



Ardnamurchan High School
Ardsgoil Aird nam Murchan

The Learning Agenda. Getting the most out of Senior School. 2013-14



S6 Graduation Dinner, June 2012

Respect the environment, yourself and others in it.

Thoir meas dha do choimhearsnachd, thu fhein agus càch

Do your best.

Dèan do dhìcheall

Our two school rules sum up our approach to learning together at Ardnamurchan High School. We believe in respecting each other and developing a holistic and healthy attitude as responsible citizens and effective contributors to the school ethos and doing our best as confident individuals and successful learners.

At this time of year where pupils, parents and staff are breathing a sigh of relief that last year's exams are over and this session's are not quite upon us, it is a good time to look forward and reflect on how to get the best out of senior school.

In this booklet we will outline some of our policies and reasons for doing what we do. I hope you find it helpful.

As always, should you require help or wish to discuss your child's progress further, please contact the school and in the first instance contact their Guidance Teacher.



Young Ambassadors 2013

**C Millar-Craig
Head Teacher**

September 2013

Summary of Key Dates

2013		Specific Events	General Alerts
August	19 th	S4/5/6 Self Evaluation	UCAS applications start University Open Day season
September	26 th	No Surprises Evening	Explore opportunities to gain wider experience and strengthen applications.
	23 rd	1 st S4/5/6 Monitoring and Tracking call with Guidance follow up.	
October	15 th	Deadline for all UCAS applications for Medicine, dentistry, veterinary sciences and for Oxford / Cambridge.	Personal Statements for UCAS
November			Busy time with extra school commitments – work with teachers to catch up + avoid gaps.
December	9 th	2 nd S4 /5 /6 Monitoring and Tracking call with Guidance follow up.	
	13 th	Course Choice Booklets to parents for 2013-2014	
2014			
January	15 th	Deadline for UCAS applications (other than those in October).	College applications begin – direct through Colleges.
February	3 rd – 7 th	Prelims	10 th to 14 th will be Prelim Results + feedback.
	24 th	S5/6 Course Choice forms for 2014-2015	Discussions with parents and teachers in light of prelim results and final levels decided.
March	3 rd	S4/5/6 Guidance interviews and Self Evaluation	A chance to review, take stock and set targets.
	14 th	S4/5/6 Reports to parents	(Hopefully) No surprises!
	18 th	S4/5/6 Parents Evening	
	28 th	S4/5 Course Choice deadline for 2014-2015	Finalise subjects and levels
	31 st	Deadline for applying for funding from SAAS	
April	29 th	S4/5/6 Study Leave and SQA exams begin	Final preparations.
June	3 rd	Study Leave ends	New courses start for the new S5/6
July	3 rd	Term ends	
August	5 th	SQA Results	

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Ardnamurchan High School has an ethos of achievement and believes all have a capacity for learning. As such, our policy is to give all learners access to an education of the highest quality no matter their age, stage or background.

In addition we believe that each member of the school community has the ability to learn and has the right to do so in a safe, secure environment.

We recognise that all learners learn at different rates and in different ways. Some learn through visual, some through auditory and kinaesthetic means. It is important that the learners are enabled to learn in the way that suits them best.

Good teaching is pivotal in successful learning and achievement. As such, it is important that teachers have high expectation of pupils and set high standards for and talk regularly with learners about their learning, listening to them and making learning clear for the learner. We also believe that we should give pupils appropriate praise and clear and regular feedback about their work.



Pace

If there is one thing which students' senior school experience needs to have, it is pace. This is especially true for our S5 pupils. Pupils return after their Standard Grade exams in June and by May the following year, they need to be ready for their Intermediates and Highers.

Taking into account holidays, prelims and other events, this represents little more than 30 weeks. 30 weeks for those who are doing Highers, to make the jump from Standard Grade. There is no slack. Students need to be 100% committed to class work, revision and homework to succeed.

Recently a number of former S6 pupils, gave advice to the S5 and their comments are reproduced over:

S6 past and present, give good to advice

In fifth year, you tend to relax too much with exams because you know you have another year to resit them, try to avoid that!

