



Together Growing Succeeding

The Gordon Schools Newsletter (1)

Session 2023-24

October 2023

Hello to all our Parents & Carers, Families and Pupils,

Information for you:

- **Welcome**
- **TGS Parents in Partnership 23-24**
- **Our School Improvement Priorities for 2023-24-25-26**
- **SQA coursework 2023-24**
- **School uniform and dress code: survey responses**
- **Free School Meals & School Clothing Grants**
- **Session 2023-24 key calendar dates**
- **Vaping: Support for families**
- **P.E. Newsletter**
- **The Gordon Schools Guidance Team Update**
- **Mobile phones and Responsible social media use**
- **Contacting TGS & Accessing Aberdeenshire Council Services**

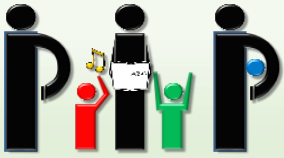


Welcome

Hello and welcome to our first Newsletter of this school session, 2023-24. We hope that you find the information in and accompanying this newsletter supportive and helpful. Our School Vision is 'Together Growing Succeeding' and it is in that spirit we are communicating with you to try to improve the lives of our pupils, families and the communities which we are a part of and serve. If you have any suggestions for items you wish to see included, please do get in touch using the contact information at the end. We look forward to working with you during this school session.

TGS Parents in Partnership 23-24

Please think about joining our Parents in Partnership body. Meetings can be attended on-line or in-person and usually are scheduled for one hour 18:30 – 19:30. You will find all of the meeting dates in the Key Dates a little further below. You will have the opportunity to be consulted with over School policies, ask questions and support our fundraising to improve resources and facilities.



If you would like any more information or simply to e-mail our Parents in Partnership body, contact:
pipgordonschools@gmail.com

Joyce Reed (Chair); Madie Whittaker (Secretary) & Helen Kings (Treasurer)

Our School Improvement Priorities for 2023-24-25-26

Many thanks to those of you who replied to our survey to help prioritise our School Improvement Plan areas for the next three years. We were very pleased with the number of responses from families, pupils, colleagues and local stakeholders who we work with in and around Huntly. All the responses were collated to identify the top areas which people felt were most important. We have built three plans around these priorities, detailed below. We'll let you know every year how we are progressing and what our next steps are.

Plan 1:

- Develop & create opportunities for positive wellbeing outcomes to be met across our whole-School community
- Ensure consistent positive, supportive & inclusive relationships in all areas of learning
- Maximise successes and achievements, particularly for those facing most disadvantage

Plan 2

- Ensure consistent high-quality, inclusive learning, teaching & assessment
- Engage and challenges all young people, facilitate their voice
- Provide more reliable formative and summative data to support improvements, achievement & attainment

Plan 3:

- Review and restructure our curriculum to build successful outcomes for all;
- Finalise our skills framework to embed and connect it with learning for life & work in just & sustainable communities, both locally and globally

SQA coursework 2023-24

For pupils in S4, S5 and S6 this school session, the SQA have re-instated some additional coursework in many subjects, called an 'Assignment' or a 'Project'. These will be completed at various points throughout the session, depending upon the subject. The marks from these count towards the overall final SQA mark and grade that your child will receive in August 2024.

It is vital that your child is in school when these assessments take place and that if there is any preparatory work allowed, anything taken from on-line sources is clearly and explicitly referenced, to avoid 'plagiarism' (passing-off someone else's work as your own). If it is found that any coursework is not the pupil's own, then they risk losing that entire qualification. Pupils should also not use any form of artificial intelligence to aid their coursework completion. The SQA do have and use software to detect this and again, the qualification may be lost.

Please do speak with your child to ensure that they are aware of all the coursework requirements and deadlines for each subject they are taking this session. Pupils will receive a booklet shortly from the SQA via ourselves around their coursework requirements that will reinforce the above. The following link will take you to the SQA website for learner support: [Learner support for National Qualifications in 2023-24 - SQA](#) Many thanks for your cooperation with this.

