



## **Parent/Carer - Staff update – 19 December 2022**

Dear Parent/Carer

As the year draws to a close, I am taking the opportunity to write to you about a number matters.

### **End of Term**

The term will finish at 3:30 pm on Tuesday 20 December 2022. The new term will start at 8:30 am on Thursday 5 January, 2023.

### **Staffing**

We have made several recent appointments in the school and several staff are leaving.

Mrs Lynda Davidson, an Office Support Assistant in the main office, is leaving us in the New Year after 23 years' service. Lynda has been an outstanding employee and her knowledge of a wide range of office procedures and protocols, and personable and efficient service, will be greatly missed by all the staff. In particular Lynda has single-handedly ensured the School Prize Giving runs so smoothly every year and she has been at the forefront of managing things like attendance and immunisation programmes to name but a few. Her attention to detail and knowledge of the young people in school were a great asset. We wish her and Stewart well in their retirement and we know she will remain a close friend of the school community.

Mr Mark Rathie – will take up a post in Business Education from 9 January 2023.

Ms Kathryn Hamilton has started with us this week as a maternity cover in Music. Mr Ken Garvey who previously covered that role is leaving at the end of term to take up a full time teaching post. We wish him well in his new post.

Ms Amy Hogg has been covering a maternity post in Art and Design and Ms Yvonne Chan in RMPS.

Ms Kasia Semik has been working as a teacher of Support for Learning but will be leaving us early next Term.

Ms Amy Ritchie started as a Pupil Care and Welfare Officer in the Guidance Area during the term.

Three new Learning Assistants started this term: Ms Kimberley Falconer, Ms Jennifer More and Mr Callum Wardlaw.

We will welcome back Ms Hollie Lyon from maternity leave this week as Acting Depute Head Teacher. Her Acting post has been covered this session by Mrs Leigh Wood

who will return to her role in Guidance. I would like to thank Mrs Wood for her outstanding leadership in the role and the great work she has done covering areas such as SQA Coordinator, manager of school reporting and Head of House.

We are currently recruiting for several posts including: a second Pupil Care and Welfare Officer, part time Youth Worker and cover teaching staff in Modern Languages and Computing.

### **School Activities**

A wide range of activities have taken place over the term including a lot of House competitions and student leadership/voice opportunities.

The bake-off heats are continuing, although last week's heat was postponed due to the poor weather and the need to let staff and students get home earlier. Last week there was a Music Quiz involving staff and students, the School Christmas Concert and Christmas Lunch on Wednesday. We are finding morale and community spirit has increased since we could hold face to face meetings and events and look forward to holding more in the Spring term. My thanks to the staff and young people involved in all these activities.

### **Prelims**

Due to ongoing strike action by teaching staff we foresee some disruption to our January Prelim diet. Where possible we will try to stick to the timetable issued earlier in the year, however we will have contingency plans in place for examinations which are impacted by the strike action. Class teachers will continue to communicate with students to let them know of changes and emails will be sent home to families to keep them informed. Please get in touch with your student's guidance teacher if you have any concerns regarding prelims.

### **Tracking and Monitoring and Interventions (TMR)**

Quite a lot of hard work has gone into the tracking and monitoring (TMR) systems we now operate and now have the appropriate levels of tracking and monitoring required to improve attainment. The TMR does rely heavily on staff input and we will be monitoring how approaches such as the SQA interventions affect exam results. The TMR also allows us to see a number of issues that will impact attainment this session such a poor attendance, lack of homework or poor application in general. Depending on certain threshold, different levels of interventions operate but if students are off track in a number of areas they will be seen by staff and work to set clear, smart targets which are followed up on and communicated via letters home. If you have any concerns about the progress of your child please do not hesitate to contact their Guidance Teacher in the first instance.

## Chromebooks

All young people are expected to:

- Bring their device every day
- 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.

## New Timetable / Coursing

Believe it or not, the coursing process for our change of timetable starts in January. Please see the below dates for your reference:

### ***S2 into S3***

Starts - 16/01/23

Ends - 27/01/23

***S4/S5 into S5/S6 Straw Poll*** (This is to help predict what our new S5/S6 course choice form will look like and help us offer students the best possible options available)

Starts - 13/01/23

Ends - 23/01/23

### ***S3 into S4***

Starts - 06/02/23

Ends - 24/02/23

### ***S4/S5 into S5/S6***

Starts - 13/03/23

Ends - 29/03/23

All the information you require to support your child through the coursing process can be found on the school website under the curriculum heading. Link below.

<https://penicuik.mgfl.net/course-choice>

On the website you will find a video that provides all the information you require to understand the coursing process. There will also be a copy of the course choice booklet that provides information about every course available as well as a copy of the course choice form. Every student will also receive a 1:1 coursing interview to discuss their choices and support your child through the process. If you have any further questions then please contact your child's guidance teacher.

## **Uniform**

It has been evident that in the weeks leading up to Christmas the standard of appropriate school uniform has fallen. This has been identified by an increase in the number of group call messages going home because students are not in full uniform. We will start to monitor school uniform again more closely in the New Year and challenge students who are not dressed appropriately. Please see below a link to the school website for full details regarding our uniform policy and the sanctions that will be in place to challenge non-compliance to this policy.

Some students are exempt due to sensory or other issues and in this case we ask that they wear plain black clothing

<https://penicuik.mgfl.net/school-uniform>

We note that no student should be out of uniform due to financial circumstances. ***If you require financial support please contact the school office in confidence, who will be able to advise you about the Council's school clothing grant or other assistance.***

Thank you for your continued support with regards to school uniform and the high standards we set at Penicuik High School.

You may want to add your bit about the importance of uniform etc.

Let me know if you need any further info.

## **Lates**

As a school we set high standards in all aspects of school life and in maintaining standards across lateness, attendance, uniform and behaviour we have improved our attainment significantly. We know that late-coming has a direct impact on pupil attainment over time. Furthermore, I am sure you will appreciate that time keeping is an essential life skill and one which is valued by employers. Therefore after the Christmas holidays we will continue to monitor late coming and issue time backs for students who

are persistent offenders. *Please get in touch with your student's guidance teacher if you have any concerns regarding late coming.*

### **Review and Consultations**

During the Spring term we will be reviewing our school ethos – in particular our vision and values.

We will also be formally consulting on changes to the school day and contact time in January/February, as will other secondary schools in Midlothian. This will be flagged with the Parents' Association in early January and further information will follow to go out to the Parent Forum and will be discussed with the student voice groups and Parliament.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your loved ones a joyous Christmas and Happy New Year. Thank you for your on-going support of the school and we look forward to welcoming all young people back to school after a restful break, in 2023.

Kind Regards

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

Craig Biddick

Head Teacher