



Message from the Head Teacher

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Term 3

Mon 5 January 2015: Start of Term 3

Week commencing 12 January: S2 reports issued

19 – 30 January: S4 to S6 assessment period

Tues 20 January: S2 Consultation evening tbc

Week commencing 26 January: S3 reports issued

Fri 13 - Wed 18 February (inc): School closed to pupils

Thurs 19 February: S3 to S5 Curriculum Evening

Thurs 26 February: S4 Parent Evening 5-7:30pm

Tues 3 March: S5/6 Parent Evening 5-7:30pm

Thurs 5 March: S2 Curriculum Evening

Mon 16 March: S2 Parent Evening 5-7:30pm

Thurs 2 April: Last day of term

2014 – another busy year for our school. Pupils continue to be involved in a wide range of activities and events and I hope this newsletter gives a flavour of the variety of their outstanding talents and achievements.

In particular, our Student Council have had a busy couple of terms. At their weekly meetings, they have been discussing and putting forward their innovative and well considered ideas on food served in our Dining Hall and a refresh of the school dress code.

As the term draws to a close, we celebrate the successes of our pupils in a wide range of cultural, sporting and leadership opportunities, but just as importantly we recognise the hard work and commitment of our staff and pupils every day in the classroom.

I wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I look forward to welcoming all our pupils back on Monday 5th January 2015.

Maria Wilson

This newsletter is produced in partnership with Alford Academy Parent Council

Staff and pupils were saddened to hear of the loss of a former colleague and teacher, Mrs Suzanne Taylor, who died suddenly after a short and brave battle with cancer at the beginning of October. In her element in the classroom, Suzanne was a natural teacher who cared passionately about her pupils and was always willing to go the extra mile. Mrs Taylor made a huge contribution to Alford Academy over the 10 years that she taught Modern Studies and Social Subjects and she will be sadly missed by all.



Alford Academy Remembers.....

To commemorate Armistice Day and the service men and women who have given their lives for their country, the Alford Academy Archivers' Group laid a flower arrangement at the War Memorial in Alford Cemetery.

Throughout the past 18 months, the Archivers have been carrying out research on the history of Alford Schools as well as interviewing past and present pupils to gather information.

As part of their research they asked Ruairidh Wishart of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives for some help in this task. Ruairidh brought with him some very interesting and valuable documents. Within these documents they discovered an article in a school journal, which mentioned the funeral of a young lad from Alford called Robert Lobban. Robert became a Private with the Gordon Highlanders and on further investigation, it was found that he was too young when he signed up and unfortunately died in service at only 17 years old.

Robert's story is a very sad and touching one and made the girls think about their own lives as they are around that age themselves. It has also encouraged some other pupils in the school to research their own family history and discover that some of their relatives had also gone to war around that time.

This year being 100 years since the start of World War 1, they thought it would be good to show their respect, not only for those who died, but for everyone who has been to war.

If you have any interesting stories about the school that you think we would like to hear about or if you have any information about the Lobban family we would be very happy to hear from you. Please contact Lynn Lennon at Alford Academy on 019755 62251.



Pictured from left to right Shona Stuart and Bethany Stuart



1950s/60s Celebrity Portraits

Pupils from the Skills for Work and Prince's Trust groups at Alford Academy have been working on a project for the Muirhead Nursing Home. They received a request to paint some pop art style portraits of movie stars and celebrities from the 1950s and 60s to be exhibited in the hair salon so the residents can reminisce about pop culture in their younger years. The portraits are looking fantastic - some of the many famous faces completed so far are Audrey Hepburn, Elvis Presley, Marilyn Munro, and John Wayne, and those still to come include, Julie Andrews, Judy Garland, and Robert De Niro. The pupils - Shannon Burr, Jennifer Armstrong, Louise McCafferty, Rhys Willetts, Scott Coutts, Kyle Harper, Craig Burr and Darren Bremner - have had a great time producing the fabulous artwork and this project will also help them gain credits to go towards their Princes' Trust qualifications.



