



Message from the Head Teacher

As we head towards the end of 2015, I reflect on what has been the busiest 12 months for our Alford Academy community. The transition to the new campus has gone better than expected down to everyone 'rolling up their sleeves' and helping. I give special thanks to Shona Ogilvie, who in her role as acting Depute Head Teacher, managed the move from the old campus to the new and also to our team of teachers, janitors, technicians, admin and clerical team, and pupil support assistants who helped pack and unpack, getting us up and running for our first pupil day on Thursday 29 October.

Term 3 Diary

6/1/16 Start of Term 3

11/1/16 - S2 reports issued this week

18/1/16-29/1/16 S4-S6 assessment period

25/1/16 - Parent Council

27/1/16 - S3 reports issued this week

12-17/2/16 - school closed to pupils

18/2/16 - S3-S5 course choice evening

24/2/16 - S4 Parent Evening

1/3/16 - S5/6 Parent Evening

2/3/16 - S2 Curriculum evening

14/3/16 - S2 Parent Evening

17/3/16 - Performing Arts Evening

25/3/16 School Closed (Good Friday)

30/3/16 Parent Council

1/4/16 End of Term 3

We've had some magical moments over the past months including our 'Open Doors' events at the old campus and at the new campus when many former pupils came along to remember their days at Alford Academy and to see the facilities our current pupils are privileged to enjoy. We shared our last minutes at the old campus at a whole school assembly where a 200 pupil choir, consisting of our Alford Academy choir, S1 pupils and primary 7 pupils from Alford Primary, performed a twelve minute tribute to previous generations of pupils, singing songs from the decades starting from the 1920s. Christianne Youngson, school piper, played Auld Lang Syne, as we officially closed the doors to the old campus. These moments brought a few tears to many eyes.

On the 25 November, Aberdeenshire Council hosted the official opening ceremony of Alford Community Campus. Our 200 strong choir again gave an outstanding performance to an audience of guests including the Provost of Aberdeenshire and our very own, Emeli Sande! Sincere thanks to the pupils and the teachers who supported them for their hard work.

I am as always very proud of our pupils. Hundreds of pupils have performed or helped at the events which have made the transition to the new campus such a memorable experience, including our Student Council, Interact Club, Senior Pupil Executive, prefects and musicians. I'm sure in years to come they will look back on this year and realise just how special it has been. Our community is now charged with looking after this building for the many generations who will follow.

I'm also proud of our staff team and thank them for their support and hard work. I am delighted that we have managed to sustain events this term which you will get a flavour of in this newsletter. All that is left for me to say is to wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year. I look forward to welcoming our pupils back on Wednesday 6 January. 2016 is looking very promising!



Zombie Science comes to Alford

To celebrate Scottish Book Week, Aberdeenshire Libraries invited Zombie Science from Glasgow University to deliver an alternative learning opportunity in a number of schools across Aberdeenshire and Alford Academy were fortunate to be one of the schools chosen for this experience. This interactive session allowed pupils to learn how traits shown by zombies can actually occur in humans from various diseases and damage to our brains. The Lecture was fun, interactive and brought the Science of Zombies to life. All S3 pupils attended the lecture in the new campus theatre and had the opportunity to ask Dr Howe, a Theoretical Zombiologist from Glasgow University, questions regarding his research. Feedback from teaching staff and pupils was very positive and all who attended enjoyed this alternative learning experience.



Children In Need

Alford Academy's fundraising was in full swing for Children In Need on the 13th of November with various activities to raise as much money as possible for the charity. As the theme was wear your pyjamas all day pupils were encouraged to dress up and this was coordinated by the academy's Interact Group. Overall a superb total of £1083.76 was raised by the pupils and staff.



