

**December 2014**

**Dear Parent,**

As we reach the half way stage of our stay in our temporary home, times becomes even more interesting in the life of our school. Since I last wrote to you we have had our first access visit into the new building on Perth Road and of course Dundee City Council have begun the consultation process in relation to the closure of Menzieshill High School. Both of these of course have implications for the school.

The progress of the building work has been spectacular and the structure is now wind and water tight allowing the internal construction work to get under way. Being able to see the school take form internally is exciting and I have even more confidence in the new Harris providing our young people with a learning environment unlike any other.

The consultative process regarding Menzieshill has a formality and a set timescale to it and we will contribute to that process in full. If the proposals are taken forward it will have implications for us and we will be fully involved and consulted before any decisions are made. Please be assured that in relation to both the school building process and the proposals regarding the changes to the school estate that I will keep you fully and accurately informed through each and every stage in the process.

**Art & Design**

Christmas card Design – Thank you and well done to Eden Thomas S6- original artwork.



Sam Gowan’s -S6, an Advanced Higher pupil from session 2013-2014. Sam’s folio was selected by the markers at SQA an example of excellent practice. His work was displayed at an exhibition of S6 Advanced Higher work held in

Tramways Gallery Glasgow. Sam was one of only 75 candidates selected across the whole of Scotland. Well Done Sam, fantastic achievement!!!

<http://www.tramway.org/events/Pages/Advanced-Higher-Portfolios.aspx>

**Community Links- CfE in Action**

Art & Design along with Music and RMPS have been working with the School Chaplin, Andrew Greaves on a Cross Curricular learning Project Celebrating the Life of the missionary Mary Slessor and the theme of Endeavour. CfE Broad General Education S1 and 2 pupils have been producing a range art work related to Mary Slessor, the local Environment and her travels to Africa. In the New Year all the pupil artwork will be exhibited in Dundee West Church as part of the celebration of the anniversary of her death.

**Computer Science**

We have had a very exciting year to date, our highlights have been our two visiting professionals. S2 pupils welcomed Debbie Forster the UK Managing Director of Apps for Good. This is the award-winning education technology movement, which Computing Science and Business Education are working with to teach our pupils how to create apps that change their world.

This week some of our S3 pupils welcomed Fraser MacLean who talked with the pupils about animation. Fraser grew up in Edinburgh; he was trained by Scottish Film Training Trust as a live action film editor and has worked on Who Framed Roger Rabbit, Spacejam and Disney’s Tarzan. Animation enables our pupils to start thinking about computational constructs and is a great way to capture their interest.



**Book Week Scotland - Author Talks**

**History -** Gordon Douglas –the Dundee author of ‘We’ll Send Ya Tae Mars’ and ‘Sons of the Mars’ kindly offered to share some of his extensive research on the homeless and destitute boys who were sent to spend time on the HMS Mars which lay on the banks of the River Tay.  Gordon was aware that we had been studying the social problems of the nineteenth century and helped our S4-S6 pupils broaden their knowledge on this.  We were also privileged that he shared with us two songs that he had written in relation to his work. Furthermore, he generously has donated two of his books to the library which our pupils look forward to borrowing.

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**English -** Kirkland Ciccone, author of Conjuring the Infinite and his recently published book Endless Empress, gave a very interesting and humorous talk to two S3 English classes during Book Week Scotland. He spoke about the books he read when he was younger and how his interest in becoming an author developed. All pupils present enjoyed his talk.

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**Music**

**Music Technology**

Pupils who are currently studying National and Higher Music Technology visited the Gardyne Theatre Recording Studios. Chris Kidd, the studio’s sound engineer, showed the pupils some of the equipment used in the studio and the pupils had the opportunity to record and edit some tracks. The pupils also heard some recordings that had been done during one of the concerts in the Gardyne Theatre. The experience was extremely valuable in preparing pupils for their assessments as part of the Music Technology courses.