Sponsored Walk 2014

Nearly 600 pupils and staff took part in Alford Academy's Sponsored Walk on 16th September. The sponsored walk is a huge team effort with staff and senior pupils helping at check and patrol points and of course taking part in the 14k mile walk through Whitehaugh Forest. Thanks also to the janitorial team for setting out the route and the staff in school whose organisational skills made the day such a success, the catering and other staff who provided very welcome hot soup and stovies at the lunchstop as well as snacks and the Parent Council who funded a free bottle of water for every pupil that took part.

Pupils did tremendously well in their fundraising - the Walk raised £6,218, 20% of which will go to two charities chosen by pupils, Safe Anaesthesia Worldwide and Befriend a Child, with the remainder going to the school fund to support a wide range of school projects, clubs, events and excursions. Special thanks to our three top fundraisers Niamh Crossland, Cara Mathieson and Elizabeth Pirie who raised a staggering £575 between them.



Higher History Pupils take on Stirling and Bannockburn by James Middleton

I have had the privilege of attending two of our school's history trips, and although I have deeply enjoyed both of them I must say that this year has been the best.

After a two hour coach journey we were really looking forward to our arrival at the grandeur of Stirling Castle, the bulwark for Scottish resistance and the gateway to the north. Obviously with the geography of this castle, its history is satisfyingly bloody and tales of knights and ladies abound, all of which were given to us by the extremely helpful staff who ran the castle. Not only were there multiple guided tours and experts in every building, but Mr MacPhee had compiled a list of features to find and questions to answer. It brought back childhood memories of looking for hidden coats of arms or particular Latin phrases which bore a family motto.

The trip then moved on to the more social side of things and we were given a few hours to settle into our hostel, which was a glorious Victorian building, before leaving to hit the town with a meal and a trip to the cinema.

The dawning of the next day was greeted with a great breakfast that really picked up spirits and got us ready for the battle ahead: the Battle of Bannockburn Centre that is. We were greeted into this new centre with wide smiles and open arms... and so began the best day of my life! Not only was the centre educational - it was fun, if playing with weapons and armour is your type of fun. We were able to wield the equipment that was used in the battle, discuss alternate historical decisions and get into the battle and the history that we were studying.

Alford Academy YPI (Youth Philanthropy Initiative)

At the finals night on Wednesday 3rd December, 6 teams (2 from each House) competed to see who could secure a £3000 grant for their chosen charity.

Each of the groups had identified a charity that worked with people affected by a social issue. Many new or less well-known charities were represented, alongside one or two well-established charities.

Despite some close competition it was the Kildrummy group consisting of Katie Bain, Kirsty Smith, Kirstie Rennie, Shannon Burr and Megan Milne representing CALICO (Cancer and Leukaemia in Children) who were successful on the evening.

A special thanks to all those who helped to make the event such a success, especially the judging panel, the prefects who helped out on the night, the janitors and the two musical performers Ben Nichol (on piano) and Nathan Vickers (on guitar).

Famous Author Visits Alford On 3 September, the successful author Ron Butlin visited Alford Academy to talk to students about his work and how to unleash their creative side and write to their full potential. Butlin was born in Edinburgh and is best known for his award winning short stories *The Tilting Room* and *No More Angels*. He has also written several poems and thrillers. His stories deal with real life situations and the varying problems of everyday survival. Erin McPake, 3KY said that "It was interesting to meet such a successful author and his talks about motivation were really inspiring."

CHILDREN IN NEED

Alford Academy's fundraising was in full swing for Children In Need on the 14th of November with the school's Interact Group co-ordinating a large number of activities to raise as much money as possible for the charity. The theme was Superheroes and staff and pupils were encouraged to dress up for the day. The costume competition which was won by Jake McKenzie 2CX who was dressed as William Wallace. Building up to the day, Pudsey and Blush wristbands were sold and there was a game to find Pudsey and Blush on the school map. Tasty treats were also on offer with special Children In Need biscuits being sold and, in the spirit of the Great British Bake Off, a cake decoration contest was held. Overall a super total of £1255.87 was raised by the pupils and staff. Well done to the heroes of Alford!