Young Musician of the Year

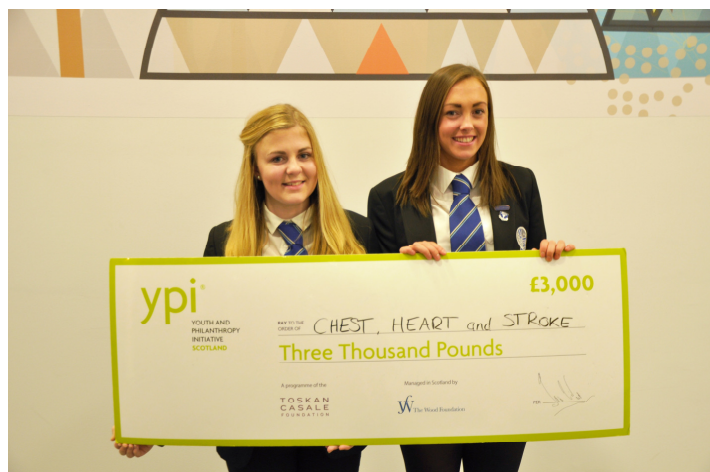
On Thursday 19th November we were delighted to host our annual Rotary Young Musician of the Year competition in our new Community Campus Theatre. Pupils from S1-6 performed on a range of musical instruments and voice, covering a wide range of musical styles and genres. We were delighted to welcome Paul Anderson and Pete Stollery as our judges for the evening who provided all performers with excellent feedback. Nobody envied their task of choosing the winners such was the overall high standard of performance. Our congratulations go to all who took part but particularly to Imogen Vickers who won in the junior (S1-3) category and to Ben Nichol who won the senior section and was declared overall winner. We wish Ben well as he competes in the regional heat which takes place in Perth early in 2016.



YPI Final

Thursday the 12th of December marked this year's YPI finals. The YPI organisation is the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative, where schools all over Scotland are given the chance to win £3000 for a chosen local charity. Charities such as Charlie House, Cash for kids, Archway, North East Sensory Services and ARI Rooftop Garden were some of the charities the 5th year pupils who took part in the event were working with. The participants were practising until the last few minutes before going up in front of the panel of judges, made up of Ellen Davidson Head Girl, Councillor Latham, Mrs Milne and Mrs Latham. In front of these judges, and an audience, the participants gave the presentation they have been preparing for weeks in advance after getting through the house finals. Tissues were required for some of the presentations, but the evening ended on a heartfelt note with a presentation from Antonia Lawrence and Jennifer Cowe representing Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland. They won the £3000 for the charity which will go towards helping the lives of many people who have to face heart attacks and strokes.

All in all the evening was a great success and enjoyed by all.



Read All About It - Alford Community Campus Opening Ceremony (article by Blair McPake, S5 Pupil)

On the 25th of November, Emeli Sande, songstress and former pupil, helped officially open the new Alford Community Campus by unveiling a special plaque with Aberdeenshire Provost Hamish Vernal.

The new multi-million campus opened to the public in October this year and over 3000 members of the community and students have used its top-of-the-range facilities, including a climbing wall and swimming pool. The first generation of students in the campus have settled in very well and are enjoying the bigger space and multipurpose rooms: "The school is actually really impressive, there is so much more space and light and it just makes coming to school a lot more appealing," was the response of a junior pupil.

The event was attended by many important members of Aberdeenshire Council, including the Aberdeenshire Provost Hamish Vernal and Chair of Aberdeenshire Council's Education, Learning and Leisure Committee Councillor Alison Evison. Guests were welcomed by the Alford Academy Head Boy and Girl Cameron Grant and Ellen Davidson and the P7 pupils Joshua Main and Mackenzie Anderson, and this was followed by speeches from Provost Hamish Vernal and Councillor Evison. There was also a performance by the Alford Community Campus Choir, made up of all S1 and P7 pupils and the Alford Academy Choir. They sang a medley of songs through the decades, one from every decade of the school's history. The medley also included a solo from S5 pupil Kate Wilson.

In a surprise appearance, the guests were treated to a performance from local superstar Emeli Sande who blew away the audience with her famous song "Read All About It", followed by "Next to Me" during which she was joined by the Alford Academy Choir. She then donated a baby grand piano to the school. When asked about her experience, senior choir member Natalya Brentnall said:

"It was such a good feeling: to be on stage with such an inspirational person. I was at ease with her, she made us feel relaxed." The superstar then helped to unveil the ceremonial plaque along with Head Teachers, Moira Milne and Beth Forbes.

S5 pupils Kyle Michie and Blair McPake were also fortunate to be given the opportunity to interview Emeli Sande after the official opening ceremony. Emeli was impressed by the open plan and noticed that there was a lot more light and artwork around the campus, something she thought was one of the biggest differences between both the old and new buildings. When we asked about her own time at Alford Academy, she confessed she was "a music geek who was always in the piano room and singing in concerts" and she always enjoyed her time at school. While she was well on her way to being accepted into medical school Emeli told us that "singing was always in the back of my mind." Her advice for any future aspiring singers is to take care of their voices and practise, as well as to perform as often as possible, just like she did and power through the stage fright. Even Emeli herself said that she always feels nervous before getting on stage but once she gets up there the music takes over and she feels fine. Emeli's inspirations were the singers with the "big voices and inspiring lyrics", for example Aretha Franklin, Whitney Houston and Billie Holiday. She would really like to meet Aretha Franklin and Stevie Wonder and really enjoyed working with Professor Green, Wretch 32 and Labrinth. Currently she is working on her second album in London.