School uniform and dress code: survey responses

We conducted a family survey at the end of last term around our uniform and dress code options. The Gordon Schools has a 'dress code', meaning that we have a range of options young people can wear as a part of their uniform here. Dress code and uniform are a School expectation. They are a social contract with families attending TGS, who have the responsibility for sourcing uniform and clothing their young people each day. We want young people's dress to be smart and safe.

Please see below the results of the family survey we conducted at the end of the last school session. We received 115 responses to the survey, and this is between 20% - 25% of our parent/carer body. Many thanks to those who did reply, it is much appreciated.

Will you support TGS by ensuring your child/children come to school wearing dress code? Yes or No: **115 responses of which 110 were 'Yes' and 5 were 'No'**

Do you want to be informed if your child / children is not wearing uniform from our Dress Code?

Yes or No: **115 responses of which 76 were 'Yes' and 39 were 'No'**

Would you like to suggest any changes to our current dress code?

Yes or No: **115 responses of which 44 were 'Yes' and 71 were 'No'**

Responses received were very varied and mentioned:

- the costs associated with uniform at a time when many families are finding finance an issue

- the need to be sensitive to pupils with sensory issues in terms of their clothing
- the need for our suppliers to keep their website and stock up-to-date
- some wanted hoodies and others did not; similarly with blazers
- some wanted smart quality black shorts for the summer
- some made the link between uniform and expectations of dress code in the workplace

Are you happy with the different places you can get uniform items from?

Yes or No: **115 responses of which 101 were 'Yes' and 14 were 'No'**

Responses received mentioned:

- the quality and durability of some suppliers items
- high costs and lack of choice
- issues with getting accurate sizing

We will continue to work with our suppliers around keeping websites up-to-date and ask that you support the School by keeping your child/ren as smartly dressed as possible, using our TGS Dress Code and Uniform options.

Our Dress Code options:

black polo; black jumper; black sweatshirt; black hoodie; black blazer (School coat of arms added by supplier). Some pupils also prefer a white polo; white shirt (with/without a School tie). Trousers or skirt in black, thick material (**not** see-through leggings, crop tops, short Lycra-style shorts).

Current Suppliers are:

- **My Clothing (online)** [Price List – My Clothing](#)
- **Gordon Rural Action (Huntly): Uniform Exchange**

For a donation or free items of pre-loved, second-hand uniform as well as occasionally some new Uniform donated by a supermarket supplier.

- **Academy Uniforms (online)** (You need to register with them) www.academyuniformsltd.co.uk (more expensive, different quality from 'My Clothing')

- **TGS Reception**

For black polo shirts and ties only

Free School Meals & School Clothing Grants

Families who are on a low income but not currently in receipt of free school meals (triggering a clothing grant) can check entitlement by completing the following online form:

[Free School Meals / School Clothing Grant Application Form](#)

Session 2023-24 key calendar dates

Please see below for an outline of key dates this session.

You can find and download our full Family Calendar, that includes dates for Reports, school trips and Parents' Meetings, from the TGS website.

