

Winter 2016

**Newsletter for the
Alford Academy
Community**



Message from Mrs Milne, Head Teacher

As 2016 comes to an end, we share with you some of the highlights of the past months. 2016 has been a tremendously successful school year with pupils achieving success in a wide range of activities in and out of school and senior pupils excelling in their examinations. However most importantly we see our young people grabbing the opportunities presented to them to develop their skills and help make them ready for life beyond school. At a recent Aberdeenshire event celebrating pupil volunteers, there were two successes for Alford Academy with S5 pupil Jack Watt being highly commended in the Young Person category and our S3 'Y Factor' team also receiving a highly commended award in the Creativity category. Great examples of young people who have developed their skills in leadership, teamwork and communication.

We have much to look forward to in 2017. Now we are settled into our new campus, we will continue to look at how we can improve the many and varied aspects of school life. Our Student Council representatives, who gather feedback from other pupils and generate new ideas, will continue to play an important role. As we move forward our transition to a 3-18 school and continue improving how we plan and deliver learning, we will work closer and better, not only with Alford Primary, but also our twelve other Primary Schools.

Our practice of working together is essential for future improvement and I look forward to future events where we work with parents, young people, businesses and organisations. We always welcome ideas from parents about how they can be involved in school.

I am very proud of our school and look forward to another successful year ahead for all our young people. I 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 Thursday 5 January 2017.

Term 3 Diary

5/1/17 Start of Term 3

9/1/17 - S2 reports issued this week

16/1/17 - 27/1/17 S4-S6 assessment period

23/1/17 - Parent Council Meeting 7pm

23/1/17 - S3 reports issued this week

10 - 15/2/17 - school closed to pupils

16/2/17 - S3-S5 course choice evening

21/2/17 - S4 Parent Evening

1/3/17 - S2 Curriculum evening

2/3/17 - S5/6 Parent Evening

13/3/17 - S2 Parent Evening

15/3/17 - Performing Arts Showcase

21/3/17 Parent Council meeting 7pm

31/3/17 End of Term 3

18/4/17 Start of Term 4

S1 Parents' evening

A new format was introduced for this year's S1 parents' evening. It provided an opportunity for parents to visit different departments to see what pupils have been learning and to talk to class teachers. Parents also saw how the library can support learning and received some practical support from senior pupils with the Show My Homework parental accounts.

The new format for the parents' evening went well with some brilliant feedback and enthusiasm from pupils about this opportunity to showcase their learning.



Children In Need

Staff and pupils raised a tremendous £1,162.16 for Children in Need. The highlight of the fundraising was the Lip Sync Challenge featuring a diverse selection of acts including Abba, Taylor Swift, Liam Gallagher and Honey G!



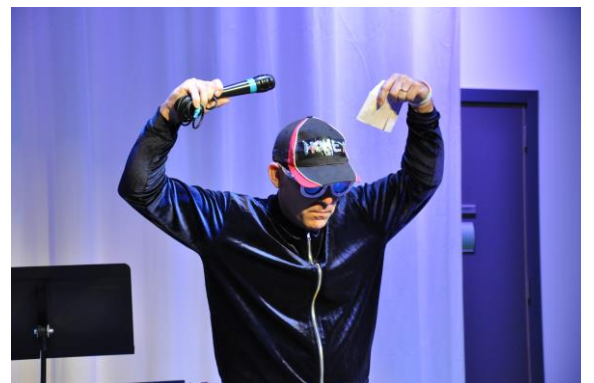
S6 Pupils



Mr McEwan as Liam Gallagher



Science Faculty as Abba



Dr Conway as Honey G

Wider Achievement Christmas Cakes

The two wider achievement classes who are taking part in our elementary cooking skills course have been making and decorating their own Christmas cakes. We are all very impressed with the effort, patience and flair they have used to create some impressive looking cakes! In the New Year they will start studying for their REHIS (Royal Environment Health Institute of Scotland) food hygiene certificate.



S3 Hospitality Afternoon Tea

The S3 Hospitality class recently organised and planned a Christmas cake and coffee event for all campus staff. This saw the class selecting and baking items in the run up to the event, carrying out a costing exercise for each item and looking at the nutritional content. They made their own invitations and menus for the table. On the day of the event itself, pupils set up the staff lounge and decorated tables as well as serving bakes and teas/coffees to their guests. The class worked well together and the event was a huge success. A fantastic £82.57 was donated to the school's chosen charities.

