

WHAT'S GOING ON AT CDHS?



Message from the Headteacher

What a busy and productive start we have had to session 2019-20. Our new S1 pupils have settled in well to secondary school life; are no longer getting lost or wondering what their next class might be and they are now at the point where they are ready to be involved in leadership roles as junior leaders who will represent their house group for S1 to contribute to whole school improvement.

I have congratulated each year group who sat SQA exams in the recent diet. I have congratulated our hard working staff who contribute significantly to the success your young people achieve. I would also like to congratulate the parent forum as you too contribute significantly to the success your child achieves in their exams. Young people at Castle Douglas High School continue to achieve excellent SQA examination results and are a credit to themselves and their families.

Following our inspection in March 2019 one of the recommendations made was that the school implemented its plans to introduce a monitoring and tracking system across the school. This is now well underway and many of you will already have received a report on the progress your child is making either in the Broad General Education, (S1-S3) or in the Senior Phase, (S4-S6). Our aim is that by the end of this session parents will feel that they have been kept more up-to-date with the progress their child is making within curriculum for excellence levels and towards achieving their SQA targets.

Senior S6 pupils have been busy, not only with their curriculum but also in volunteering to contribute to the wider aspects of school life. Groups of pupils have volunteered to help supervise in the school dining hall, to take part in paired reading with younger pupils, to organise our charities events, to organise our school dances, to supervise behaviour on school buses, to support learners in classrooms across the school, to be part of a variety of committees and organising groups to ensure their S6 experience is the best it can possibly be.

In S6, Head of House and House representatives have been appointed after a very competitive selection process which involved a written application, a presentation to the assembled S6 pupils and an interview. The successful candidates were:

Head of Solway House:	Caitlin Black
House representative for Solway House:	Sarah Mariacci
Head of Kelton House:	Emilia Maxwell
House representative for Kelton House:	Pacey Young
Head of Threave House:	Hannah Whitelaw
House representative for Threave House:	Niamh Carroll
House representative for Threave House:	Oliver Broadhurst

We all wish our new S6 Heads of House and House Representatives well as they take on additional responsibilities in the school that will help to make our school an even better place to learn.

One of the first task that the Heads of House and House representatives took on was to appoint junior leaders from our new S1 cohort. The seniors found this a very rewarding experience as they had to read applications from the S1 pupils, conduct interviews and then announce the decisions made to the S1 pupils.

The junior leaders appointed for each house are as follows

Threave House

Ryan Powell

Ryan Kerr

Andrew Sinden

Tilda Henderson

Solway House

Fiona Edgar

William Cawthorne

Libby Nelson

Mia Barbour

Kelton House

Charley Henderson

Fraser Irving

Gwen Wallace

Brook Thomson

In S2-S4 the leader groups from last session have volunteered to continue in their roles. The type of activities that all of our pupil leaders may be tackling are, for example, to:

1. Evaluate how well Castle Douglas High School promotes opportunities for achievement through out of class learning and activities. This might include trips to places of interest in our local community and further afield, learning in a workplace or joining teams and clubs to learn a new activity.
2. Analyse the displays in your Castle Douglas High School corridors and social areas to see how well they are used to promote wellbeing, inclusion and equality.

A mixture of S4 and S5 pupils travelled to Hamburg on our annual Art exchange with the Gymnasuim Hochrad. The pupils had a day trip to Berlin and visited the Reichstag. In Hamburg they went to the Elbphilharmonie a concert hall in the HafenCity quarter of Hamburg. It is one of the largest and acoustically most advanced concert halls in the world. Overall the visit was a resounding success and I would like to thank Mrs Bowles for her tireless organisation of this trip and Mrs Todd and Miss McCulloch for accompanying our young people.

S3 girls attended a 'girls into physics' day hosted by Lockerbie Academy. This event had speakers from a number of different universities in Scotland including Glasgow and Edinburgh. There were also speakers from the RAF. There were activities from constructing RAF signs and building rockets to nuclear physics and experiments with liquid nitrogen. The girls had a great day and came home with a better understanding of the potential of a career in physics.

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When we returned from our summer holiday we received the delightful news that pupils Anna Fox and Tessa Hall had been part of a very successful production at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. The girls were part of a play that was aimed at raising awareness of Autism. The girls performed superbly and were rewarded as the play won The Derek Award for Best Drama at the Edinburgh Fringe. The play was coordinated by the Fox and Hound Company. On the back of their success the girls have been asked to perform the play in front of the Scottish parliament. Well done Tessa and Anna.

The school's parent council continues to provide support to the school and are very keen to help the school to mitigate against many of the budget cuts that we are facing. You may be aware that at this time last session the school was in the position that it had to ask parents to pay for any use of bus transport to take pupils to curricular and extra-curricular activities. School teams for any sporting activity were being asked to pay £5 for a home match and £5 for an away match in order that the teams could continue participate. Thanks to the excellent work of the parent council who, following a successful bid for funding, have made it possible for us to be able to offer free transport to all pupil curricular and extra-curricular activities across the Castle Douglas/Dalry Secondary partnership for this session, while the funding lasts. It is important, however, for parents to be aware that this funding is currently for one session only and we could find ourselves back in the original position for session 2020-21.