Rhona Maitland (past pupil)

Spend a couple of hours a week just looking over coursework, even if its spending some time reading a book, newspapers or looking through notes and jotters. In the long run, it would help as the information goes into your head gradually, and you've become, without too much effort, clever!

Sian Taylor (Past Pupil)



Work Hard from the start, it will everything easier, remember S5 is much harder than Standard Grade –manage your time well! **Rebecca MacKellar (Past pupil)**

Don't put your work off, just do it! It's for less than a year and it's worth it in the end. **Lucy MacMillan (Past pupil)**

If you work harder in S5, then it gives you a chance to to try different things in S6. **Kayleigh Marie Woods (Past pupil)**

Just don't leave things to the last minute!
Craig Griggs (Past pupil)



That is not to say that pupils should not play hard too.

Part of a young person's health and wellbeing is keeping a balance. Sport, music, socialising, hobbies, etc. are a vital part of this balance. However, we should always keep that balance in mind.

Attendance

Good attendance is basic to good progress at any level and in senior school in particular. Absence can be unavoidable, of course and can also involve important sporting and musical events representing the school. But nonetheless, if work is missed, we see it as the pupil's responsibility to initiate and take the necessary steps to catch up on work missed.

Here is some advice:

1. Prior to a planned absence (trip, sporting event etc.) pupils should write down the classes which will be missed on that day in their diary

They should inform their teachers and if possible they should find out what is planned for the next lesson and if there is work they can undertake to keep up. They should make a note of this.

2. Following an absence, a child is expected to find out/check what they have missed on their return and get notes and work copied up from peers if applicable.

Linking with point 1 above, they should also ask their teacher what additional exercises, homework etc. they have missed and should ensure that they complete recommended work.

Pupils should not wait to be told to do this.

3. During extended absence, it may be appropriate for parents to ask whether staff can provide alternative or additional work. Under these circumstances, parents should contact their son or daughter's guidance teacher. Parents should bear in mind, that collation of extra work can take a little time and generally is only of use during absence of more than a few days.¹

It should be noted, that under certain circumstances however, such as unauthorised holiday absence (see below); it may not always be the case that staff can provide extra work for pupils.²

Therefore, in conclusion, having initiated the catch-up process, should a child need help to complete a task or require work to be marked, staff will, of course be on hand to lend assistance.

¹ As a general rule, pupils should have resources organised in such a way that ongoing or current work is taken home in school bags. This way, pupils can be prepared for all lessons by revising regularly and checking previous work prior to their next lesson. It also means that for a longer absence, pupils do have work at home they can be going over

² (Unauthorised holiday absence. Pupils are expected to be in school during term time unless for reasons of health or family concerns. Should a pupil take extra days holiday during the term, we are instructed to categorise this as "unauthorised" absence.

Assessment, Targets and keeping an eye on things:

As a school, we seek to provide information to pupils, parents and staff to assist in the aim of improving the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process and in raising attainment.

The purposes of assessment relate to the intended audience:

Teachers will use the assessment process as an evaluative, diagnostic and formative tool to provide evidence of pupil attainment and progress, to inform Learning and Teaching approaches and pupil targets

Pupils should view the assessment process as a motivating experience which takes place within the overall context of a supportive school. Pupils should make use of feedback, in all its forms to inform their learning targets for the improvement of their own learning.

Parents should expect feedback on their son or daughter's progress which provides them with strategies for improvement and how they can support their children in this partnership

Targets:

For National Qualifications, Intermediates and Highers we use statistical information to give pupils attainment targets – grades they should be aiming for as a minimum and by monitoring and tracking progress towards these attainment targets, we can support and advise staff, pupils and parents of any concerns. The accompanying leaflet '*Pupil Support leaflet for Parents*' also gives more information on tracking, support and follow-up.

Parents will receive further information from pupil Reports which will provide information on progress following the Prelims in February. The parents' night in March will allow for discussion between parents and teachers.

Developments in Assessment:

The school is continuing to embed learning & teaching approaches under the "Assessment is for Learning" (Aifl) banner which aid better achievement and learning. These currently include:

- **Formative Assessment** : The use of **Self and Peer-Assessment** can assist pupils progress towards these targets which have been set by themselves and/or teachers and helps to make pupils' learning more effective.
- **Learning Styles** : There is an increasing body of evidence about the nature of learning styles and their overall significance for the teaching and learning process. We have an ongoing programme to train pupils and staff in identifying preferred learning styles and how to make use of this in learning.

