



# St Thomas of Aquin's High School In Focus Newsletter ~ April 2016



## Message from the Head Teacher

Dear Parent/Carer

I extend a warm welcome to the spring edition of In Focus. The previous term and the start of this term have been demanding for staff and pupils as we all work towards the conclusion of practical and internal assessments as well as folio pieces. Now that the Easter Holidays have finished there will be less than 3 weeks before exam leave begins for S4, S5, and S6 pupils and the examinations start on 4 May. The whole school community extends our best wishes to all of our young people sitting their National Exams and indeed to those pupils who have already sat their practical exams in Music and Drama. The school will be bidding farewell to all of our S6 pupils and some S5 and S4 pupils, and we wish them every success and happiness as they leave St Thomas'. There will be a Leavers Mass for pupils intending to leave St Thomas' this year at The Sacred Heart, Lauriston Place on Thursday 28 April at 7.00pm. Pupils, families, and friends are welcome to Mass and afterwards to a Ceilidh organised by The Parent Council.

There have been a number of changes to staffing since our last edition of In Focus. Miss Marshall, Deputy Head Teacher, has left us to take up the post of Deputy Head Teacher at St Mungo's RC High school in Falkirk. I would like to thank Miss Marshall for all the hard work and positive impact she has made at the school during her time as Deputy Head Teacher. Mme Isabelle Jean-Pierre will take the Acting Deputy Head Teacher role in Miss Marshall's place. Mr Rooney, Teacher of English, has left to take up an English Teacher position in Braes High School in Falkirk. Mr Martinez, temporary Teacher of Spanish and French, was successful in achieving a permanent teaching position at Leith Academy. We welcome Ms Annabell Luque Ordonez as a temporary replacement for Mr Martinez in Modern Languages. Mrs Mackay, School Support Assistant at St Thomas' for over 25 years, retired at the end of January and we extend our best wishes to her and her family for a well-earned restful retirement. In her place we welcome Mrs Lori Ferrante who started with us after the Easter holidays. We wish our colleagues every happiness and success in their new schools.

On Friday 29 January St Thomas' welcomed Archbishop Cushley back to the school for the celebration of our Patronal Feast. After Mass in Sacred Heart, he joined the S6 Leadership Team to learn about their charity

work planned for session 2015-16. Head Girl, Sarah Wilson, and Head Boy, Alistair Mitchell explained the £1400 they raised to support the Fresh Start homeless programme through planned events in December.

The season of Lent and our Easter celebration have come to end this year and on behalf of the community of St Thomas' I hope you and your loved ones had a very happy and joyful Easter.

Since the last edition of In Focus, St Thomas of Aquin's RC High School had an article written about it in an Edinburgh Newspaper. To support the whole school community in moving forward we welcome Mrs Peigi Macarthur, former Head Teacher of Portobello High School, as a supporter of the school. Mrs Macarthur has already visited the school and met with staff and pupils and we all look forward to working with her to promote the improvement agenda here at St Thomas'.

**T Hughes**  
**Head Teacher**

## SQA Exams.

The first SQA exam for pupils starts on 4 May and the last finishes on Friday 3 June. The last day for the majority of S4, S5, and S6 pupils is Friday 29 April. Study leaves starts for all pupils in S4/S5/S6 on Monday 2 May. If candidates are studying predominantly National 4 in S4, where there is no final examination, there is an expectation that they will be in school following their normal timetable.

## Exam Timetables

Individual timetables and last-minute information about the exam arrangements for 2016 will be with pupils and parents in the following week. Candidates can register with the SQA before 18 July to receive their result by text or email. The SQA have produced a leaflet entitled *relaxaminations* which details information for pupils and parents regarding the 2016 exam diet and can be found on the SQA website. Pupils will receive results by text or email by 8.00am on the 9 August if they sign up to this service. All pupils will receive their results by first class mail on 9 August. Mr Santini will be school on the 9 and 10 August to meet with pupils to discuss their results. Candidates should ensure that if there has been any change in name, address or personal details they should notify the school immediately.

### Exceptional Circumstances Consideration

If a medical condition, bereavement or domestic circumstance arises that interferes with a candidate's ability to access an exam, or a situation that has led to an adverse performance, a candidate may be eligible for exceptional circumstances consideration. By its very definition any medical situation that affects a candidate's performance on the day has to be exceptional or serious. Minor ailments such as headaches, colds and sickness would not fall into this category. The deadline for a request submission is 10 working days after the examination in question.

### Post Results Service

Information about this service and the school's policy on this can be found on St Thomas of Aquin's website.

### 33 period week

The ballots cast in the vote for the preferred 33 period week model were been counted in March by Mr Hughes, Ms Gardiner, and Ms Statham. In order to give a fair weighting to the voting process for key stakeholders each block of votes (Staff, Pupils, Parents) were taken individually and the majority of that block of votes would count on its own without being added to votes in the other blocks.