30 October	Pupils and Staff return to TGS for Term 2 (Monday)
14 November	TGS Careers Fair 13:00 – 18:00 in-person at School TGS Parents in Partnership Meeting 18:30 in School Library or online; e-mail: pipgordonschools@gmail.com for a link
15 November	S1/2 Parents' Meeting (virtual)
16 & 17 Nov	Staff In-Service days: School closed to pupils both days
Wk beg 20 Nov	Flu immunisations at TGS
23 November	S1/2 Parents' Meeting (in person) 17:00 – 19:30
05 December	S4/5/6 Parents' Meeting (virtual) 17:00 – 19:30
13 December	S4/5/6 Parents' Meeting (in person) 17:00 – 19:30
19 December	Planned S1/2/3 Christmas Dance at TGS
20 December	Planned S4/5/6 Christmas Dance at TGS
22 December	Last day in School for pupils before Christmas holidays End of Term 2
08 January	Pupils and Staff return to TGS for Term 3 (Monday)
11 January	S2 (into S3) Families Curriculum Evening at TGS 19:00
15 January – 31 January	Senior Phase Prelim Diet begins / ends (all pupils attend school as normal during this time)
23 January	TGS Parents in Partnership Meeting 18:30 online only; e-mail: pipgordonschools@gmail.com for a link
27 January	Saturday TGS Parents in Partnership Coffee Morning in the Stewart's Hall, Huntly
30 January	Primary 7 (into S1) Information Evening (1)
1 February	S3 (into S4) Families Curriculum Evening at TGS 19:00 S4 & S5 (into S5 and S6) Families Curriculum Evening 20:00
7 February	S3 Parents' Meeting (virtual) 17:00 – 19:30
8 February	Last day in School for pupils before mid-term break
9 February – 14 February	Pupils off School for Cluster Occasional day (9 th), Aberdeenshire holiday (12 th) and two staff In-Service days (13 th and 14 th)
15 February	Pupils return to TGS after mid-term break S3 Parents' Meeting (in-person) 17:00 – 19:30
5 March	TGS Parents in Partnership Meeting 18:30 in School Library or online; e-mail: pipgordonschools@gmail.com for a link
28 March	Last day in School for pupils before Easter holiday
29 (Friday) – 14 April	Good Friday & School Easter holidays

15 April	Pupils and Staff return to TGS for Term 4 (Monday)
22 April – 3 June	SQA Exam diet begins. S4/5/6 Pupils required in School only for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher Exams & to complete any outstanding National 2, 3, and 4 Coursework.
23 April	TGS Parents in Partnership Meeting 18:30 in School Library or online; e-mail: pipgordonschools@gmail.com for a link
6 May	School closed to all for May Day holiday
29 May	TGS Sports Day during the morning
3 June	Occasional Day & local Huntly holiday (Monday)
4 June	Planned new Timetable begins for all pupils (previous S1 – S5) S4 and S5 pupils return to School after SQA exam diet for new S5 and S6 timetabled classes
11 June	TGS Parents in Partnership Annual General Meeting
24 June	Primary 7 transition day (½ of the year group)
25 June	Primary 7 transition day (other ½ of the year group)
26 June – 28 June	Primary 7 transition days: whole year group on the Wednesday, Thursday and Friday
27 June	Primary 7 (into S1) Information Evening (2)
2 July	BGE Celebration of Learning Ceremonies S1, S2 and S3
3 July	TGS Prize Giving in the evening 19:30
5 July	Last pupil day of Term 4 in School (Friday)
6 July – 20 August	Summer break (six weeks)
6 August	SQA Results Certificates issued to pupils
19 August	In-Service day: no pupil attendance – staff colleagues only
20 August	Term 1, Session 2024-25 begins for all pupils



Vaping: Support for families

Vaping has very quickly become a huge national problem. As will all things in society, this is now beginning to be mirrored in schools, with TGS no exception. Together with this Newsletter, we are also sending out a very informative and supportive document that we ask you read through with your child, whether they vape or not. The BBC News link below may also be interesting reading.

[Vapes '95% safer' than cigarettes messaging backfired - BBC News](#)

As a School we are providing education to pupils about the health and environmental dangers associated with vaping; we are carrying out spot-checks on toilets and other areas where this takes place and; we are working with Trading Standards and Police Scotland to identify local places where pupils are purchasing vaping equipment.

We need your support to reinforce the message around the health dangers, addiction, financial costs and environmental damage that vaping is already causing.

North East Community Care: Employment Opportunity below for Parents/Carers and any pupils who are 18 years old

**Real compassion.
Real careers.**

**We're hiring extraordinary people
to do the everyday things which mean
so much to our clients.**

Choose a career with us in Aberdeenshire
and be you could be extraordinary too.

