

Parent Update – 19 December 2024

Some quick updates as we end the year.

It has been a busy term in school with a number of school trips, outside speakers, House competitions and of course senior phase exams. Overall the school atmosphere is very positive and calm and I would like to thank young people for their continued positive attitude and involvement in school.

Prelim Exams

The prelim exams have gone smoothly over the past few weeks and overall student attendance has been good but there may be a need for some young people to catch up on missed Prelims in January when they return. These exams are important for preparing students for formal exams in the Hall or sitting the exams in line with their personal AAA arrangements during the SQA diet. The results will also help staff target areas of poor understanding and indicate where more effort is required.

We have standard protocols for tracking and monitoring attainment and will put in place interventions to support young people who are off target. Formal interventions include setting smart targets to turn the situation around. We have also now introduced a new focused mentoring programme (FMP) where we feel students are in danger of not reaching their best possible attainment outcome in one or two key subjects. This is a small focussed group across S4-6. They will be supported monthly via a meeting with senior staff. It is worth noting this is not necessarily about applying more pressure as many young people put pressure on themselves already but rather about finding ways to support them practically to overcome under performance or address anxiety or avoidance. If you are worried about your child's progress at school or how they are coping please do contact their Guidance Teacher in the first instance.

Attendance

As you will be aware there is currently a lot of reporting in the media about a drop in school attendance rates across Scotland. Penicuik High School is no different and we saw a 2% fall in average attendance figures across last session. This figure is made up of individual and cohort data and it is quite concerning to see attendance fall for Senior Phase students as it directly affects course outcomes and attainment. I will be writing to parent/ carers about this early next Term.

Tree of Knowledge

In order to support the motivation and engagement of young people we are building an increasingly strong relationship with Tree of Knowledge who are a company who work with businesses and schools to encourage people to be the best version of themselves. They deliver a variety of different programmes to support this. We recently had the privilege of inviting them in to deliver workshops to our Senior Phase students in the build up to their prelims. They delivered workshops titled Mindset and Match and Reach

for the Stars and these both focussed on motivating our students to be the best they can be and also shared some skills to help prepare them for their prelims. The feedback we received from the students regarding these sessions was extremely positive with 100% of S4 students stating they feel more confident about their future and 97% felt inspired to do something differently. The S5 feedback was extremely positive as well with 94% of students stating they feel more confident about their future and 93% felt inspired to do something differently. We have invited Tree of Knowledge to come back again in February to deliver further workshops to our Senior Phase students as they prepare for their final SQA examinations in May.

Uniform

In the New Year we will be picking up on our current Uniform consultation and taking forward our discussions with stakeholders. We are also looking at possible samples of uniform items to share with students based on current feedback.

At present the overall standard of uniform is good but male students are reminded they currently should not be in trackies or joggers and we would respectfully request that trousers are worn to school after the Christmas break. We know many young people are choosing to wear them despite having the correct trousers and will check on this in January.

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School Concert

On Wednesday night this week we will hold our annual Christmas Concert in the school hall. The evening is highly recommended and it is a great showpiece for the many talented young people we have in school. Tickets are available now from the school office.

Finally, as the year draws to a close I would like to take the opportunity to thank all parent / carers for their support during the year.

I hope that you survive what can be a crazy season with many stresses and that the Christmas and New period are a happy family time.

Best wishes



Craig Biddick
Head Teacher