**Armistice Service**

The Wind Band accompanied the hymns at the school’s annual Armistice Service. Well done to Ruaraidh Proctor, S6, who played the Lament on the bagpipes, and also to Oscar Holm-Huxley, S3, who played the last post on trumpet.

**Christmas Light Night**

The woodwind ensemble and school choir performed in St Paul’s Cathedral as part of the Dundee Light Night events. Thank you to all parents, friends and former pupils who came along to support us. The Cathedral was full and the audience commented on how much they enjoyed the concert.

**West End Christmas Lights**

The school Wind Band performed at the annual switching on of the West End Lights. The event involved pupils from the associated primary schools, Victoria Park, St. Joseph’s, Ancrum Road and Blackness. The Wind Band accompanied the traditional carols along with highlights from Frozen!

**PTPA Christmas Fayre**

Well done to Eve Brebner, Jay Lam, Niamh Henry and Zoe Scott who provided some background music at the PTPA’s Christmas Fayre.

**Lord Provost Christmas Concert**

Harris Academy pipers along with pipers and drummers from other Dundee secondary schools played at the Lord Provost Christmas Concert. Thank you to Mr. Potter for organising this event.

**ABRSM: Assoctiated Board of the Royal Schools of Music**

A number of pupils sat Associated Board exams this term and we await the results. Well done to all who took part in these exams.

**National Youth Choir of Scotland**

A number of pupils took part in the annual National Youth Choir of Scotland Christmas concert in the Caird Hall.

**Christmas at the Music Centre**

A huge number of pupils from Harris Academy take part in the many activities available at the Music Centre, Bell Street. These pupils participated in a Christmas concert in the Music Centre on Sunday 14th December. Well done to all involved. The pupils are practising for the annual concerts in the Caird Hall on Tuesday 24th and Wednesday 25th March 2015.

**Christmas community events**

December is an extremely busy month for both pupils and staff in the Music Department. Our pupils were involved in a number of trips in the community including Carol Singing at Tesco Riverside and visiting the wards in Victoria Hospital.

**SQA**

Next term, S4-6 pupils studying Music will be working towards Prelim Exams and the final SQA Performing Exams. These important final SQA Performing Exams take place in February for all National 5 and Higher pupils and we would encourage you to support your child in their preparation for this exam.

Pupils following a National or Higher Music Technology course will be submitting their course assignment to SQA. This assignment is sent off early March. Again, we would encourage you to support your child in their preparation for this course assessment.

**Music Department dates for your diary**:

Monday 22nd December, 7pm – Annual Carol Service in Dundee West Church

Sunday 8th March – Pipe Band Competition in Broughton School, Edinburgh

Monday 23rd – Thursday 26th March – Dundee Arts Festival

Tuesday 24th and Wednesday 25th March – Annual Caird Hall Concerts

Tuesday 31st March – Male and Female Vocalist of the Year Competitions

Wednesday 1st April – Instrumentalist of the Year Competition

Tuesday 16th June, 7pm – Mary Slessor Concert in Dundee West Church

**PE Kit**

In response to a number of enquiries made to them, Parent Council asked me to give parents a bit of clarity in relation to acceptable kit for P.E.

As part of our preparation for moving into the new school and in response to pupil’s requests for a more up-to-date style of kit the PE department consulted with pupils during last session on designing a new range of kit. Unfortunately the outcome of the consultation was not completed until after the School Handbook was published and issued to P7 pupils last January. The handbook contained a description of the old style kit which most parents then bought.

It is our long term aim to have all pupils attending PE in the new version of the kit. I am however most aware of the current financial situation and understand as we aim towards August of 2016 that there will be a number of pupils attending PE classes in the old style kit.

Should you be considering buying/replacing your child’s PE kit then it can be ordered from the following link:

http://www.pslteamsports.com/harris-academy.html

**Hockey**

From September to November the hockey club have trained at Riverside using the Dundee University all weather pitch. The club is open to boys and girls from S1 to S6 and also pupils from our associated primary schools. During December coaching has moved indoors to the gym at Rockwell.

