



17 December 2025

Dear Parent / Carer,

As we draw to the close of another busy and successful year, I am writing to highlight some key matters in the school. This is in addition to the information found in our E-bulletin Newsletter for parent/ carers and the separate student bulletin.

Staffing

We are currently fully staffed, including having additional support staff in place. These are paid for by the Council to assist with student management during the decant phase.

Several staff are leaving at the end of term. Kathryn Hamilton – Teacher of Music is leaving us on Friday. I would like to thank her for her work with young people both within the Music Department and wider school music events such as school concerts and *Burnt Out* record events. Kathryn will be missed by the young people she worked with as she has built a strong rapport with many through her commitment to their well-being and learning. She will be replaced by Ms Lauren Hand, who will start in the Music Department later in January, once onboarding is complete.

Laura Beattie – Teacher of Complex Needs is also leaving her role at the CN Base and we will be recruiting for a replacement in the New year. We thank her for her work with young people at the current Strathesk base and wish her well for the future.

I would also like to thank Mr Derek McMillan, a long-term cover teacher in our TLC nurture base who has been a real asset to that support room and the young people in it. We hope to see him back in school later in the session.

We recently welcomed a number of staff to teaching and support roles across the school: Mrs Kate Gordon – to a part time teaching post in Home Economics, Roseanne Carlin in the role of Teacher of Behaviour Support in our Nurture base (TLC) and Amy Wilson as a Teacher of Support for Learning in our Learning Hub (The Learning Zone – TLZ). The Complex Needs base at Strathesk Primary School also welcomed Ms Ioanna Love as a Teacher of Complex Needs earlier in the term. In January that team will be joined by Ms Kamila Bigos in an LA role. In our new triage nurture space, we welcomed Megan Davidson and Natalie Young as learning Assistants early in the Autumn Term and in January we will welcome Diane Stratton who will support across Nationals, Triage, TLC, TLZ.

Alongside these staff, we also welcomed Megan Yule to the team as a Home School Practitioner. This new role created, through our bulk ASN grant allowance is to support young people's attendance and engagement at school and is part of our redesigned pastoral care package.

Refurbishment / Rebuild

As some of you will be aware there, has been a recent paper to Midlothian Council asking for additional funding for the Penicuik High School estates project and outlining reasons for the building delays which relate to matters like asbestos, ground conditions and ensuring the building meets energy standards. This is not surprising given the age of the building and some of the technical difficulties. The current delays to the main works starting means the new completion date is March, 2028. I have asked the project team to ensure there are regular project updates for the school community in the New Year so you understand how the project is proceeding.

Christmas Concert

The school's renowned Christmas Concert is back again for its annual musical smorgasbord on Wednesday 17 January at the Town Hall. We are looking forward to another fantastic night showcasing the hugely talented young people in the school. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Keith, Sarah and Kathryn and the IMS team who have again worked very hard to make all this happen.

Christmas Appeal

We are delighted to share that over £800 has been raised through our Christmas Appeal. These funds will be converted into vouchers to support families within our local community who may need some extra help this festive period. Thank you to everyone who contributed and helped make a positive difference. Thanks to Mrs Yule our HSP for organising this and the school community for supporting it so well.

Parent – School Partnership Group (PSP)

At the recent PSP meeting we discussed the Prelim diet and its administration. In January we will send out a formal response to your feedback and communicate any future adjustments as a result. As Head Teacher, I also went through a detailed presentation on our Attainment – recent and historical. We are at or above our virtual comparator (*VC – this concept is explained in the presentation that the PSP will share*) in many key measures and literacy and numeracy outcomes at S3, which are measured across Scotland, are above the Midlothian and National figures. Our particular focus now is on improving Level 6 Numeracy and Literacy outcomes at S5 and S6 through alternative course offers and improving the number of young people achieving one, three or five Highers in S5 at one sitting. The presentation has been shared with the PSP and will be put on our website.

Course Choice

This is an ongoing process across a number of year levels and I encourage you to discuss future courses and pathways with your young person and seek input from school staff if required. There is also valuable guidance on the school website outlining the school's process. We have added quite a number of additional SCQF courses over the last few years, widening our offer for all and improving overall attainment.

Consultations

We are currently developing a new Relationships for Learning policy based on our new vision and values. This policy follows National guidance as well as new Midlothian Council policy. It is relationship based with a focus on nurture and restorative practices. A staff consultation has furnished us with a lot of positive feedback. Development work from January will look at practical aspects of defining and putting practical elements into our setting so it works to improve behaviour across classrooms and other spaces.

Across January / February we will be seeking feedback on the draft policy from parent / carers and other stakeholders. Please take the time to give your opinion.

Also attached to this letter is a summary of Parent/ Carer feedback from the recent Curriculum Rationale survey. It is an easy to read, one page Infographic that really captures key themes and concerns from your essential input as stakeholders.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all our school community a safe and happy holiday period as you celebrate Christmas and New year with family and friends. If you are travelling, safe travels. If you are staying home, I hope the sun shines on you.

Thank you for your continued support of the school.

Best Wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Biddick', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Craig Biddick

Head Teacher