Bottle cap project

Miss May is heading a new and exciting project in the Art and Design department. To raise awareness of being eco-friendly, the department is collecting bottle caps to create themed boards to portray school and local life. Everyone has been encouraged to collect bottle caps and donate them to the project, to draw attention to sustainable practices, where art doesn't have to cost anything at all!

Currently the S3 year group are piloting the scheme, but it will soon involve pupils throughout all the school and larger scales of artwork will be produced to be on display in the new school campus.

The project is coming along fabulously, however there is much need for more donations of bottle caps. The next goal is to start working with wood and scraps of wood planks so the project can develop further.

Please help us by donating bottle caps (especially black bottle caps) now and wood in the near future. Enquiries to Miss Mav.



Mid winter evening of music and drama

This year we decided to have some pantomime included in the concert. Jake Newby and Liam Spooner did not disappoint, playing their roles as the two ugly sisters with considerable flair. Staying in role as these eccentric siblings was not easy but they carried it off!

The music was excellent bringing together the talents of the pupils, Mr Trueman, Mr Sande, Miss Leslie and the Music Tutor Team.

All in all a wonderful evening with over 100 pupils taking part.



Alford Academy Young Musician of the Year 2014

The Rotary Club of Alford and District and Alford Academy's Interact Group held a highly successful Young Musician of the Year competition on Thursday 27 November 2014. The quality of entrants was exceptional and the judges, Mr Ian Milne and Mr Alistair Macdonald from Alford and District Rotary, had some tough decisions to make. Congratulations to Ben Nichol from S3 on piano who won the junior section and S6 pupil, Nathan Vickers on the guitar who was winner of the senior section and overall winner. In addition to those taking part in the competition, there were also performances from Cameron Gillies, winner of last year's competition, on the accordion and the School Choir sang "Accentuate the Positive". The organisers thanked Mrs Gray for accompanying the pupils on the piano in the competition and also the audience who came to support our talented young musicians. We wish Nathan all the best as he progresses to regional and, we hope, the national finals.



LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION - Journey to Excellence Documentary Filming at Alford Academy

Following on from last year's highly successful HMIe visit, which highlighted good practice in delivering Technologies, Education Scotland invited Alford Academy to take part in its Journey to Excellence series with filming taking place on December 10th 2014.

Film activities included interviews with staff, pupils and external partners and visits to a variety of classes to showcase teaching and learning approaches across Business Studies and Computing Science, Engineering, CDT, Textiles and Home Economics.

Activities in Business Studies included the work of S3 classes in this year's Real Business Challenge led by Mrs L Taylor and a visiting business consultant Rachel Forsyth, while Mr A Speirs led a session on group presentations and peer review with an S2 class. S3 participation included demonstrations of applied technologies in Textiles and Fashion (computer controlled embroidery), Food, Health and Hospitality. S4 and S5 pupils demonstrated their work in Mr J Sande's Young Engineers group focusing on the F24 car and ROVs. Craft and Design Technology teaching was highlighted through Design & Manufacture (S4) and 3D printing and Graphic Communication (S3).

Through specially erected wall displays, computer-based simulations and the setup of a robot arena, Alford Academy's STEM initiatives in providing pupil leadership opportunities were showcased through Stop Frame Animations (P7 - S1), Web Design (S1), Social Enterprise (S2), Robotics (Lego Mindstorm Programming) (S3) and support for Alford's Community Website (S4).

Special focus was given to Higher Computing and their partnership with RGU staff, Professor P Holt, Dr JC Golovine and Dr Doolan. An external partner class was provided on iPad programming by Dr D Doolan. S3 Computing Science interdisciplinary learning was also highlighted through the design of an Automated Juice Making Factory where cross-curricular connections are made to the Real Business Challenge initiative and 3D printing in CDT.

This was a busy day for all concerned and many thanks are due to Mrs J Holt, Miss C Woolley and all the staff and pupils who organised, contributed and took part in activities.