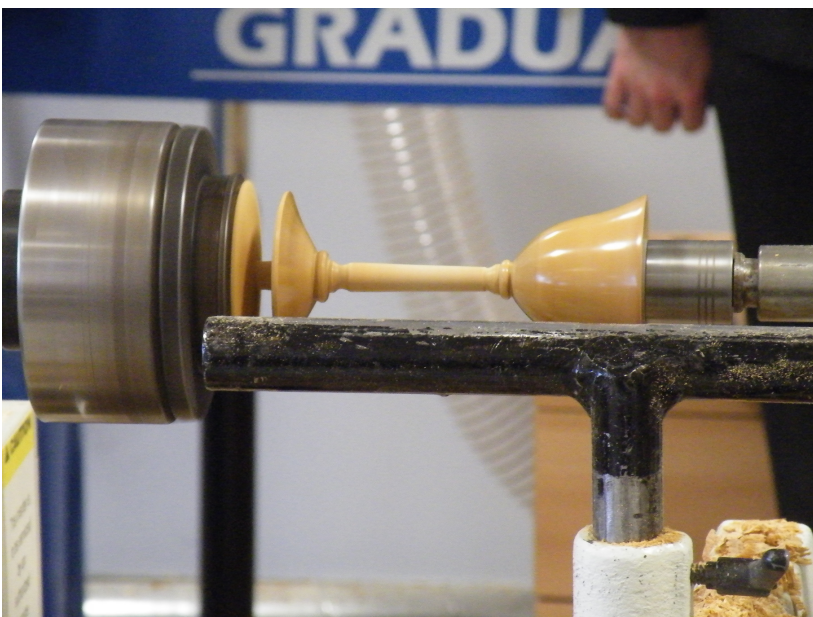
Stuart Mortimer is a retired Police Inspector originally from the Alford area. Stuart is a self- taught turner, winner of many National awards for his woodwork, he has built up an International reputation and is highly regarded by his peers and collectors alike in many areas of turning, he is a writer, teacher, demonstrator, and consultant to turners and turning groups throughout the U.K., Europe, Scandinavia the U.S.A. and Australia. Stuart came in to demonstrate to pupils his skills and to train our teaching staff. He was accompanied by his brother and Alastair Ross and they shared valuable knowledge with staff and pupils alike.

Stuart is very keen to encourage young turners and people into the Craft and would like to forge strong links to the school and possible funding and support for pupils interested in woodturning as a hobby or career.

Stuart's work often features some form of spiral work, an example is his popular twisted goblet first produced in 1969. He demonstrated to pupils how to make a twisted goblet making it look very easy!

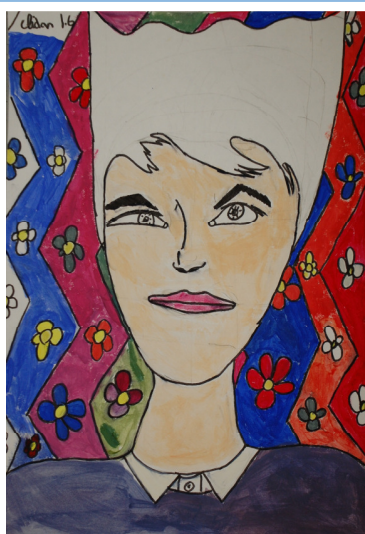
He was recently commissioned to make 6 finials for the celebration thrones for her Majesty the Queen and the thrones are now in the Permanent Royal Collection.

He is the holder of the World Record for the largest bowl turned out of one piece of wood in 1997 in the USA authenticated and certified by the Guinness book of records.



S1 Art and Design

At the start of the year Miss May's 1st year classes were looking into 1960s culture and some of the styles that emerged at that time. They used this research to inspire their Pop Art self-portraits which can be seen hanging in the art department display cabinets. They concentrated on creating accurate proportion in their portraits and then the use of bold colour and line. This was done to recreate the iconic style of Andy Warhol. It was a project that was enjoyed by all and has produced some interesting and highly skilled artworks!



Hour of Code

This year, Alford Academy took part in the international Hour of Code between 7th and 10th of December. Mrs Holt organised a series of fun and challenging events joining in with over 191,000 events worldwide. P7 pupils from Alford Primary took part during two of their lunch breaks and worked hard on programming the actions of Minecraft characters, gaining their very well-deserved Hour of Code certificates. Helpers from our Higher and Advanced Higher Computing Science classes were on hand to share their coding skills with the younger pupils. Rumour has it that a huge amount of fun was had by all!!

