



9th October 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

Looking out the school window, I can see that Autumn has arrived and we have reached the October holidays in what has been a very busy term.

It has been great to welcome our pupils back into school after the strangeness of last term. They have been enjoying themselves, being amongst friends once again, whilst also working hard and doing well in classes. Coping with the new strange environment, our COVID-regulations and social bubbles within school, have been taxing and the pupils are now tired and ready for the break - as are the staff, of course, who have also had to adapt to the changes. Everyone has responded so well this term and I want to thank pupils and staff for their exceptional efforts since the start of the session.

COVID-19 REGULATIONS

Overall the regime of hand sanitising, surface cleaning and wearing of face coverings is working well in school as part of a range of mitigation methods for COVID 19. However, once again I would like to ask for parent support in ensuring that your child comes to school with a face covering that they will then wear in social areas and on school transport. At present the School Office is giving out 50 disposable masks a week to pupils who have lost or forgotten their face coverings and while the cost of about £10 per 5 days is hard enough for us to bear in these financially straightened times, the thought of all these masks ending up in landfill is even worse! Your help with this is much appreciated.

SQA EXAM DIET 2021

Following on from the Deputy First Minister's statement on Wednesday, afternoon, the SQA made an announcement the same day about next year's exam arrangements. In short there will be no formal exam for National 5 subjects while Highers and Advanced Highers entrants will still undertake exams (COVID permitting) and these are scheduled to start in the middle of May, which is later than originally planned.

There is a lot of detail still to come to schools, potentially including standardised assessments which could form a series of class tests throughout the year for National 5 pupils. These will form a bank of evidence that will be used, together with classwork, folios etc., by teachers to make professional judgements on the grades to be awarded for individual pupils.

As we go through the year we will also be doing something similar for Higher and Advanced Higher, just in case COVID intervenes once more and the planned May exams are also affected in May.

UHS recognises how stressful the situation can be for affected pupils and their parents/carers and how important it is that you are kept up to date with information as soon as possible. We will write once again as soon as we have further news.

WILFUL DAMAGE

Despite the positivity at the beginning of this newsletter there have been some issues lately which have been causing us some concern; perhaps they indicate levels of stress or upset amongst our pupils but they need to be addressed nevertheless.

Both the boys' and girls' toilets have been regularly vandalised this term. Sometimes the sinks have been deliberately blocked, thereby causing flooding; on other occasions the tiles and pipes have been targeted and destroyed. Not only has this cost us in the region of £800 to fix, it has also taken up many hours of Mrs Stewart's and my time as we endeavour to identify and track those pupils who have used the toilets at the key times. Our main aim, and one that you as parents/carers, can help us with, is to communicate the message that this behaviour is completely unacceptable and should stop. I would appreciate it if you could discuss the issue with your child and reinforce this message. It is sad to say that, if we can't challenge and stop this within the school, there is a high probability that the vandalism will spread out into the community.

STAFF CHANGES

After almost 20 years in post, some of you might think that Mrs Talbot, the School Administrator, has become part of the fixtures here at Ullapool High School – I'm sure it's sometimes felt like that to her! However today, is her last day in the School Office and I'm sure you will join us all here in wishing her a long and interesting retirement. Her knowledge of the inner workings of fundraising ceilidhs, school buses, Highland Council financial systems and World Cup football Dreamteams will be much missed. Thank you, Mrs Talbot.

2020 SCHOOL DUX

In times past the School Assembly which we hold at the end of this term also includes the presentation of the Ullapool High School Dux trophy to the pupil or pupils who have achieved the best SQA exam results by the end of S5. Of course such large gatherings are no longer permitted but, luckily for us, the school photographer was in yesterday, taking individual photos for the S1 NEC cards, and was therefore on hand to record our two joint dux for 2020 receiving their award in front of their peer group, S6.

Step forward and take a bow

KATE GORDON & MACY PATON



Worthy recipients of the School Dux trophy for their exceptional performance in the SQA exams, they also share **The Rev. John H. B. Macphail Award** which is presented on behalf of Wm. Alasdair B. Macphail of Achiltibuie, the Rev Macphail's son. This award takes the form of a book token each for £50.

On that positive note, I will end this Newsletter. Enjoy the upcoming holidays. We look forward to welcoming pupils back to school at the usual time on Monday, 26th October, with their Chromebooks charged up and their face coverings on display 😊!

With best wishes

Robbie McFedries

Headteacher