Alford Academy and Community - Groups and Clubs Session 2014-15 (October to April)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Lunchtime	ACES D3 12 noon Chill Out Room G1 12:15 (and G8) Choir A5 at 12:15 Entertainment Committee C8 Football (Boys U15) Games Hall 12:10 Hang Out Group Community Lounge from 11:50 am Rights Respecting Schools Group E6 12:15 (every 2 nd week)	Chill Out Room G1 12:15 (and G8) Duke of Edinburgh E3 12:15 Interact C8 12:15 String Orchestra Community Lounge 12:15	Basketball (U15) Games Hall Chill Out Room G1 12:15 (and G8) Pipe Band A3 12:15 Samba Band A5 12:15 Student Council D4 12:15 Ukulele Group A6 12:15	Alford Archivers Library Chill Out Room G1 12:15 (and G8) Concert Band Community Lounge 12:15 Press Committee ML Base 12:15 Study Support Group D4 12:15	Brass Ensemble Community Lounge 12:15 Ceilidh Band A5 12:15 Chill Out Room G1 12:15 (and G8) Creative Writing A3 (once a month) 12:20 Eco Group E5 Football (senior boys) Games Hall
After School /Evening	Netball Games Hall 4:45-6:15pm (Adult Netball* 6-7pm) Outlook 2015 F9 4-5:30pm Hip Hop Dance Dining Hall 4-6pm Badminton* Games Hall 7:30-10pm Gaelic Conversation* A1 7:30-9pm Yoga* GP Room 7:30-9pm	Basketball Games Hall 4-7pm Young Engineers Technical 15:40-5pm Youth Forum* Alford CLD 3:40-5pm	Circuit Training Games Hall 4-5:30pm Craft Club Art Dept 4-5:30pm Parkour Games Hall 4-5:30pm Robotics and Coding Club C5 3:40-5pm Rockwall Games Hall 3:40-5:30pm Soul Band A5 3:40-5pm	Drama Club G7 3:40-5:30pm Hockey Games Hall 3:50-5pm Rugby Games Hall/out 3:50-5:30pm Web Group C6 3:40-5pm Badminton* Games Hall 7:30-10pm Streetdance* Dining Hall 6:45-9:30pm	5 a-side Football (Staff and Senior Pupils) Games Hall 3:45-5pm Judo* Community Lounge 3:45-7:15pm

For more information on activities/groups marked with an asterisk * please contact Community Learning



Choir - The Alford Academy Choir is very highly regarded: they perform many pieces at events in school and outwith. Headed by Mr Trueman from the Music department and Mr Sande from the Technical Department and some dedicated sixth year members, all members have a great time learning to sing songs and perform the whole year round. If you love to sing and have a great time, please join the choir.

Craft Club - Every week the club focuses on a different craft technique such as knitting, jar painting, origami, Christmas cards, Christmas decorations and loom bands. The club is free to attend and you can bring in your own projects to work on and receive help if needed. Some of the items made by the club will be sold to raise money for charity.

Creative Writing Group - Members participate in various online competitions to win money for the school and to have their work published in national books. The Group have their own Edmodo page in which they post their own short stories every month. Miss Leslie said that she was "pleased to see the pupils commenting on each other's work." Currently, the pupils are entering the Young Writers monologue competition. They have to produce a monologue of no more than 100 words from the point of view of a celebrity. Claire Bellarby, 4CX, already has 6 poems published in the annual book. When asked about how the Group benefitted their literacy skills, Kat Williams, 3FY, replied "It develops and consolidates the knowledge obtained from English Classes". The Group is always open to new members.

Drama Club - The Drama Club is led by Mr Coston and is open to all students that have a strong interest in Drama. Sessions focus on improving acting skills, working with others, using theatre arts and putting on a scripted performance.

Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme- The return of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme to Alford Academy last year, resulted in over 40 pupils signing up to start their Bronze Award. To achieve the Award an individual needs to complete 4 sections; volunteering, learning a skill, doing regular physical exercise and completing a two day assessed expedition. In total the Bronze Award requires about 100 hours of training and activities, spread over at least 6 months. Gaining a DofE award is widely regarded as an excellent achievement. Nine pupils have already completed their Bronze Award; whilst the remainder are just completing their last sections.