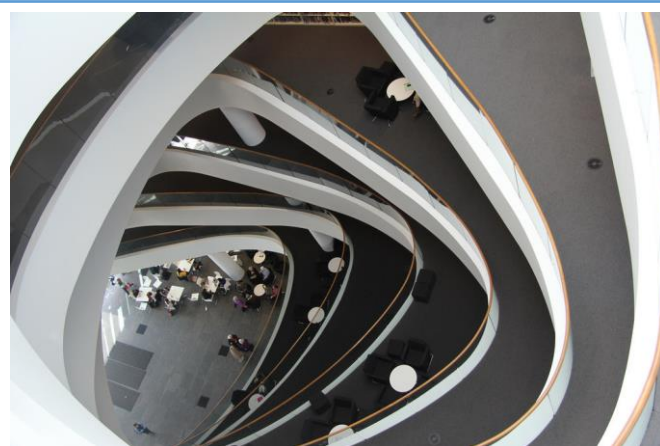


Advanced Higher History Trip

Mr MacPhee's Advanced Higher pupils were lucky enough to be taken to the Aberdeen University Library in order to research their dissertations and listen to lecturer and author, Dr Fredrick Pedersen.

"I was worrying a lot about the sources for my dissertation but the amount of books and journals available in the library was amazing. It was definitely a beneficial trip." - Blair McPake S6 pupil.

Blair McPake



Advanced Higher English Trip

On Friday the 9th of September the Advanced Higher English class was given the opportunity to attend the annual Marr Mini-Writefest, held this year at Aboyne Academy. Writefest is a creative writing workshop supported by Aberdeenshire libraries that allows pupils to work with renowned authors and journalists and gives them a real insight into the creative industry. This year journalist Catherine Deveney and author Alan Bisset gave presentations on their own experiences and worked very closely with the students to help them improve their own literary techniques.

"It was really interesting," said S6 pupil Kate Wilson, "A lot of their advice was very useful and will help me when I come to write my portfolio pieces later on in the year."

Blair McPake



Advanced Higher Chemistry 2016

Alford Academy S6 pupils studying Advanced Higher Chemistry work independently in the S6 laboratory. The Researching Chemistry unit allows pupils to develop scientific skills which are transferable to university. Here the pupils are carrying out a practical experiment where they are preparing *potassium trioxalatoferrate (III)* a transition metal complex.

Throughout the year they will participate in many practical techniques, both here at Alford Academy and also at the University of Aberdeen. The pupils experience laboratory practicals at University and also get a good insight into University life.



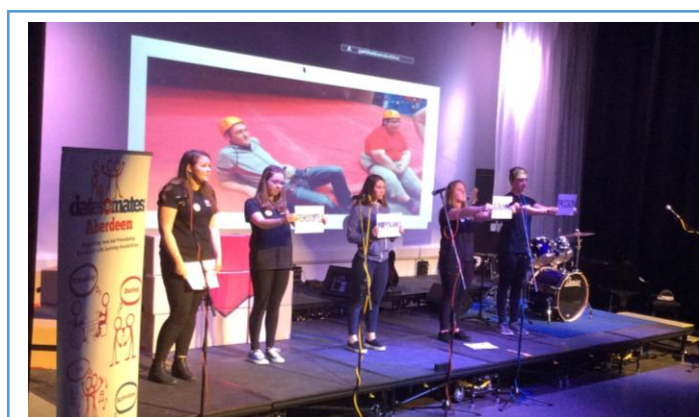
Scottish Parliament visit

At the end of September some of our third year and senior Modern Studies pupils along with Mrs Williams, Mr MacPhee and Miss Cameron visited the Scottish Parliament buildings in Edinburgh. Along with a tour of the building and time watching a debate in the Chamber, pupils had the opportunity to meet with some of their local representatives (Mike Rumbles, Alexander Burnett and Alex Johnstone). The pupils engaged in a question and answer session and were a credit to our school. There was also much excitement when we met Willie Rennie (leader of the Liberal Democrats) outside.

YPI Final

This year's YPI final brought 5 highly talented and superbly rehearsed groups together to battle for the £3000 grant for their chosen charity. The judges had the hardest of decisions trying to choose the winning group from such a fantastic range of presentations and worthy charities.