Thanks to Mrs Munro and Mr Speirs who helped to lead events, with a special thank you to Miss Leslie for running a fabulous one-day 'Appy Life' event for our S1 and S2 pupils. We look forward to running the Hour of Code event again next year and introducing even more youngsters to the fun, challenge and excitement of coding!

Alford Pupils learn about Cyber Hacking

On Friday the 11th December some S4-6 pupils went to RGU in Aberdeen to listen to a lecture about forensics and cyber hacking/cyber security. I enjoyed the lecture as they made it interesting and fun as they used audience participation which included Mrs Holt and a group of Alford pupils taking part in a quiz. Attending the lecture definitely increased my knowledge of cyber hacking and the amount of different possible careers in that industry. At first I did not know what to expect and didn't think much about the topic of cyber security but it has made me want to find out more and consider it for my future career.

S5 pupil

Great Success for our Snowsports Team at the 2015 Scottish Schools' Ski and Boarder Cross

On Thursday 10 December 2015, our Snowsports team consisting of 3 skiers, Tabby Allan (S4), Amelia Allan (S2), Phoebe Allan (P7), and 2 boarders, Leon Daly and Rhiannon Taylor from S6, headed down to the Snow Factor in Glasgow to compete against over 240 competitors from 30 secondary schools.

At the awards ceremony, the Individual Results revealed fantastic placings for all of our team. Tabby was awarded a bronze medal for 3rd place female skier and Rhiannon a bronze medal for 3rd place female boarder. Leon secured a 5th place male boarder. Amelia got in the top 10 with a solid 8th, and Phoebe, being one of the youngest competitors from a Primary school in Secondary races, got an excellent 12th out of 44 female skiers.

With our excellent individual results, we were hoping to beat last year's 4th place in the Team results. And we did! We came 2nd equal with Bearsden Academy's A team – the winners Robert Gordon's College A team only beat us by the narrowest of margins - 1.40 seconds in race time. Once again our Skiers and Boarders have done themselves and the school proud!



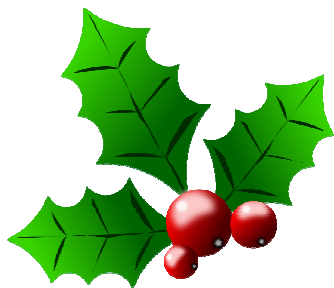
Alford Academy Netball

This term we have over 30 girls attending training each week in the new games hall. We are working with our Active Schools Co-ordinator to arrange some tournaments in the new year against local schools. New players are always welcome.

We have achievements in both performance and coaching.

Leoni Zimmermann has been selected to join Netball Scotland's Junior Pathways squad. Junior Pathways is part of Netball Scotland's Pathways to Performance Programme and is delivered locally by the Grampian Netball Network to develop potentially talented netball players.

One of our senior pupils, Emma Bryant has qualified as an Assistant Netball Coach. Emma travelled to Edinburgh to attend the UK Coaching Certificate course delivered by Netball Scotland before attending a further assessment day which she passed with flying colours. Emma already assists with coaching at Alford Academy and several local Primary Schools.



Basketball

Another fantastic start to the year for the Alford U15 Boys' Basketball team. They have an unbeaten record in the league and are once again Grampian Region Schools Cup Champions. Well done to all the boys and their coach. We now await the draw for the knockout stages, which will take place after the Christmas break.



Rock Wall club

Mr Cruickshank, Mr McKinnie and Mrs Lennon have recently been approved to instruct on the new Rock Wall. Taster session for pupils will start after Christmas with the intention of starting a rock wall club soon afterwards.