Kirsty Birnie, Emily Strachan, Rachel Edgar, Elle Anderson, Lucy Smart, Sian Allerton, Kate Wilson



The highlights of the year included a trip to the Braemar Mountain Rescue Centre, a practice expedition to Glen Muick and the final expedition in Glen Tanar.

The Glen Tanar expedition was especially eventful as a large male capercaillie chased Mr Scott away from one of the paths. During the expeditions pupils walked 8 to 9 miles each day, carrying all of the kit required to camp out overnight and prepare all their meals. All expeditions were completed successfully, fuelled mostly by super noodles and hot chocolate. Four members of staff, Mrs McDonald, Dr Conway, Mr Scott and Mrs Trewin, trained and supervised the pupils during their expeditions. Dr Conway said "Every pupil should feel proud of their achievements; the expedition to Glen Tanar required a lot of effort to complete the challenging walks. For many pupils it was also their first experience of walking and camping in the hills, going without a comfy bed, toilets and phone signal for two days".

This term has seen about 40 new S3 pupils sign up to start their Bronze Award. To help the group buy and maintain the kit required for training and expeditions, the DofE group has just produced a cookbook, full of recipes donated by pupils and staff. The cookbooks are for sale at a cost of £5 each and are available to order from Mrs McDonald.

Duke of Edinburgh – A Pupil Perspective (By Sian Allerton and Kate Wilson) - We recently completed our Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award. It took a lot of dedication and time, but it was worth every effort. We completed our Bronze Award by carrying out volunteering which was something new, we met lots of people who we wouldn't have met if we hadn't volunteered and it boosted our self confidence in working with others and on our own. We then went on an expedition, lasting one night and two days. This was definitely the best part of Duke of Edinburgh, although it was very tiring carrying a heavy pack! We had a great time during our whole experience, we enjoyed making new friends and taking part in activities particularly cooking on the camp stoves – the custard was very nice! It was also fun attempting to put up the tent – which probably took a lot longer than it should have. All in all we had a great time and would definitely recommend the Duke of Edinburgh experience. We are now just starting the Silver award.

Eco Group - Recently, they have been fundraising for the WWF and the group itself. The Chairperson, Iris Beswick commented that "We are a small but committed group dedicated to protecting the Environment around our school. Hopefully, we will be able to raise more money for our cause and maybe encourage more people to join. Next year we plan to launch more campaigns." For more information on the Eco Group check the notice board outside the canteen.

Entertainments Committee - The Committee meet every Monday lunchtime in the Jubilee Suite. The Committee have been very busy this term organising Christmas Dances and the Leavers' Ball.

Hang Out Group - This group, run by Diane Forbes, Pupil Support Worker, Kirsty Muir, CLDW and Senior Volunteers offers a place for pupils to meet every Monday lunchtime. There are board games, Wii, crafts, a football and a pool table for pupils to use or you can simply come along to chill out or get some support and advice. All welcome.

Interact Group - The interact group works with charities, and organise many fundraising events throughout the school year to raise money for the chosen two charities, one local charity, and one international charity. This year the nominated charities are Befriend a Child and Safe Anaesthesia Worldwide. The Interact group are also in charge of other fundraising events such as Children In Need and the Young Musicians of the Year competition. They work closely with the Alford and District Rotary club and even help out on Santa's sleigh! Feel free to join and help raise money for charity.

Outlook 2015 Expedition Group (by Hannah Scott) - As a member of the new team going to Zambia and Botswana in July 2015, I cannot wait to step foot on the sandy roads of Livingstone and begin one of the greatest adventures of my life. First we land in Livingstone (the capital of Zambia) we head out to a local tribe called the Lozi tribe, where we will be building mud huts for those whose houses have become impossible to live in otherwise, as well as for elders looking after HIV orphans. Many of the local people will work with us and will provide us with evening meals so we get a taste of the local cuisine.