- **Questioning** : A key finding has been that **waiting-time** is significant and that teachers need to allow at least three or four seconds before intervening after a question has been asked. The school is continuing to develop this and other strategies through CPD .
- **Lesson structure** : lessons are structured so that purpose, context and outcome are made clear to pupils and that, as a result, they can work towards a set of learning targets devised either by the teacher or by the pupils themselves within this overall context.

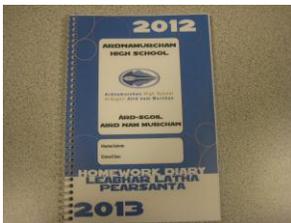
Doing your best - Setting the example

For senior students, setting a good example to the younger pupils is a hugely important role. There are a number of ways in which S4, S5 and S6 can support the school ethos by setting a good example; these include, being in dress code, being seen to work hard in classes, becoming involved in sporting and other school activities, helping the younger ones if they are upset, or need help and for the S6, becoming buddies and supporting younger pupils in classes.



A former Maths class say farewell to their S6 volunteer, Rebecca Stace,

Homework



Homework is an integral part of the life and work of Ardnamurchan High School. It plays a large part in the life of the pupil and is a means of communication and continuity between school and home. However, for senior students engaging with homework, being reliable with deadlines and proactive with revision and learning makes the difference between reaching potential and disappointment.

At this level, homework may involve more challenging pieces of work with longer timescales for completion and hence, greater responsibility for managing time. Pupils who are up for the challenge of doing their best should not be surprised that they are given deadlines which span a holiday period.

Good time management and use of our Homework Diaries is key to keeping up with the pace and tasks designed to challenge and strengthen our young people's skills and knowledge.

S6 think that about two hours a night through the week is reasonable for homework, ongoing revision and learning. They also think it is important to use their own learning styles while working or revising. Ask your child about learning styles!

Study Skills:

Study skills and learning styles is an area which we revisit regularly to help pupils and staff. An excerpt from our "Passport to Success" shows some highlights:

Identify Your Learning Style

Take the information you are given in class/ in books/internet and reshape it into a form that suits you:



- Visual learners – seeing pictures, colour coding, use symbols, create own pictures
- Auditory learners- say work out loud, listen to instrumental music, record notes onto CD and play back, make up songs
- Kinaesthetic learners- walk about while learning, do actions

How To revise

You must revise to be successful. You must be an active learner.

- Understand – read, identify main themes and details and summarise
- Memorise – put what you now understand into long term memory by using visual or other memory techniques
- Revise – self testing, reinforcing, revisiting, repeating



S6, independent study and taking responsibility

S5 pupils are expected to take 5 subjects and fill their timetable.



S6 students may limit their choice to 4 subjects and keep a free column for independent study and other aspects to school responsibility. S6 students can choose flexible study options available through the Open University, Telford College, the Highland Council Open Learning provision, or through the on-line courses available through Heriot Watt University, called "Scholar"



These options require considerable responsibility and independent study on behalf of the students and provide a bridge to their future Higher education experiences where they will receive considerably less direct teaching and monitoring of whether work is done or not. It also allows course choices which we are not currently able to offer as taught lessons or classes.

Each student will be allocated a Mentor for their courses, either here at AHS, or on-line.

Open and Distance Learning for S6 is overseen by Mrs Taylor, Depute Head, but it is important that Students monitor their own deadlines and keep up to date with all work.

Advanced Highers: For students who have been successful with their Higher courses, they may choose to continue a course of study of Advanced Higher in one or more subject.

These courses also demand a considerable degree of self study and motivation. For a number of subjects, depending on staffing, we are able to offer teacher support with contact and tutorial periods in the timetable.