A massive congratulations to all who participated and who made the finals evening. The winning group were Eve Morgan, Lucy MacLean, Liam Troup, Tabby Allan and Sarah Trewin who were representing Dates-n-mates. Dates-n-mates is Scotland's national dating and friendship agency run by and for adults with learning disabilities. It provides opportunities to make new friends, support to improve confidence and build personal relationships, invitations to 2-3 social events and activities every month, ranging from bowling to Halloween parties to club nights, supported first dates and volunteer opportunities to work with and help other members.



Author visit – Cathy MacPhail

Award winning author Cathy MacPhail visited the Academy to give a talk to our S2 and S3 pupils about creative writing. Cathy is a Scottish author from Greenock who writes spooky thrillers for younger readers as well as teen novels and has the unique ability to get to the heart of serious, topical issues through the stories of her feisty characters. She has won many awards for her books and one of her books Another Me is currently being made into a film. Our pupils were lucky enough to see the trailer for the film which features Jonathan Rhys Meyers (Mission Impossible III) and Rhys Ifans (Notting Hill) and Sophie Turner (Game of Thrones). The library staff were really pleased as there was an increase in the number of Cathy's books borrowed after the event with pupils keen to read her books.



Book Fair

The Library Book Fair was really successful this year. We were lucky to get a half-price book fair which meant lots of bargains to be had. Pupils, teachers and people from the community visited the fair during lunch and two open evenings. A total of £618 was raised. This means with a commission of 10% we get £61 of vouchers to buy new books.



Macmillan Coffee Morning

Our INTERACT Group organised, setup and ran a hugely successful fund raising event for MacMillan. The group organised a Coffee Morning for all Campus staff and laid on a fine spread of teas, coffees and fancy pieces. Invitations were produced by Alford Primary pupils and their work was organised into an attractive display that staff could enjoy. The MacMillan coffee morning raised £580.



Young Musician Of The Year

This year's Young Musician competition went off with a bang with 15 talented performers playing for over 100 friends and family. Charlie Patton (piano and pipes) came first in the junior category and Rosie Hopwood (violin) was the winner of the senior category and the overall winner as well. All proceeds go towards the school fund. A big congratulations to the winners.

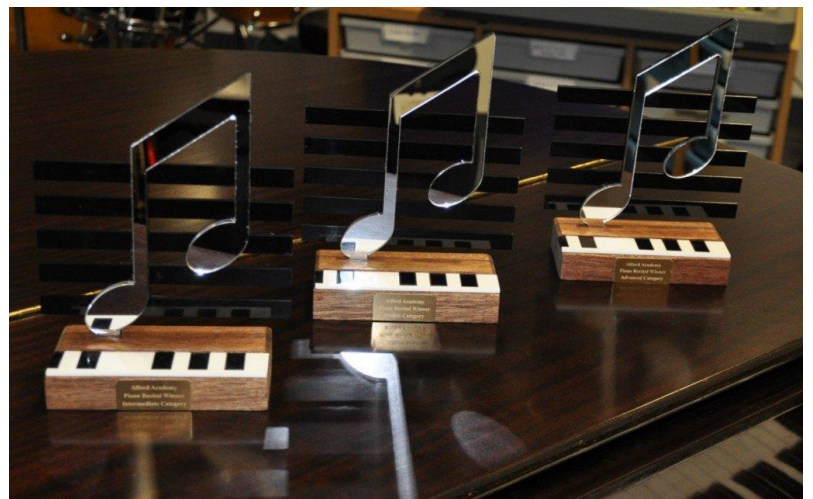
Hamish Dawson and Blair McPake

Piano Recital Evening

This year Alford Academy held its first ever Piano Recital with 20 students performing for an audience of 70 people. Well done to all the pupils who performed on the evening. The standard of playing was incredibly high and the judges had a difficult job picking out the most notable performances. The school choir and S6 band also provided musical entertainment.

Sophie Trueman won the rookie category, Charlie Patton won the intermediate award and Kate Wilson was the winner of the advanced category. The trophies were made and designed by our very own Mr Duffy from the technical department and all funds were given to the music department. This will be the first of many annual piano recitals at Alford.

Pictured below (left to right) are the winners from each category: Charlie Patton (Intermediate), Sophie Trueman (Rookie) and Kate Wilson (Advanced.)



Mr Duffy designed and crafted these stunning trophies for the winners of our Piano Recital Evening.



Kapten Piano Trio Workshop

The Kapten Trio is made up of three outstanding graduates of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre and Oxford University. The trio formed in 2011 whilst students at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

Along with our N5 and Higher music classes, pupils who play an instrument from both the Academy and Primary attended the workshop together with a Primary 4 class.