After our tough but rewarding build of the new huts for the Lozi tribe, we head out on our 4 day trek through Bakato gorge, the trek takes us along tough terrain, with boulder landscapes – of course nothing we can't handle – and ends back in Livingstone.

The final part of the expedition is a safari in Chobe national park in Botswana – where we will experience the diverse wildlife and get to see Africa's biggest population of elephants.

The Outlook Groups meet after school every Monday to plan fundraising and teambuilding activities.

Rights Respecting Schools Award Group - Alford Academy is now striving to achieve the UN's Rights Respecting School Award.

Both the Primary and the Academy have recently decided to run for the award and hope to achieve it in time for the new school build. The committee is being led by Mrs Smeaton, an RMPS teacher in the Academy along with Mrs Ross from the Primary School.

They aim to achieve the Rights Respecting Schools Award by recognising the work schools do in regards to teaching about the convention of the rights of the child. It is all about realising that every child in the world has rights and that we as a country need to help those less fortunate.

New charters will be made and hung up in the Academy that will describe the rights we have as a school.

Young Engineers — Young Engineers is run by Mr Sande and Mr Duffy. An extensive list of activities is carried out which includes general engineering - ranging from hand tools and workshop skills to complex machine tools activities. In addition the team also participates in a range of Technology and Engineering competitions which have included the F24 endurance race competition organised by Greenpower, R.O.V Design and Manufacture (Robert Gordon University) and Robotics (Rampaging Chariot).

Rock Challenge — Any pupils interested in dance, drama, music, lighting or costume please check the school bulletins for information on Rock Challenge which is starting in the New Year.

Active Girls Day - Active Girls Day is an initiative run by Sportscotland and Active Schools to support girls' activity within schools. The Dance Leaders from Alford Academy ran curricular sessions for the S1 and 2 pupils during their PE lessons and over lunch times and went on to complete their dance leaders certificates. Well done girls!

The Girls' Senior and Junior football teams (coached by Laura Murray and Les Graham) both went to Aboyne Academy to take part in an inter-school football match. Both teams played exceptionally well, the junior team coming away with a win, and the senior team unfortunately being defeated after penalties!

Alford Academy Netball Club - Alford Academy Netball team led by Parent Volunteers, Mairi Farrands, Kerry Bryant, Rachel Boal and Stella Sims have had a hugely successful year with over 30 girls from S1-S4 attending training each week and showing great enthusiasm and commitment to the sport. Their efforts were rewarded by winning gold in the Active Schools Tournament in June 2014.



Two teams were entered and played exceptionally well at the Active Schools Netball Festival in November 2014 with the A team winning bronze medals. The team, captained by Ellen Glennie, included three of our S1 players who were successful in the selection process for the Aberdeen Netball Junior Pathways Squad.



Alford U15 Basketball Team - Following a resounding victory against Kemnay Academy on Wednesday 3 December, the Alford Academy U15 Basketball Team are Grampian Champions for the second year running, having played and won all 6 matches in the league. Congratulations to all the boys who are now one of 16 teams to take part in the Scottish Cup next term. Alford Academy would also like to thank the Basketball Instructors, PE staff and parents for their support.

Football - The senior boy's football has not quite hit the dizzy heights of last year as yet but the team have played some very competitive football and have set a fantastic standard and every player should be extremely proud of their efforts in supporting each other and in how they have represented the school. There have been some closely fought matches – none more so than the home tie in the Aberdeenshire Cup against local rivals Inverurie. The match ended 1-1, with James Duncan netting a spectacular equaliser from close range with literally the last kick of the ball. This double-header provided Alford with our first points on the board for the league, but we ultimately lost out on the penalty shoot-out to see who would progress in the Cup.

Several pupils have been recognised at Regional level, with Matthew Johnson, Stuart Lawson and Euan McDonald all involved with the Aberdeenshire U18s Select.

