building. Whilst a call home may alarm a parent/carer you will appreciate we have a duty of care and must inform you if we feel your young person is not where they should be. Mistakes can be made but err on the side of caution. Finally, if you feel the system has not been reactive in a certain situation, please let us know by emailing penicuik\_hs@midlothian.gov.uk FAO –SMT as we always aim to improve our services and responsiveness.

**Chromebooks**

Any new pupils to the school who do not have a Chromebook will be able to collect a seed stock device from various subject areas in the first instance. Arrangements will then be made for a new device to be permanently allocated.

All young people are expected to:

* Bring their device everyday
* Keep the device fully charged
* Ensure it is safe and kept secure
* Only use their Chromebook as directed for school/ subject level tasks

Misuse under the standard Student Use agreement may result in loss of access to the network or removal of the device during a lesson. The devices are monitored and access to unlawful or inappropriate sites is controlled via Lightspeed software. Use of the device at home is the responsibility of parents/ carers but we will support you with any issues.

Please see our Equipped for Learning website for more information.

https://equipped.midlothian.education/

**Homework**

*We will be sending a separate update about our Homework policy and how to check Google homework early next week.*

**Staffing**

We are currently fully staffed in terms of teaching staff but have some vacancies in support roles. We will be interviewing for a new Administrative Manager next week. We have current vacancies for a Pupil Care and Welfare Officer, Learning Assistant – ASN and an Office Support Assistant (Attendance). These roles will be advertised via Myjobscotland.

**Student Support and Inclusion**

This term the Support and Inclusion Department have been spending time supporting students to access the specialist teaching available to them in their subject classes. We have been doing this through support in class but also through teaching them to use the Read, Write programme on their Chromebooks. We have begun the role out of this training with our senior students and hope to have everyone able to use the application in the near future. If your student has not yet had this training be assured they will receive it. In the meantime we would encourage them to explore it themselves. It is available via the purple jigsaw piece at the top right hand side of their Chromebook screen. This package is very exciting as it has a variety of tools which will support students with literacy difficulties. We will be giving students help sheets to support their use of the programme and we would encourage you to work with them to learn the full benefits of the programme and how it can support their learning.

**Ethos Review**

We continue our ethos review this session and we have worked with large and small groups of students and gained input from staff to look at key values to inform a vision. We will shortly be sending out some vision statements formed from this work to parent/carers to help arrive at a preferred vision. After this is completed we will go back to develop values relating to this key vision statement and also work on a revised behaviour policy based on this ethos and which has a high degree of student input to ensure ownership.

In April 2024 we are also scheduled to apply for Gold Rights Respecting School (RRSA) Charter Status which will embed a rights based approach to all our work in school and this will be underpinned by our ethos. As part of our rights work we will have to look at our policies and processes to make sure they are based around the specific articles in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of The Child from which the RRSA award scheme is developed as well as ensuring staff and young people understand these rights in action.

**SCQF School Ambassador Programme**

We have started our journey towards the SCQF School Ambassador Programme Bronze Award (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework – by using two measures, the level of a qualification or learning programme and the number of credit points awarded, the Framework helps you understand and compare various Scottish qualifications.) The SCQF School Ambassador programme offers schools the opportunity to learn more about the benefits of the SCQF and the wider ways in which it supports learners such as: recognising wider achievement, developing Senior Phase learning pathways in line with the Developing the Young Workforce strategy and giving equality between vocational and academic qualifications. This programme will support us to increase our curriculum offer on top of the traditional National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher areas. We have already introduced new courses across the school and we are looking to continue to increase this offer as we progress through the School Ambassador Programme. We are currently gathering evidence to meet the Bronze Award criteria and this includes identifying students to become SCQF Ambassadors and there will be more information to follow on this very soon as our students become leaders in this area.

**After School Clubs**

Below is a list of after school clubs and activities. We strongly encourage all young people to take advantage of these opportunities.

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| **VENUE** | **ACTIVITY** | **AGE** | **DAY** | **TIME** | **TEACHER/COACH** |
| Games Hall | Girls Football | S1-S6 | MON | Lunch 1:05 – 1:50 | K Madden |
| Spin Studio | Spinning | S4-S6 | MON | After School 3:30 – 4:30 | S McLennan |
| Games Hall | Girls Netball | S1-S6 | TUES | After School 3:30 – 4:30 | S Van Aswegen |
| Games Hall | Basketball | S1-S3 | TUES | Lunch 1:05 – 1:50 | C Hunter |
| Rugby Pitches | Rugby | S1-S6 | TUES | After School 3:30 – 4:30 | L Witton |
| Astro | Boys Football | S1-S3 | WEDS | After School 3:30 – 4:30 | Z Dziewulska |
| Astro | Boys Football | S4-S6 | WEDS | After School 3:30 – 4:30 | M Rathie / S MacDonald |
| Games Hall | Racket Sports | S1-S6 | THURS | Lunch 1:05 – 1:50 | L Witton |
| Astro | Hockey | S1-S6 | THURS | After School 3:30 – 4:30 | K Robertson |
| Astro | Cricket | S1-S6 | THURS | After School 3:30 – 4:30 | D Burgess / C Hind |
| Spin Studio | Spinning (Jan 2024)  | S4-S6 | FRI | Before School  | N McShannon |

**Please also note the following:**

Please ensure you wear suitable clothing and footwear for the activity and:

* Please bring a bottle of water to the activity
* Please bring a packed lunch on the days you are attending lunchtime clubs.
* Please check the daily bulletin / Active Schools notice board for any changes to the above – details may change
* Please inform family that you are attending clubs and will be late home or arrange suitable transport / lift home
* Please join Penicuik High School Sports Club – this will allow you to attend as many clubs as you want for only £10 per year Forms available from PE department. (No payment is required for students on free School meals or who feel unable to pay. Please contact the HT in confidence.

There will be further news updates across coming months and we are looking at having a staff member help coordinate communication, including Social media links and calendar updates. In particular we will look at monthly reminders of key calendar events being sent out and consider how we improve the Google calendar function on the website

If you have any queries regarding items in this parent update please contact the school by email penicuik\_hs@midlothian.gov.uk outlining your query and it will be forwarded to the appropriate staff member.

Kind regards



Craig Biddick

Head Teacher