**To apply call 01888 569 183 or
search our roles at www.cch.careers**



P.E. Newsletter

Our P.E. staff colleagues have also produced a newsletter that you will receive. We're delighted that we are back up-and-running with extra-curricular activities, as well as regular fun and competitive events, together with opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles around sports and health & wellbeing.

The Gordon Schools Guidance Team Update

The Guidance Team are delighted to share some positive updates with you, particularly regarding our recent move to a collaborative Team office within the School building. This change marks a significant step forward in enhancing our support for students and fostering a consistent supportive environment.



One of our primary focus areas this term has been addressing critical concerns relevant to our students' well-being. Across all year groups, we have been actively engaging in open and honest discussions about the rising issue of vaping. By imparting knowledge and facilitating dialogue, we aim to equip our students with the information and skills necessary to make informed choices. There is family information accompanying this Newsletter to support discussions.

Our S2 students have been delving into comprehensive Relationship and Sexual Health Education, fostering a healthy and respectful understanding of these important aspects of life. Moving into S3, the spotlight is on Mental Health. Recognising the importance of mental well-being.

In S4, our focus shifted towards a thorough exploration of cannabis use, ensuring that students are equipped with accurate information to make responsible decisions regarding their health. This year, we've taken a fresh approach to Personal and Social Education (PSE) for our S5 students. We of hosting several engaging speakers, including representatives from Aberdeenshire employability programmes, Aberdeen mountain rescue team, and higher education institutions. These sessions aim to broaden our students' horizons, offering insights into various career paths and opportunities beyond the classroom.



Life is precious

Our S6 students have received extensive support and guidance in navigating the complex landscape of UCAS applications and personal statements.



Mobile phones and Responsible social media use

In order to support teachers with learning, assessment & teaching in School, we ask that if you need to speak directly with your child during the hours of learning (08:55 – 10:55 / 11:15 – 13:00 & 14:00 – 15:45), please contact our School Office colleagues (number below), who can facilitate this for you rather than phoning your child's mobile phone. Our Mobile Phone policy gives teachers the discretion over whether it is appropriate for phones to be available for pupil use during learning.

Irresponsible social media use is a growing issue and causing unhappiness and breakdowns in relationships between pupils. A further worrying trend is the number of fake sites and social media accounts that claim to represent The Gordon Schools, but by their vile, abusive and disgusting content, clearly do not. These target both pupils and staff colleagues and we are working with Police Scotland and online support organisations to combat these.

There are however, many pupils who choose to follow these sites as well as the few who set them up. Again, we would ask that you speak with your child around their online presence and ensure that they are aware of the hurt and damage to everyone in our community that is being caused by irresponsible and inappropriate use. For support around this, organisations such as Childline provide valuable resources:

[Staying safe online | Childline](#)

Contacting TGS & Accessing Aberdeenshire Council Services

Please either download the 'MyAberdeenshire' app for your phone / device or register on-line at 'MyAberdeenshire' to access services provided by Aberdeenshire Council.

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/my>

Services include iPay payments ('School payments' including paying for school meals, services and activities); 'Parents Portal'; School Closures and Term dates, for example.

Please use the following to contact The Gordon Schools:

The Gordon Schools
Huntly
AB54 4SE

E-mail: gordonschools.aca@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Phone (available 08:00 – 17:00): 01466 405 990

You will be given two options:

- Option 1: To report an absence (only between 08:00 – 17:00)
- Option 2: All other enquiries

From 17:00-08:00 there is a voicemail service for you to leave a message (absence or otherwise) and we will respond to this as soon as we can.

Web: <http://www.gordonschools.aberdeenshire.sch.uk>

Finally...

On behalf of everyone at The Gordon Schools, take care & very best wishes. Phil

Phil Gaiter

Rector