Our Senior music pupils were challenged to write a short piece of music in a different style from normal. This can involve using shapes, swirls, lines etc and the performer then interprets how they see the images and plays accordingly. Three pupils' pieces were chosen and performed by the trio.

Imogen and Paige are pictured with their pieces of music which were played by the trio.



Christmas Concert

On Thursday 15th December, Alford Academy held their Christmas Concert, featuring a varied programme of music from each of our Performing Arts extra-curricular groups. This included the debut of the Musical Theatre group who performed "I'm a Believer" from Shrek – the Musical.

Thank you to Mr Trueman, Miss Vickers, Mrs McQuaker, Mrs Cheyne, Mr Barclay, Mr Sande, Mr Wood, Mr Dallas, Mr Niven and all the pupils who took part in this wonderful evening of festive entertainment.

It was a poignant farewell to Mrs Cheyne, our woodwind instructor for the past 12 years, as she led the Concert Band and Orchestra for the final time. Christine is highly regarded by all her woodwind pupils and colleagues and will be greatly missed by Alford Academy.



Duke of Edinburgh Award

This session we have 42 pupils participating in the Bronze award group and 21 in the Silver. Both groups are currently training for their practice expeditions next year.

Gold Award

“It was the most midge-infested four days of my life,” stated Deputy Head Girl Kate Wilson, “but it’s the people you do it with that make it great.”

A big congratulations to Kate Wilson, Kyle Michie, Siân Allerton, Kirsty Birnie and Elle Anderson – The Villains Anonymous – along with Elise Moaut, Rachel Edgar, Rosie Riley, Aoife Goodin, Iris Beswick and Natalya Brentnall – The Seven Dwarfs – who completed their Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award after a four day long expedition.

Blair McPake

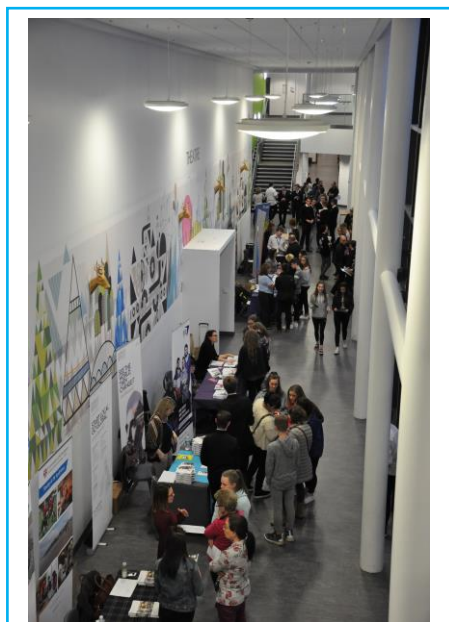


Gold award group

Careers Evening - Looking to the Future

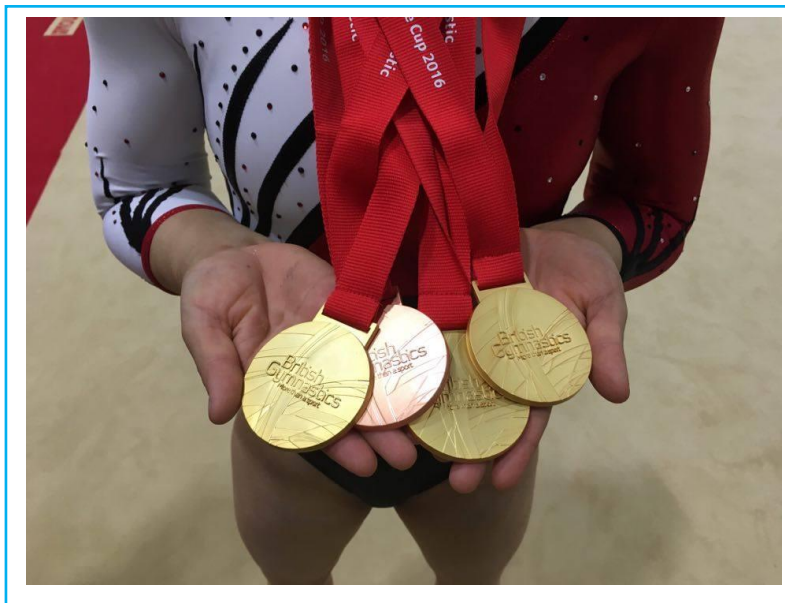
On 4 October Alford Academy held a successful careers evening including representatives from a wide range of employers as well as professional bodies and colleges and universities. We would like to thank all the employers, organisations and FE/HE institutions listed below for attending - this annual event is a fantastic source of information and support for pupils of all ages S1-S6 and their parents for planning future careers and course choices.

