

27 September 2021

Dear Parent or Carer,

Supports for Young People at Penicuik High School

I am writing to you to outline some of the supports that are available for young people at Penicuik High School.

At the core of our work is a recognition that all young people, and the challenges they may face during their school career, are very individual. To that end, we aim to provide support tailored to meet the needs of each young person. This support may also vary at different times in their school journey but so it is crucial that young people are central to discussions and decisions about supports offered.

Since March 2020 when schools had to close doors to the majority of young people and move to online learning, we have continued to endure a very lengthy period of disrupted education. While we are back in school now, and very much hope to stay in school, we are aware of the effect the last 18 months has had on the learning of our students. To ensure that we are getting supports correct we are currently taking the following actions.

The first set of supports are S1/2 specific due to the fact that these two year groups experienced a heavily disrupted Transition to secondary school:

- All S1 students will meet with their guidance teacher for a 1-1 catch up. This is to review how their start to S1 has been and identify any supports that may be required.
- All S1 students with an **identified ASN need** are also be seen by Support for Learning to review those needs and check that the correct support strategies are in place.
- Half of our S1 students took part in the Enhanced Transition Programme. The reasons for this varied between ASN needs, medical needs and anxiety. ASN and medical needs will be followed up by Support for Learning Staff while the Guidance Teacher will support those identified with anxiety
- S1 will be completing basic assessments in reading and numeracy over the next few weeks to give us clear and current information about where they are with their learning. The assessments are carried out on computer with Support for Learning staff on hand to support young people through them. These assessments will allow us to target the correct supports to young people to help them build back and bridge any gaps in education due to their time out of school

- Students in S2 will also complete these assessments and supports for S2 students will be reviewed.
- Students in S1/2 identified as needing additional support in Literacy will be supported either through the Paired Reading Programme. In this programme, students are paired with a trained S6 student who will work with them on a weekly basis to support their reading under the supervision of the Support for Learning Department.
- Students in need of more intensive support will start the Freshstart Reading programme. Run by Support for Learning, this operates in a small group format to support reading recovery.

In addition, we have expanded the Pupil Support Department and will be offering the following supports to any students in any year group depending on their needs:

- **Support for Learning Tutorial Groups/1-1 supports, In-class supports.**
- **Individualised support through the ASN Hub.** First established in March in school and the ASN Hub ran alongside the established Hub during the closure period. Due to its success, we have made the decision to continue it on return.
- **Youth Work Support** - Individual or Group Support for young people experiencing anxiety or challenges to their learning or emotional health and wellbeing. Our youth worker is employed by Penicuik High School and is not linked to any other support agency. The purpose of the youth Work Programme is to provide entry level support to either avoid the need to escalate to CAMHS or MYPAS or to provide support to young people while on waiting lists for these external services.
- **The Learning Centre** - A specialised service aimed at supporting young people facing difficulties in engaging in education. There can be many reasons for this including anxiety, long term non-attendance, illness, mental health concerns or having a diagnosed condition (eg ASD, ADHD etc) that makes coping in a mainstream classroom a challenge.
- **School Counselling Service** - We are delighted that the Counselling Service will resume soon following the appointment by the programme of new counselling staff. Our time allocation has also increased. Counselling slots are requested for students by referral through Guidance and are allocated by the counselling service in order of priority. There will also be a number of shorter weekly drop in session for young people who maybe just want to bit of advice or need to offload worries or concerns.
- **Breakfast and Lunch Service** - Due to the fact that the school catering service is not operating in school we have been running an emergency breakfast and lunch service for young people who might be experiencing hunger during the day. While students are bringing packed lunches or going out for lunch, the opportunity to have breakfast or a snack mid-morning in the Bitesite is not possible at present. This service is aimed at helping young people who may need a bit of a boost and is open to all students. Breakfast cereal, toast, breakfast bars and porridge are all available along with soup and toasties at lunchtime (for students who may have forgotten lunch or lunch money).
- **Sensory Room** – Our new sensory room is now up and running and provides a safe, calm space for students who are maybe experiencing anxiety or difficulties in the school day that

is impacting on their ability to go to and stay in their classes. The sensory room has been set up specifically to provide a space for young people to de-escalate from a heightened emotional state and has already proved very successful in helping young people manage their difficulties and go back to classes after a short time out where previously they may have wanted to go home.

We are also delighted to inform you that we have appointed three new Learning Assistants to fill the three vacancies in the Support for Learning Department. The new learning assistants will start with us as soon as the mandatory PVG (Protecting Vulnerable Groups) screening is complete and will bring the Support for Learning Department back up to full strength again.

Pupil Support Staff names and roles for 2021-22 are attached.

I hope this gives you a clear idea of some of the ways we are trying to support our young people at Penicuik High School.

Yours faithfully,

Diane Burgess

Depute Headteacher (Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion)

Pupil Support Staff in session 2021-2022 are:

Principal Teacher Guidance (Clerk Maxwell House):

Mr David Saffhill

Mrs Leigh Wood(**Wednesday – Friday**)/Ms Suzy McLennan (Monday-Wednesday) – job share.

Principal Teacher Guidance (Liddell House)

Mrs Margaret Brandie

Mrs Morven Murphy

PT Guidance (Clerk Maxwell and Liddell Houses)

Mr Stephen Milligen

Guidance Admin:

Mrs Lesley Simpson

Support for Learning

Mrs Tracey Edge-Loake (PT SFL)

Ms Alison Colquhoun (Teacher of SFL)

The Learning Centre:

Miss Kat Brack (**Monday-Wednesday**)

Miss Shannon McDonald (**Thursday-Friday**)

Youth Work

Miss Helen Slaney