The screenshot shows the SQA website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Low Graphics', 'Accessibility', and 'Terms & Conditions', along with an 'A-Z Index' link. Below this, a breadcrumb trail reads 'HOME > NQ > General Pages > Introducing Advanced Higher'. The main content area features the SQA logo and a section titled 'You are in: National Qualifications'. Underneath, there is a 'Subjects' section with a dropdown menu labeled '-Select a subject area-' and a 'GO' button. To the right, there is a section titled 'Introducing Advanced Higher' with a brief description: 'Advanced Highers are, as the name suggests, advanced qualifications. They are usually taken in the sixth year at school or at college. People who take Advanced Highers have normally passed Highers. Advanced Highers are National Courses. They are usually made up of three National Units and an external assessment — normally an examination or project.' A small image of students is visible in the bottom right corner of the screenshot.

It is important to realise, however, this does not entail a fully teacher taught provision, but rather supported study. We have been successfully increasing the range of such courses in recent years with English, Maths, Biology, Geography, Art, Music and Business Management being recent successful provision.

Useful links:

SQA and Advanced Higher:

<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/13813.html>

Scholar:

<http://scholar.hw.ac.uk/sco.html>

Open University

<http://www.open.ac.uk/yass/index.php>

Next steps

Careers

Careers education in S5/6 will focus on the following areas:

- **Awareness of self**
 - To use an awareness of their own lifestyle aspirations to review possible choices.
 - To draft a written personal statement and present their skills positively.
 - To explain their own process of career planning to date to others.
 - To identify career management skills requiring further development.
 - To anticipate personal changes for five years ahead that might impact on career choice.
 - To demonstrate an awareness of equal opportunities in their personal choices.

- **Awareness of opportunity**
 - To understand the importance of lifelong learning.
 - To investigate social and moral issues at work.
 - To discuss financial implications of different personal choices.
 - To anticipate future decisions likely to be required in the short and long term.

- **Understanding career decision making**
 - To identify the impact of desired lifestyle and significant others on career decision making.
 - To recognise the need for balance between work, leisure, family and community roles.
 - To consider levels of risk taking in decision making and the extent to which career decision making rests on uncertainty.

- **Understanding transitions**
 - To produce a CV.
 - To demonstrate the skills required in making applications to work, college or university.
 - To anticipate ways in which new support networks may be built post school.

Useful websites are:

<http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/>

<http://planitplus.net/>

<http://www.ucas.ac.uk/parents/>

UCAS

If your son or daughter is hoping to go to University in 2014 they shall be in the process of completing their application. This is done online on the UCAS website. The site can be found on www.ucas.ac.uk and will give you all the information you need to understand the process and support your son/daughter. If you click on "parents" you can access the information and also register for a free parents' guide.

Update:

- Potential applicants will be registering with UCAS and need to complete the following sections: Personal Details, Choices, Education and Employment.
- They should also be working on their Personal Statements for the application.
- You need to encourage your son/daughter to speak to teachers, employers who know them well and ask them to pass any relevant comments to Mr Patterson for their references.
- There is always competition for university places so make sure the application is a priority.
- Deadline is January 2014 but we would encourage applications to be in as soon as possible from mid -September.

Guidance and Support

The Guidance team are key to the smooth running of the school and the welfare of our pupils.

Here is our team with their responsibilities

An excerpt from our school policy on support is included here:

*Guidance at Ardnamurchan High School is the responsibility of **all staff** with specific responsibility lying with the PT Support team. Guidance is regarded as having a key role in promoting the ethos of our school as a caring community. Our school rules expect all pupils and staff to have respect for themselves and others, and for their environment. We believe that through an effective Guidance programme we can encourage pupils to learn from their achievements and mistakes, and to develop as individuals. A child's Guidance teacher is the first point of contact for pupils and parents who may have difficulties or concerns.*

	Mr Simon Patterson is currently* in charge of Guidance and Support, is Guidance teacher for Beith and Luis houses and is a member of the SMT.
	Mrs MacArthur is Guidance teacher for Coll and Darach Houses and has additional responsibility for Health and Enterprise

**Update – Mr Patterson has now been appointed Depute Head Teacher and his Guidance duties will be re-evaluated.*

Ask your child which house they are in so that you can identify who their guidance teacher is!

We very much hope you find this booklet useful in understanding what your son/daughter's S4, S5 and 6 will be like. If you have any comments, or additions you would like to see, please let us know.

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