The parent council have also been very active in looking to support the 'cost of the school day' budget. This was a budget that was cut by the local council at the February 2019 budget setting exercise. This budget ensured that young people who were following courses in Home Economics did not have to pay for the food they were learning to cook and those young people who were following courses in Technical subjects did not have to pay for the wood or metal they were using in the classroom. For session 2019-20 we have received 50% of the 'cost of the school day' funding and for session 2020-21 this budget will no longer exist. In school we have been mitigating against these cuts by altering the curriculum we are offering. This means that in Home Economics more young people are following Health & Food Technology courses rather than Hospitality courses. In the Broad General Education, S1-S3, more Health & Food Technology content has been introduced reducing the amount of cooking for the young people. The aim here is twofold, firstly to reduce the cost in terms of food being used and secondly to introduce a pathway for more young people to be able to attain a Higher grade pass in the senior school as Health & Food Technology can be taken to Higher level but Hospitality only to National 5 level. In Technical a similar tactic is seeing more young people take on Graphic Communication and Design & Manufacture rather than Practical Woodwork or Metal work in order to reduce the cost of the materials used in these subjects and provide a better progression route for the majority of pupils. The parent council have supported the school through these changes and have been very active in looking for ways to help ensure that young people are able to cook and to participate in Technical courses. If you have any ideas that can help the parent council or if you would like to join the council, then please contact the chairperson Mrs Suzanne Broatch.

Hopefully many of you were able to join the school community at the Fullerton Theatre in June to enjoy the school show 'High School Musical Junior'. Everyone who attended the show agreed that the young people had done an excellent job and thoroughly entertained their audiences. The drama group have already started their auditions, casting and rehearsals for the show they aim to put on in June 2020 which will be Aladdin Junior. Aladdin is about the lovable street urchin who meets Princess Jasmine, the beautiful daughter of the sultan of Agrabah. While visiting her exotic palace, Aladdin stumbles upon a magic oil lamp that unleashes a powerful, wisecracking, larger-than-life genie. Good luck to the drama club with their preparations.

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You may have read recently in the Galloway News or heard rumour around the town that a pupil from a Stewartry school was stabbed on a school bus. I would like to reassure you that this did not happen at Castle Douglas High School or at Dalry Secondary. Indeed, I would like to congratulate the pupils of both schools for the very positive and responsible way they make use of school transport. It is very unusual for any of our bus drivers or senior pupils to report poor behaviour on our school transport. On the occasions when this does happen the pupils respond well to being reminded of our school values to show respect. However, knife crime and the threat of knife crime is a major issue in our society today and we take this very seriously in school. Recently we have had input to school assemblies from Police Scotland and from the British Red Cross to raise awareness of the legal seriousness and of the physical danger of knife crime to ensure that we are doing our best to protect our young people, to encourage them to make responsible choices and to keep them safe.

A group of S4 and 5 pupils have been trained as Mentors in Violence Prevention. The MVP programme uses a peer education model to discuss important issues faced by young people in Scotland. Topics include bullying behavior, gender based violence and social media use to name a few. Lessons will be delivered by the MVP ambassadors to younger year groups in PSE.

MVP was established in Scotland in 2011, by the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) of the police and is now operated by Education Scotland in partnership with the VRU and the Scottish Government.

The MVP programme gives an excellent opportunity for mentors to be leaders both inside and outside of the classroom and to develop their presentation and communication skills. MVP sessions encourage young people to think of themselves as 'bystanders' to a situation. That is someone who sees, hears or has knowledge of a situation. Time is spent looking at ways every person has the potential to influence a situation positively and safely. Many of the activities delivered in MVP are designed to start conversations about the ways that gender stereotypes can lead to bullying, exclusion and harmful behaviours. Violence takes many forms and MVP defines it as physical, verbal, emotional and sexual acts which can cause harm. Mentors are encouraged to consider what healthy, respectful relationships look like.

Please remember that the school calendar of major events such as parent evenings, reports being issued and prelim dates is available on the school web site – www.cdhs.info – along with a great deal of other information about what is happening at the school.

I want to extend a thank you to the school staff and to the young people of Castle Douglas High School for an excellent first term of this session. Enjoy your October holiday and return to us safe, healthy and ready to work even harder in the term from October to December.

Some upcoming events for the term October to December 2019.

30th October Halloween Disco

1st November S3 receive their first monitoring & tracking update

29th November S4/5/6 receive their second monitoring & tracking update

3rd December S5/6 Parents evening

12th December junior Christmas dance

17th December senior Christmas dance

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