Thank you to University of Aberdeen, University of Edinburgh, RGU, North East College, Glasgow Caledonian, SRUC, Heriot-Watt, St Andrews University, Army, Navy, RAF, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, Scottish Ambulance Service, Aberdeenshire Council – Recruitment, Work Experience, Creative Aberdeenshire and Sports and Physical Activity, NHS Grampian, BMI Healthcare, Dunnydeer Vets, Young Smile Dental Care, Muirhead Nursing Home, the Oil & Gas Authority, Energy Institute, Aberdeen Association of Civil Engineers, Alan Grant Grampian Ltd, CNR International, Sandy Innes Painter and Decorator, KPMG, Balfour Beattie, Country Flavours, Berry Scrumptious/Felicity's Chocolates, Red Evolution – web design & digital media, CITB: Construction Industry Training Board and McIntosh Plant Hire.



S6 pupil, Izzy Tolometti competed at the British Challenge in Guildford on the weekend of 17th September. A high score is required by gymnasts in this competition to gain access to the British Championships.

Izzy has competed in this competition now for 6 years and in that time British Gymnastics have increased their required score, making it even more difficult to qualify – especially as a senior. This year she not only achieved that score but she won the senior all-around section as well as Gold on Bars and Floor with a Bronze on Beam. She now qualifies to compete at the British Championships in March in Liverpool alongside all the top gymnasts in GB including the Olympic Team!



SASSA - South Aberdeenshire Schools Sports Association

A superb performance all round from the Alford students who were crowned the SASSA Champions for 2016! Competing in seven activities against seven schools from across South Aberdeenshire, Alford proved strong as the Basketball team retained their shield and the S2 Boys won the Football shield for the first time.





It's been an incredible year for Struan with the following notable achievements in cycling:

Scottish Road Race Champion

2km Individual Pursuit Scottish Champion

North West Youth Tour Stage 2 - 1st

North West Youth Tour - 5th Overall

British Series - 6th Overall

British Championships - 8th

Isle of Man Youth Tour - 3rd overall

Struan is now riding for HMT with JLT Condor and we would like to share part of Struan's profile from the team website.

Where is your favourite place to ride?

Has to be Aberdeenshire! The roads may not be in the best condition and the weather is terrible for 90% of the year but it's good training for the classics! The parcours of the roads and the views are second to none so that makes it all worthwhile.

What is the best thing about being a cyclist?

All the travelling, I get to see loads of amazing places all over Britain and Europe that I wouldn't have the opportunity see if it wasn't for cycling.

What are you looking forward to most about the 2017 season?

The early season races, Kurne-Brussels-Kurne and the Cicle Classic. The hard races in the cold weather on rough roads, that's the conditions I love.

Struan's next goal is the Youth Commonwealth Games in Barbados next year. We wish him every success.

Alford U15 Boys' Basketball Team

Following their 56-17 win against Mackie Academy earlier this month, the Alford U15s Boys' Basketball Team are yet again Grampian Champions in the Open Boys' Basketball Schools Cup. The team are looking forward to the knock out stages which start with a home game against the winners of the Highland League in January. We would like to take this opportunity to extend a huge thank you to their Coach, David Wyllie, and all the parents who come along to the matches and give their support.

Young Sports Ambassadors

Our Young Sports Ambassadors are Emma Bryant and Natalya Brentnall and are pictured here with Colin Gregor – Scottish Rugby 7s Captain from the 2014 Commonwealth Games.

Emma and Natalya took part in the Young Sports Ambassadors' Conference at the Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre on Friday 30th September. As Sports Ambassadors they help lead and develop sport at Alford Academy. Both girls are excellent role models for our students, they coach and organise the Netball and Hockey clubs which have both grown in strength this year.



