

# WHAT'S GOING ON AT CDHS?



Dear School Community,

Session 2020-2021 has started and pupils are beginning to get back into the routines of school and learning following the extended period of lock down and the summer holidays. School is not the same as it was when lockdown started in March and the differences are most obvious in the much reduced inside and outside space we have due to ongoing building works. As you can imagine of a 1958 building, any form of renovation is not straight forward as almost everything that the builders do identifies and highlights other problems, which in turn, delay the timescale for completion. However, we keep looking on the bright side and hoping that while there will be pain the resulting improvements should make the school a great deal more inviting for our young people.

SQA results day and the days that followed proved to be a challenge and a concern to many young people and their parents. However, in school the staff were confident that the quality assurance procedures we had put in place to generate our estimate grades for SQA were robust and effective. Consequently, a very small percentage of the results announced on the 4<sup>th</sup> August at CDHS were changed by SQA. Some changes were made and caused students and parents concern, fortunately, the decision to award the grades as estimated by teaching staff has addressed those concerns. The 2020 results data at CDHS shows that young people continue to achieve excellent grades in their SQA exams and have been awarded the grades that their hard work and dedication before lockdown deserved. Castle Douglas continues to be one of the highest performing schools in terms of SQA awards in Dumfries & Galloway and this is achieved through the hard work of the young people and their teachers who should be celebrated and congratulated for their efforts.

The impact of the Covid19 pandemic meant that session 2019-2020 ended without the usual celebrations and opportunities to bid farewell to the S6 pupils who missed so much of the traditional end to their time at school. We also did not have the opportunity as a community to bid farewell to colleagues who would not be returning to Castle Douglas High School in August due to moving on to new challenges or because they had decided to take the step into the world of retirement.

Staffing in any Technical departments across Scotland remains a very difficult task. In session 2019-2020 we were fortunate to have a trainee teacher Mr Sean Kilcullen. Mr Kilcullen proved to be an excellent trainee and in order to live closer to his own family he has secured employment with Fife council. All of his colleagues thank Sean for his contribution to CDHS and wish him well in the Kingdom!

Mr Richard Bell, teacher of geography at CDHS for 13 years, has moved to Dalbeattie high school as a teacher of geography. We all wish Mr Bell good luck in his new post.

A member of our support for learning staff who has not returned in August is Mrs Gillian Dingwall. Mrs Dingwall has been a major part of our development of Nurture over the last couple of years and has really made her mark by establishing our nurture room. Mrs Dingwall has decided to take the step of completing a Post Graduate Diploma in Education and then returning to schools next time as the teacher. She will make an exceptional teacher and all of her colleagues wish her good luck for this next step.

Mr Michael Rennie taught science and physics for 30 years at Castle Douglas High School. He also spent a period of time as Principal Teacher of Science. Mr Rennie has made an outstanding contribution to the success of Castle Douglas High school not only in science/physics teaching but also in the way he involved himself in so many of the wider aspects of school life. Rural skills and maintaining the grounds of the school was something that Mr Rennie took great pleasure from involving many of our young people in learning those skills. Mr Rennie officially retired at the end of the Easter holiday to allow him to be able to visit the Chelsea flower show during the summer term. Covid19 put paid to that idea, so we can only hope that he will be able to have that visit in 2021. Mr Rennie will be missed but we do hope to see him around the school grounds continuing to ensure that we stay in bloom and we wish him a long and happy retirement.

Mrs Joan Clayton has had a long and distinguished career as a teacher of English, teacher of Religious Moral and Philosophical Studies and for several years as a teacher of additional support needs. Experience is defined as the sum of your experiences; Mrs Clayton had a wealth of experiences in her roles in many different school settings and drew from this knowledge each day to provide meaningful learning experiences for all of the young people she worked with. Mrs Clayton retired at the end of session 2019-2020 and all of her colleagues wish her a long and happy retirement.

Mr Brendan Butler taught English, that is about as simplified and understated a statement that anyone could make about Mr Butler, because not only did he teach English he lived and breathed an example of how English could and should be taught. Mr Butler also retired at the end of session 2019-2020 and while the school will miss the major contribution he made to the teaching of English in the school, we all wish him a long and happy retirement.

As some staff take their leave of us we are also fortunate to be able to welcome new staff to Castle Douglas High School

Mr Keith Beacom joins us as a teacher of Technical Education

Mrs Lizzy Sime joins us as a teacher of English

Mr Stephen Belford joins us as a teacher of Physics and Science

Miss Hazel Murray joins us as a trainee teacher of Physical Education.

Mrs Vicki Dunlop joins us as a teacher of additional support needs.

Mrs Simone Tobitt joins us as a support for learning assistant to work in our nurture base.

It is always good to welcome new teachers, new ideas and new beginnings to the school and we all wish for our new staff many years of success in delivering their subject knowledge to our young people.

The school is working hard to try to be as normal a place as possible for our young people as we continue on a local, national and international basis to fight this pandemic. We have taken steps to try to minimise the risk to all school users and our young people have responded well to these measures. From Monday 31<sup>st</sup> August we have a new challenge in the form of face coverings as all young people will be expected to wear a face covering when they are moving around the school, when they are in social areas and when they are not able to maintain a social distance from other school users. Please support us in our attempts to keep everyone safe by explaining to your child/children the importance of conforming with all of the Covid safety measures we have in place. We continue to update information re-Covid19 on our school website and on our school Facebook pages.

For parents of our new S1 pupils we would, under normal circumstances, have had a parent evening towards the end of this first term. This parent evening was always well attended and appreciated by parents, especially those where it was their first child to attend the high school. Unfortunately, we are not going to be able to have that parent evening but instead staff will provide you with a brief written report to let you know how well your child has settled into school life at the high school. If parent evenings become possible in the future then we will reschedule the S1 parent evening.

A lot has been happening at the start of the session such as our new initiative to provide an even wider suite of opportunities for our young people. CDHS are delighted to welcome Team Golphin to the school and through this initiative, we will be able to add a 'school of golf' to our suite of junior elective subjects. Our young people will be able to choose the 'school of golf' as a junior elective where they will not only be able to develop skills in golf but will also explore the wider aspects of the golf industry. Golphin have worked with Primary Schools in the past but we are delighted to announce we are the first secondary school to have worked with them. A lot of work has went into planning the pilot in the last 18 months.

As well as the School of Golf, S1 and S2 pupils were also given to the opportunity to participate in School of Dance, School of Rugby, Duke of Edinburgh preparation, Science in the Movies, Silk painting, Book Illustration and local History. We are thankful for the time teachers have taken to develop these courses and delighted to offer pupils the opportunity to be as active as possible.

This corona virus pandemic is not yet over and there may be further restrictions placed on us in the weeks and months to come, however, it is our hope and ambition to make session 2020-2021 as 'normal' as possible for our students and to ensure that every young person has a successful year.

Stay Safe

*Mr Smith*



Some pictures of our S2s at Castle Douglas Glob Club. We would like to thank them for their support.

Find us on Facebook @cdhighschool

If you have a wider achievement success you would like to share please contact us on the email address at the bottom of the page.

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