The S1-S3 team have been playing in the Active Schools League and the remaining league games will take place in March. During November and December two Harris indoor teams played in the Active Schools indoor cup and both teams have qualified for the finals in February. The players involved in the outdoor and indoor games were:- Callum Bolton, Lucas Mahoney, Ross Dyer, James Lothian, Jack Renton and Sean Hegarty (all S1) Ross McNicoll, Ben Graham, Gregor Trickett, Jack Hunter, Toby Owen-Hughes, Alex McNally, Finlay McInally, Bella Ackerley and Shaun Ellis (all S2), Jonny McLeish, Oscar Holm-Huxley, Kyle McCartney and Caitlin Burns (S3)

In October the S4-S6 team won the outdoor league title and in November they qualified for the finals of the indoor cup competition to be held at DISC in February next year. The S4-S6 Squad was:- Dylan Ackerley (S4) Duncan McNicoll, Jack Torano, Callum Ellis, Jack Dyer, Jessica Trickett, Zoe Hunter and Jack Torano (S5) Sam Owen-Hughes, and Finlay Wright (S6)

Outdoor training at Riverside restarts on Wednesday 28th January. Anyone interested in attending should see

Mr Martin, Maths Department.

**Netball**

The Netball squads have had a great start to this year. We are regularly getting good numbers along to training on a Thursday after school. These sessions are led by Susan our Active Schools coordinator along with students from Abertay University. The S1/S2 teams have finished top of their league and are now competing in the Dundee Schools cup competition. The S3/4 squad has also participated in both tournament dates, and will be competing in the top tier competition.

**Rugby**

The rugby squads have had a positive start to the 2014/2015 season. The U14 and U16 teams have played a number of Saturday morning fixtures against the likes of Lathallan, St Leonards and Madras. All of these games have been very successful and have given the boys experience of playing weekend games. Moving forward the squads will be playing more games after the Christmas holidays, including more fixtures with Active Schools. Our U18 squad has played a few games and had a successful start to the season. This squad has been an amalgamation of various schools across the city, with the bulk of the boys being Harris pupils. This has proved to be a positive initiative. They are still to play their first round matches in the U18 Bell Lawrie Bowl. As the spring approaches we are hopeful all teams will have the chance to participate in some 7 a side tournaments.

**S2 Football**

The S2 football team have made a strong start to their football season, topping the league at the half way stage. They have played five games so far, winning three and losing two. The team have two remaining league games to play before the top four split off into the Champions League and are expected to reach this. The team also have the Tannadice Cup to play for, hoping for the chance to play on the home of Dundee United. It has been a solid start to the season and hopefully this can continue after Christmas.

Senior Football

After a slow start in their first game, the senior football team have gone onto top their league before the Christmas. After defeat to Grove, the team went on to record victories against Baldragon, Craigie, Braeview, Morgan and Monifieth. The boys also played last year’s treble winners Menzieshill, losing 4-3 in the last minute after being 3-1 up which was extremely disappointing. The boys are aiming to make the Champions League and make amends for their two defeats and hope to reach the Tannadice Cup final to mark off a successful year.

**Scottish Schools Rock Climbing 2014-15**

On Monday 8th December Jessica Trickett, Megan Phin, Oscar Holm-Huxley, Arran Roy, Gregor Trickett and Alyx Crosby-Bairstow represented the school in the Scottish Schools Rock Climbing Competition. They competed in Round 1 at Avertical World and should they qualify, the top climbers from the first round will be invited to take part in the Grand Final to be hosted at the Glasgow Climbing Centre on March 28th 2015.

**Harris Academy Ski Team**

Harris Academy has entered three teams into the Scottish Schools Ski race at Glenshee Ski Centre on the 5th February 2015. The team members have already had a training day at Garthdee in Aberdeen, where they got to race through some gates, and are about to head up to Glenshee for a second training day on the 5th Jan. Let’s hope for load of snow!