U15s Girls' Football Team

The Junior Girls' Football Team have made a superb start to their first season as they have represented Alford Academy in several leagues and tournaments across the region. With comfortable wins against Meldrum Academy and Inverurie Academy the team have made a strong start in the Aberdeenshire League and League Cup which puts us in a confident position as we progress through the season. The U15 squad is a combination of S1-3 students who have gelled well as a team both on and off the pitch which is mainly thanks to the excellent coaching from our senior students – Anna Brown and Katie Cobban who have worked relentlessly with the girls to create a tremendous spirit and confidence within the team. We hope to continue this winning streak after the Christmas break as we are confident we have the quality and ability to collect some silverware this season. Well done girls!



Imogen's Skating Success

Imogen Vickers (S4) has recently been selected for the Regional Development Squad for Great Britain. In addition to the endless hours of training in Aberdeen, Imogen regularly travels around the UK, and this year she went to Copenhagen to participate in various competitions and specialised training sessions. Last June, Imogen qualified and competed in the British Solo Ice Dance Championships in Sheffield. We wish Imogen all the best for her future in Ice Dancing.



European Day of Languages – 26th September

The Modern Languages Department hosted a “pop up” continental café to celebrate the European Day of Languages. A great spread was laid on and pupils and staff were able to pop in before school and lunchtime to enjoy different European foods washed down with hot chocolate and juice. Also available was a wide choice of magazines, books, quizzes and board games all in different languages.



Sponsored walk

Yet another successful sponsored walk took place on Thursday the 15th of September around Whitehaugh forest. An incredible £5,409 was raised by students, a big thank you to all those who donated. And finally another thank you to the janitorial and catering staff that helped on the day as well as all S6 year pupils who assisted the staff.

Congratulations also to our two top fundraisers, Chloe Crossland in S2 and Erin Matthew in S1 who between them raised a fantastic £367 in sponsorship money. The girls received gift vouchers, kindly donated by Sandy Innes Painter and Decorator, as a thank you for their fundraising efforts.

Blair McPake



Donna Brander, Alford Academy

The Scotland Big School Bake Off 2016

We would like to say a massive well done to Donna Brander from the Alford Academy Catering Team, who competed in the Scotland Big School Bake Off.

Donna got through to the finals with her Raspberry Brownie which involved a trip to Glasgow to showcase her bake.

Although Donna did not win, overall she was only 0.4 points behind the eventual winner!

This is a great achievement and shows just how good the team in our kitchen is.

I think you will all join me in congratulating Donna and we look forward to sharing her recipe and tasting the Raspberry Brownie very soon.

Ian Paterson, Area Catering Officer - East



Alford Academy Takes Two Awards at Aberdeenshire Youth Volunteer Awards Ceremony

Alford Academy scooped two Highly Commended awards at the Aberdeenshire Youth Volunteer Awards Ceremony on Thursday 10th November. Jack Watt, S5 pupil, was highly commended in the Young Person category in recognition of his amazing contribution to leading and mentoring our Pupil Digital Leaders and for his continued dedication to mentoring our S1 and S2 Code Club enthusiasts. Our S3 finals winners of the Y-Factor this year were also highly commended in the Creativity category. The group was led by Mrs Taylor, PT Faculty (Acting), Business Education and Computing who said, "We are all so very proud of this group of youngsters. They worked together amazingly as a team and it is the icing on the cake to be recognised for this work by Aberdeenshire Council".



BBC School Report

For the first time this year Alford Academy is taking part in the BBC School Report wherein pupils aged 11-16 can research, write and report local interest news stories that will be published on the BBC website with a live report on the 10th of March 2017. Led by Head of the English Faculty Mrs Rae alongside Modern Studies Teacher Mrs Williams, the report gives pupils experience in the journalistic field and prepares them for any future career prospects.

S1 pupil Hamish Dawson said that he is "looking forward to developing an understanding of the media," and that by "preparing for the year ahead, I'll get experience in the industry."

New members are welcome to join in the New Year.

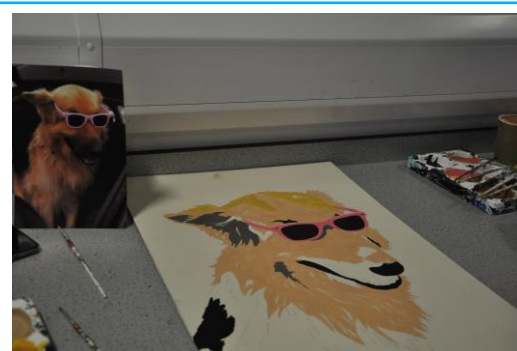
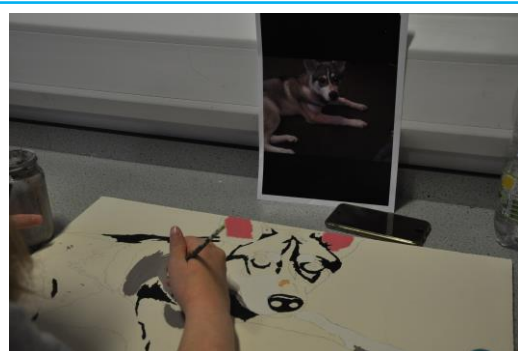
Blair McPake



