



28<sup>th</sup> January 2015

Dear Parents / Carers

I am writing to update all of you with the Ullapool High School plans for changes to the Course Choices & Options which will affect several of our year groups this year. 2015 is a year of change and, because of this, I have built into the process several Information Evenings where you are welcome to visit and ask questions about these changes. You are of course also very welcome to contact me directly at the school, at any time, if you have concerns about how your child might be affected. More details are set out below.

#### PARENTS EVENINGS - CHANGE OF DATES

After some consultation, there has been a change made to the Parents' Evening schedule:

- **S4/5/6** Parents' Evening will now take place on **Thursday, February 26<sup>th</sup>**  
Following concern regarding the prelim results at Higher level in particular, we have made this change to enable meetings with teachers to take place sooner, thereby to allow earlier intervention.
- As a result, **S3** Parents' Evening has moved to **Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> March**.

I apologise for the relatively late change to the published schedule (our website [www.ullapoolhigh.highland.sch.uk](http://www.ullapoolhigh.highland.sch.uk) has been updated) and please let me know if these changes present any difficulties to you. Staff are always available for consultation at other times.

#### COURSE CHOICES

The following table highlights the main timings for our Course Choices process this year:

YEAR GROUP	TRANSITION	BOOKLET ISSUED	PARENTS' EVENINGS	DUE IN
S2 into S3	BGE with Choices	16 <sup>th</sup> March	Information Evening 19 <sup>th</sup> March	30 <sup>th</sup> March
S3 into S4	Senior Phase 1 (National Courses)	23 <sup>rd</sup> Feb	Parents' Evening 12 <sup>th</sup> March (also Information slot on 26 <sup>th</sup> February 7-7:30)	16 <sup>th</sup> March
S4/5 into S5/6	Senior Phase 2 (National Courses/Highers)	23 <sup>rd</sup> Feb	Parents' Evening 26 <sup>th</sup> Feb	2 <sup>nd</sup> April

Each year pupils pick the courses they wish to continue with, usually leading onto SQA examinations. Information booklets are given out to pupils and parents to explain more about the options, while Guidance staff also go through the individual preferences with each pupil. There is a Parents' Evening (or an Information slot) available for each transition at which more information will be available and the 'Due In' dates are the deadlines for when the pupils have to have made their choices and handed them in to the school.

### **Changes for S2 - S3**

As many of you are already aware, there have been several major changes in recent years to timetabling across Scotland. Here at Ullapool High School, we have spent the last few months bringing ourselves into line with this national (and Highland) entitlement for pupils. The first change to take note of is the finish of pupils picking two year courses at the end of S2 to take onto examination in S4. Now all pupils in Scotland are expected to experience what is called a "Broad General Education (BGE)" until the end of S3. Within that, some choice in S3 is permitted but it should not be solely subject-based and, importantly, it should not close any doors for taking a subject on to examination in later years during the Senior Phase (S4-S6).

### **Changes for S3 – S4**

Another change is that in S4 (year 1 of the Senior Phase) 6 subjects will be the 'norm' as opposed to the previous 8. The rationale behind this is to allow more time for each subject and is based on the statistical likelihood that many youngsters will then progress to a Higher after having had the benefit of more time in subjects in S4. Our experience as a school also suggests that the examination and assessment burden of the National exams on our youngsters in S4 is simply too much at 8 subjects and fewer will help mitigate these pressures. Another reason behind this change nationally is that the number of youngsters leaving school at the end of S4 is almost in single figures (in percentage terms) across most schools and the number of employers looking for '8 good Standard Grades' at this stage is almost zero. Times have changed and employers and colleges are looking for a whole range of experiences and different qualifications. Universities as well, have endorsed the 6 subjects in S4 model. More detail on these changes can be found on the school website ([www.ullapolhigh.highland.sch.uk](http://www.ullapolhigh.highland.sch.uk)).

### **No change for S4/5 – S5/6**

For this year the move from S4/5 into S5/6 (Senior Phase 2) will be the same as in previous years. Those pupils did not have the advantage of the 'extra time' which 6 subjects allows and therefore will carry on with the older model of 5 Highers, etc.

There is a lot of text in this newsletter but I hope it makes sense; as mentioned the website contains more detail. At each stage of the changes this year we have involved the Highland Council, our staff, the Parent Council and both Pupil Councils so there has been a lot of consultation before any decisions were finalised. However, if you would like to talk to people about these changes or if you have any major concerns, please let me know at the school or come along to our Parents' and Information Evenings.



### HIGHLAND FOODBANK APPEAL

I hope that you have been aware of the school's Highland Foodbank Appeal which has been running all this week – flyers were sent out in schools bags at the end of last week while there have also been posters on display in the school and around the village. At a Council meeting last week, I was surprised to learn that almost 3,000 adults and 1,000 children in Highland region were relying on food banks to help them eat. I really appreciate the work of the school office staff in organising our collection and the support of the community who have given generously. The collection boxes at the school entrance are filling up nicely but there is always room for more tins and packets so, if you haven't already done so, please send what you can.

### QUALITY IMPROVEMENT VISIT – REPORT

In my Newsletter before Christmas, I mentioned that the school had been visited by the Highland Council Quality Improvement Team who were looking at many aspects of our work here, including leadership, attainment and self-evaluation. We have now received their report, which I am pleased to say makes for positive reading, and a copy is available on the school website via this link, <http://www.ullapoolhigh.highland.sch.uk/school-info/evaluations-reports>. I am pleased with many aspects of the report but especially the first strength which is highlighted – ‘The school has an excellent working atmosphere’. This is a tribute to the hard work of every person in the building, whether staff or pupil. Please read the report and see for yourself.

### FARTRADE SCHOOL HOODIES

Over the past few months the Enterprise Group has been working on promoting the new school logo. As a result of their research, we are pleased to offer the following items, available NOW :

Black Hoodies	Sizes 32" + 34"	£17.00
	Sizes 36" + 38"	£20.00
T-shirts (white & black) (made by Calman Trust)	All sizes	£ 6.50

Please contact Ms Clark if interested in purchasing. We also plan to run some fun competitions promoting UHS and the new logo – watch this space!



Yours sincerely

*Robbie McFedries*

Head Teacher