**Social Subjects**

During October we held our annual visit to Verdant Works, Dundee. The aim of the trip was to broaden pupils understanding of their own local history and of Dundee’s place in the wider world. The pupils experienced a variety of settings and interactive activities ranging from film and computer activities, explaining the development of the jute industry from location to occupational advantage. They also enjoyed a demonstration of the old machinery working, which for many was too noisy! The pupils particularly enjoyed learning about the living conditions of Dundee people during this time. As an additional element to their learning this experience proved to be very popular with pupils who were keen to discuss it with their family members and teachers.

**Great War Schools Conference on Tuesday 28th October**

A number of History pupils attended the University of Dundee for the Great War School Conference, which was a great success. The pupils spent the day at the University and were treated to a number of lectures and a small theatrical production, focusing on the Great War. The conference reminded everyone of Scotland’s contribution, and of Dundee in particular, which our pupils found very interesting. There was also a very informative lecture on the use of graphic novels and comics during and after the time of War, which teachers as well as pupils found particularly interesting. Finally a lecture relating to Russia and its own experience of War greatly impressed all. This was the first Conference of its type in Dundee for pupils and the University is keen to repeat this annually. Harris Academy therefore will eagerly look forward to this.

**Dundee Law Memorial**

In November a number of staff and pupils, walked to the Dundee Law Memorial to pay their respects to all the fallen soldiers of World War One. We set off from school, marching briskly on this cold and misty day, with the sound of lively chatter between pupils. However, as the sound of the pipes, beautifully played by our own Conner Bell, guided us to the top of Dundee Law, our sentiments turned to the soldiers, their experiences, and the effect on their communities. Zoe Hunter and Ava Gourlay presented a very thoughtful presentation, laying a wreath from Harris Academy, and we stood for a few moments, in silence and with deep respect for all those who had fallen.

**Pupil Support**

I am delighted to say that Harris Academy has been successful in securing £4,121 of funding from the access to education fund. Within the last six months, young people accessing either youth achievement or employability have been given the opportunity to volunteer at Balhousie Care Home and work with older people, many of whom have dementia. This has been a challenging but enjoyable experience for everyone and we applied to the fund so we could continue this intergenerational practice and also enhance it by establishing more of a partnership approach teaming up with St Johns pupils, youth workers, Balhousie staff, creative learning and local artists. We hope to do a number of things with the money including developing the garden area at the care home, working on signage for their café, carrying out weekly activities within the home and also accessing training for the pupils involved so as they are equipped with the skills to carry out the activities.

By engaging in this project we hope to build on pupils’ skills and knowledge, give them a sense of responsibility, improve confidence, empower them to contribute to their local community and give them the opportunity for a successful learning experience. We also envisage meeting outcomes for the older people such as increased motivation, increased perception of self-worth, social contact, social inclusion and increased ability to make a contribution to the life of the community.

**Youth Achievement Groups**

All the pupils have been involved in volunteering and working towards their Saltire Award. At ‘The ‘Balhousie Care Home’ in Clement Park, they have been carrying out art activities with the residents, at ‘The Maggies’ Centre’ they have been counting money, gardening and decorating the Christmas tree and with ‘Mealmakers’, they have been delivering leaflets. Some of the pupils will also attend the official launch of Mealmakers’ in the City Chambers on the 17th December. We have had very positive reports from all our partners about the behaviour and attitude of the pupils. With the introduction of the bag tax, pupils have been working on jute bags to their own designs to sell. If anyone would like to place an order with their design, please contact Mrs Cook/Karen Boath. The Social Enterprise group want to give a big thanks to Mrs MacDonald for all her hard work. Fundraising has gone well and we would like to thank everyone who supports us throughout the year. Our S2 group have been visiting the Cinema and posting their reviews on ‘The Young Scot’ Website. We were able to showcase all our activities at the recent Open night.