Princes Trust

This year sees the 40th anniversary of the Princes Trust charity. Earlier this year last session's group were the first students to complete the units required for the Personal Development and Employability qualification in Scotland. They were presented with their certificates by Vincent Docherty (Aberdeenshire Council's Head of Service for Education) and other dignitaries.

Taking part this session in the program we have 12 pupils across S4, S5 and S6. The program allows pupils to: choose bite-sized chunks of learning or whole qualifications, develop their achievements at their own pace and in different learning contexts, combine learning to help achieve their goals and have their achievements recorded centrally to remain with them throughout their learning and working life. Pupils are currently carrying out the Planning for Personal Development Course at SCQF Levels 3, 4 and 5. The aim of this unit is for candidates to develop an understanding of how to assess their strengths and weaknesses and to set manageable, achievable goals for work and/or personal life. They will consider their own strengths and weaknesses and how they might address areas of weakness. At the moment they are taking a basic idea and taking it through the stages to a finished piece of work. For most pupils this is their first unit for Princes Trust but one candidate has now completed 5 units over 3 years and once they have gained 21 credits they will receive an award.



It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas!

The Christmas lights were switched on across the school during morning break on Tuesday 6th December.



"I Wish" Snowflakes

As part of the M.E.L (Mentoring For Effective Learning) initiative this year for Christmas pupils made snowflakes and wrote a wish on the inside. These lovely snowflakes were then displayed around the school for others to read. Some contained heart-warming messages about loved ones, while others were Christmas presents!

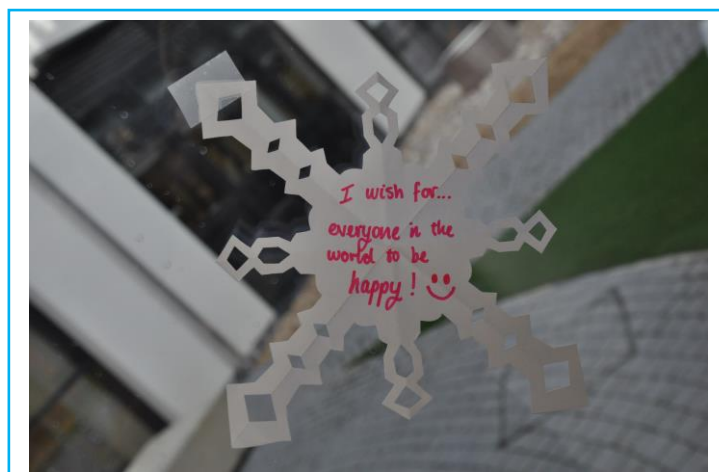
"I wish for no more wars."

"I wish for everyone to get the exam results they want/need."

"I wish I could have some transformers."

"I wish for everyone to be with their family."

Blair McPake



Communication with Parents

Your help is needed to shape the introduction of new technology in schools for sending communications via email, text message and a smartphone app. We will soon be able to send more detailed messages to pupils' main parent / guardian contact where up-to-date email or mobile telephone numbers are held. Parents will also be able to download a smartphone app and can receive communications for all children in one place, even if the children attend different schools. What's more, messages sent by email and smartphone app are free for both parents and the school - helping us cut the cost of using text message services. This service will also allow us to send larger attachments like newsletters and in future parents will be able to respond directly using the app. We will continue to contact you by letter or phone if the communication is of a confidential / sensitive nature.

In preparation for the roll-out of the new technology, we are keen to gain some insight into what types of communication you would like to receive electronically. Please find a link to the survey here: <http://bit.ly/2dPGAKn>

In addition, to help us prepare, we would ask all parents to contact the school office if your email address or mobile telephone number has changed since the last update.

Further information on school messaging is available here: <http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/parents-carers/school-communications/>

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 for a myAberdeenshire account 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/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.