A Great Year for Tim and Izzy

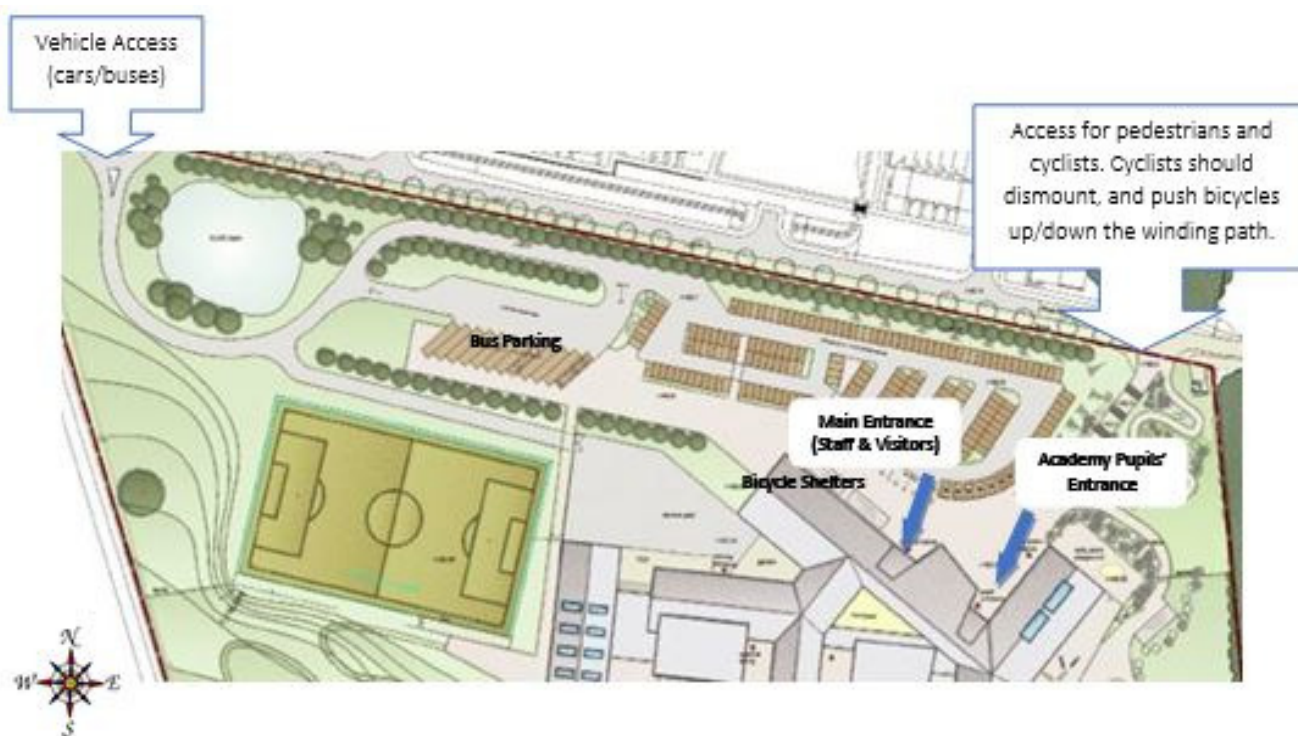
This year Tim Shoreman (S4) has continued his success at competing at British National level in Cross Country Mountain Biking. In July he came 6th at the British Championships under 16 level. And in September, he represented Scotland at the Inter-Regional mountain bike championships at British National level. Throughout the year Tim has competed in the Scottish Cross Country Series, winning 3 rounds, and being overall winner for the whole series. These are all fantastic achievements. Tim trains incredibly hard always pushing himself to the limit in his daily program. He is certainly a very talented and highly motivated young athlete whose determination and commitment to his sport will continue to see him reap the rewards of his hard work.



Izzy Tolometti (S5) was Awarded Aberdeenshire Sports Council Young Female Sports Personality of the Year in March and has continued to have a busy year. Recently she has been representing Scotland in the Northern Euros in September and the Sandra Clark Invitational in November where the Team came first, and Izzy came 2nd in the vault, 3rd in bars and 2nd in floor as well as competing for Scotland in France this month. In 2016, Izzy will be part of the Scotland Women's Performance Programme with trials starting in January.

Campus Parking Arrangements

Reverse parking only please. If you are using the drop-off area immediately in front of the main entrance please pull in parallel with the building. There have been a few near misses where drivers have pulled in then reversed into the flow of traffic. Thanks for your help with this.



Adverse Weather

In the event of adverse weather please check the school closure information on the **Aberdeenshire Council website** <https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/Apps/schools-closures/> (you can register to receive email alerts re school closures) or the **phone line 0870 0544999 (Pin number = 021010)**.

For bus pupils Guidance for Parents from the Public Transport Unit can be found on the Aberdeenshire Website <http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/public-transport/school-transport/adverse-weather>.

Please note in the event of a journey to school being cancelled in the morning by a transport operator on the grounds of adverse weather, the operator will not run transport at the end of the school day. In such circumstances, parents of pupils who normally travel on school transport are asked not to bring their children to school themselves. Should parents ignore this advice and, at their own risk, choose to bring their children to school the parents then become responsible for conveying their children home again at the end of the school day, or earlier, if it becomes necessary to send all pupils home and close the school due to worsening weather conditions.