From the U15s Mark Reid and Craig Ballantyne have performed exceptionally for the Aberdeenshire Regional select. Craig has been a formidable last line of defence in goals and Mark has been on fire, scoring 6 goals in 3 games against the North of Scotland, Angus and Aberdeen selects. The U15 select, managed by Mr McEwan, move on to the knock-out phase of the U15 National trophy after the festive break.

Parkour - The school Parkour Club meets every Wednesday after school. It's been run successfully by Mr McKinnie and the senior members of the Parkour Club for two years. If you're interested in joining the club see Mr McKinnie in the PE department.



Mountain Bike Club - The school mountain bike group has had a successful year with around 8 students turning out for the regular Saturday morning rides. During the summer the club have visited local venues such as Bennachie, Kirkhill, Pitfichie, and Millstone Hill doing some arduous and challenging rides.



Ski and Snowboarding Team - A huge well done to Alford Academy's Ski and Board team who recently competed in the 2014 Indoor Skier/Boarder Cross Championships at Snow Factor, Glasgow and came 5th out of 36 schools competing. It was a particularly difficult course and the challenge was even greater as no practice runs were allowed due to the large number of competitors. Our six Alpine stars are Amelia Allan S1, Tabby Allan S3, Leon Daly S5, Rhiannon Taylor S5, Callum Duff S6 and Stuart Lawson S6.

Staffing News

Welcome to Mr Hoskin who joins us in the Science Faculty teaching S1 Science classes on a Friday; Miss Alecio who has been appointed to teach Geography and Social Subjects, following the departure of Miss Marsden to Peebles High School; Mrs Margaret Henderson who joined the school receptionist team in October when we said farewell to Mrs Rebecca Taylor and Mrs Pauline Watt who joined the PSA team.

At the end of this term Mr Dave Allan retires after having taught PE in Alford Academy since 2007. Mr Allan will be missed by colleagues and pupils, particularly the members of the popular Mountain Biking Club which he established in the school. Mr McKinnie will be increasing his hours teaching at the Academy to 4 days per week from January.

We also say farewell to Mr Burr, Teacher of SFL and Mrs Stokes who provided clerical support to the Children's Services Network.

Congratulations to Mrs Gilruth, Teacher of Modern Languages, on the

New Year's Resolution - Be Prepared In a recent snapshot survey we found a number of pupils were not arriving at lessons fully prepared – with some forgetting to take a pen or pencil, pupil planner, jotter, folder, textbook or other essential item. Lack of preparedness for lessons can impact on learning and we would encourage all pupils to start the new year by arriving at lessons promptly and with the resources they need. Replacement planners are available from the School Office.

Winter weather: School Closure Information In the event of adverse weather please check the **Aberdeenshire Council website** <http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/closures/default.aspx> (you can register to receive email alerts re school closures) or the **phone line 0870 0544999 (Pin number = 021010)**.

In the event of a school closure due to adverse weather, there is an expectation that pupils continue with their studies as directed by class teachers. Further instructions for pupils will be posted on the school website <http://www.alfordacademy.aberdeenshire.sch.uk> and blog <http://alfordacademy.edublogs.org>.

Some teachers may also give out materials in class for pupils to refer to in the event of snow closure or post information on GLOW. We would urge all parents to encourage their children to access these materials and to undertake homework tasks that have been set by teachers in the event of school closures or disruption to transport. Assessments which are missed due to adverse weather will be re-scheduled.

Press Committee Thanks

Special thanks to everyone who has contributed to the Autumn/Winter 2014 newsletter! We hope you have enjoyed it. Finally a huge congratulations to all those involved in the numerous achievements this term, it has been a pleasure to document your successes.

The Press Committee meets every Thursday in the Modern Languages base at lunchtime; grab the chance to improve your writing skills, and get the chance to see your work published in the Donside Piper. Story ideas are also welcome from all.

List of contributors and members of the Committee:

Miss McIver, Mrs Ogilvie, Mrs Watt, Rebecca MacAskill, Fernando Greatbatch, James Middleton, James Muir, Maddy Mollicone, Morgan McIntosh, Ramsay Taylor, Hannah Scott and Blair McPake