**Amina Muslim Women's Group visit S3 RMPS Pupils**

At the beginning of this term S3 RMPS students were visited by an Islamic educational organisation which is based in Dundee and Glasgow called Amina. Amina is an organisation which promotes the inclusion of Muslim women in all aspects of society and also works with agencies to give a better understanding of the Islamic religion as a whole. This visit was arranged to enhance the S3 pupil’s learning about the Islamic faith. The focus of this visit was to give pupils the opportunity to find out what life is like as a Muslim in Scotland and more specifically in Dundee. Pupils asked questions about the challenges that Muslims face practising their religion in Scotland and heard first-hand accounts of their experiences and solutions to these issues. This was a very positive experience and pupils gave encouraging feedback about this opportunity. The RMPS department hopes to maintain our links with this organisation and provide a similar experience for S3 pupils next academic session.

**The Harris Academy Human Rights Group**

The Harris Academy Human Rights Group is made up of a collection of S1-S5 pupils who are committed to campaigning for all people around the world to be afforded their human rights as laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The group is run weekly at Wednesday lunchtime by Miss Collier in the RMPS department. So far we have completed an awareness-raising poster campaign in the RMPS department and have supported advocates of human rights such as Malala Yousafzai and Ghoncheh Ghavami by writing letters of encouragement and support. This year we successfully raised over £60 for MIND Scotland and Amnesty International through an Ice Bucket Challenge which was carried out, filmed and edited by the pupils themselves. We have also spent time researching violations of human rights around the globe and have engaged in pressure campaigns by writing letters to governments who have violated human rights. Next year we hope to arrange an event which will raise awareness and money for charities supporting human rights and continue to support those who are fighting for human rights around the world.

**Anne Frank Exhibition at Harris Academy**

The Anne Frank Trust has worked extensively in schools in Scotland since 2008 with its travelling History for Today exhibition and guide training programme. The Trust received funding from the Big Lottery Realising Ambition fund to extend and develop this work in Dundee 2014 in order to create Scotland’s first Anne Frank Ambassadors. The Trust draws on the power of Anne’s life and diary to challenge prejudice, reduce hatred, promoting positive attitudes, responsibility and respect for others.

The RMPS department at Harris agreed to participate in this programme which involved working with the Trust to train 20 pupils to show 200 pupils plus around the exhibition. It was intended that from this experience all of the pupils would have an increased knowledge and understanding of Anne Frank and factors which led to the rise of the Nazis and the Holocaust, an appreciation of the dangers and injustice of prejudice, improved attitudes towards people regardless of difference and a greater inclination to challenge prejudice and/or become more active citizens. The hosting of the exhibition provided an opportunity for our school to enhance our links with local primary schools by inviting them to view the exhibition, work in an interdisciplinary manner and demonstrate a commitment to the four capacities of a Curriculum for Excellence.

The exhibition which consisted of 16 large panels was housed from September 24 to 10th October 2014 within one of the School’s gyms. Twenty S2 mixed-ability pupils were chosen to become guides to show at least 200 other pupils around the exhibition. The guides were given training via videos and workshops so that they knew and understood Anne’s story and were able to talk confidently about each of the panels as well as answer any questions. This is what the guides have said about their experiences:-

“The Anne Frank exhibition has boosted my confidence speaking in front of people I have never met and I feel that I now have more confidence. I also have more knowledge about some of the conditions the Jews lived in. I am glad I participated.”

“I don’t really know what to say about the Anne Frank tour programme apart from it was an amazing experience. It was so enjoyable and I learnt things I never knew about the Holocaust. I was so grateful I was chosen and I would gladly do it again. “

Each of the 20 pupils had the opportunity at the end of the fortnight to put themselves forward to become an Anne Frank Ambassador. Six were chosen and these six will go into our associated Primary schools and speak to their pupils about the Anne Frank Story and the Holocaust after further training. It is hoped that these six pupils involved in the Ambassador programme will become more confident, resilient and motivated; improving their communication and social skills through peer education. The whole experience has been a great success for the whole school community.

**Primary 7 Maths Challenge**

In November, Harris Academy hosted its annual Primary Maths Challenge. The competition involved mixed teams of Primary 7 pupils from our five associated primary schools who participated in a variety of mathematical problem solving activities.

The competition was organised as part of the school’s P7 to S1 transition programme. A group of our S2 pupils took on the responsibility of captaining the teams, ensuring that the primary pupils enjoyed their day and had a friendly contact for any questions.

**Media Studies**

The National 5 and Higher Media classes have made two trips to the DCA this session. The first was a workshop with Mike Tait who explained how the DCA choose the films they show and how they promote them. He then taught the class how to analyse a film poster. Pupils also attended the Discovery Film Festival where they viewed Beyond Clueless, a documentary about the genre of High School Movies. This provided a forum for lively class debate and helped pupils analyse a text they are studying for their exam.

**Harris Rebuild Update December 2014**

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Welcome to the Eleventh issue of the New Harris Academy Newsletter. This newsletter aims to update you with the decant and plans to construct the new Harris Academy. Details of the rebuild of Harris are available on the Website where you can look at plans and developments in more detail.

**Planning Approvals and Project Update**

The school build continues to be on track. Much of the insulation has now been fitted to the building and all but the Atrium windows are in. Work on the exterior brick work is well underway and sympathetic to the colour of the stonework from the previous building. Internal walls and the structure of classrooms and offices have begun which now gives a clearer indication of the levels and layout. As the year progresses opportunities may arise for some staff and pupils to get an initial look around the internal layout of the building.

**Decant to Lawton Road**

Maintenance works around the building continues, providing as comfortable and suitable environment for all. Recent works have included the sanding and vanishing of the dining centre floor with has helped brighten the area.

**Bus and Transport Arrangements**

Transport of pupils to and from school continues to go well, with minor adjustments helping maintain good pupil levels on the 11s and 12s. Again we would encourage that during the inclement weather pupils make sensible choices on their travel to and from school without compromising the journeys of those who have a considerable distance to travel on these services.

**S4, S5, S6 Prelims January 2015**

• **S4, S5/6 Prelims run from Monday 12th January to Friday 30th January inclusive**

**• All prelims will take place within the school building**

**• Pupils being presented at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher level will have examinations in order to mirror the end of Course external exam in May**

**• Pupils being presented at either National 3 or National 4 will not sit prelims as the assessments for these courses are carried out internally by the school**

**• The only exception to this is National 5 PE where assessment is by logbook which means National 5 PE candidates will not sit a prelim in that subject**

**• As previously intimated Dundee City Council’s policy is that there should be no Study Leave for S4, S5/6 pupils. It is therefore anticipated that all S4, S5/6 pupils will be in school for the duration of the prelim exams**

**• On the day before and on the day when a pupil has a National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher prelim they will not attend timetabled classes but will only attend school for the prelim that day.**

**• Pupils must report to school in good time for the start of the prelim and may leave school when** the prelim **finishes**

**• Pupils who are being presented at National 3 or National 4 should attend timetabled classes as normal – this may well be a period when important internal assessments are carried out by subject teachers**

**Supported Study during exam period**

**You will notice from your exam timetable that there are a number of periods of supported study available in the school during the exam period.**

**• If you do not have an exam at that time you will be expected to attend all supported study sessions in the departments indicated if that subject is on your timetable**

**• If there is more than one supported study session in subjects which you are studying you must discuss with your teachers the best subject for you to attend.**

Dates for your Diary

Monday 22nd December - Christmas Carol Service (Dundee West Church)

**✶ *School closes for Winter Term 2014*✶**

*Tuesday 23rd December 2014*

***✶ School opens for Spring Term 2015✶***

*Wednesday 7th January 2015*

**S4/S5/S6 Prelims**

Monday 12th – Friday 30th January 2015

***\*Mid Term Holiday\****

*Friday 13th February – Monday 16th February 2015*

I thank you for all your continued support of the school and wish you all a restful and peaceful winter break.

J Thewliss

**J Thewliss, Head Teacher**