The results of the vote are follows:

	Model 2	Model 2A	Model 2B
Pupil	121	150	302
Parents	111	47	82
Staff	18	12	10

1. Pupil Vote is for Model 2B
2. Parent Vote is for Model 2
3. Staff Vote is for Model 2

### Key Dates

- S6 Leavers Mass: Thursday 28 April at 7pm Sacred Heart Lauriston
- Last Day for S4-6: Friday 29 April
- In-service Day Thursday 5 May
- S3 Parents' Evening Wednesday 25 May
- S5/6 Induction: week beginning 6 June
- New Timetable begins Monday 6 June

## The preferred model for the 33 period week is therefore Model 2

### Model 2 33 period week

Monday - Thursday	1	2	Interval	3	4	5	Lunch	6	7
	8.40 - 9-30	9.30 - 10.20	20 mins	10.40 - 11.30	11.30 - 12.20	12.20 - 1.10	40 mins	1.50 - 2..40	2.40 - 3.30
Friday	1	2	Interval	3	4	5			
	8.40 - 9-30	9.30 - 10.20	20 mins	10.40 - 11.30	11.30 - 12.20	12.20 - 1.10			

### **U15 Girls' Basketball Scottish Cup Champions 2016**

The U15 Girls' Basketball Team have won the Scottish cup for the first time in the history of our school entering the girl's competition. It was a truly amazing performance by the girls as they defeated Arbroath High School 55-46. Just like the boys that won the cup in 2014 they are coached by a former pupil Lana Buzuk. She started coaching three years ago in her sixth year at St Thomas' and continues to coach at school, as well as for Boroughmuir Blaze, whilst continuing her studies at Edinburgh University. Coach Buzuk's preparation and clear game plan ensured that everyone in the team executed their role to perfection. St Thomas' controlled the tempo of the game from the outset and the girl's performance was fluent, dynamic, and composed throughout.

The Cup winning squad were: Pollyanna Storie (Captain), Khená Dungu, Eilidh Turner, Rosa Williamson, Natalie Wilson, Elif Yildirim, Nica Villaester-Watt, Sophie Evans, Kirstie Cronin and Nicole Holburn.

St Thomas basketball is going from strength to strength as all of our teams did well this season. All of our teams progressed through the group stages and into the knock-out stages of the competition. The U15 and senior boys reached the quarter finals Scottish cup. It is a true testament to the coaching academy that was established eleven years ago that all basketball teams are doing well and now all coached by current and former pupils: Aidan Haughey, Molly Agab Mckey, Emilia Rossi, Ronan Mullan, and Lana Buzuk.



Well done to all the players and coaches for a fantastic season, and thanks for all of the continued support from the parents and the staff at St Thomas'.

<http://www.basketballscotland.co.uk/2016/03/23/report-2016-girls-school-cup-finals/>



### **Visit to the Scottish Parliament**

This term, the Higher Modern Studies class enjoyed a visit to the Scottish Parliament. Students took part in a workshop where they were asked to take on the role of committees, scrutinizing a potential bill. After that, they toured the parliament – getting to see the impressive debating chamber and the various committee and meeting rooms around the building. (photo attached)



### **S3 History Visit to the Scottish Parliament**

On the 28 January, Rose Inglis, India Lloyd, and Kirstie Cronin of S3

History, had the opportunity to speak at a Great War commemoration event at the Scottish Parliament. The students were welcomed by the Edinburgh Quaker Society and they spoke about the experience of Conscientious Objectors in the First World War - a topic they had been learning about in class. Kirstie recalls 'Rose, India and myself really enjoyed our experience at the Parliament. It is an experience we will never forget.'



### **S2 Modern Studies visit to the Filmhouse**

In January, a group of S2 pupils had the chance to see the documentary 'He Named Me Malala' at the Filmhouse. The film explores the life and activism of the incredible Malala Yousafzai. Pupils and staff both found the film very interesting as it makes close links with our current Modern Studies topic of 'Human Rights'

## The World is my Country

The work of Ms Hunter's S3 class formed part of the Exhibition: The World is My Country organised by The Scottish Storytelling Centre in collaboration with the Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre. It aimed to celebrate, in stories and pictures, the people and movements that opposed the First World War.



## S3 Modern Studies

The S3 Modern Studies class has been studying the United States as a part of their World Powers unit. As well as investigating America's influence on other countries, the class has been particularly interested in following the unfolding presidential elections. On 16 March, the class took to the streets to survey the public of Edinburgh about their knowledge of American politics and their views on the presidential candidates. They completed 200 surveys and had a very enjoyable morning talking to different people about their views.

## STEM Project- Pupil's choice Award

The S2 Go4Set team won the Pupil's Choice Award at Heriot-Watt University for their STEM project. For the last 10 weeks the pupils have been working to develop a train station of the future. They had to complete a lot of research and produce posters, a report and a model. The group also had a guided tour of Selex ES who had supplied mentors to help with the project. They have worked extremely hard over the past three months and we are extremely proud of the work they have produced.



## Mandarin at St Thomas of Aquin's



This year on Monday, 8 February, St Thomas of Aquin's High School enthusiastically celebrated the year of the monkey. This is the ninth in the twelve-year cycle and will next be celebrated in 2028. Our Mandarin club takes place on a Monday and pupils give up their lunch break to learn and appreciate the Chinese language. Our Chinese language assistant, Xufen supports Mr Montenegro in guiding

the class through useful vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar and conversation.

As part of the New Year celebrations the club made lanterns to decorate the languages department, and organised a dragon parade that travelled through the corridors of the school. The colourful and exciting display featured long dragons, masks, music and yet more lanterns; as well as all the members of the Mandarin club.



In the lunch break, various workshops were held in the Modern Languages department. The Mandarin club pupils talked to other school pupils and staff members about the Chinese culture and taught them simple mandarin such as numbers and calligraphy. Delicious dumplings were also served to the visitors to sample the richness of the Chinese cuisine. The event was very well attended and even had to



be extended into class time in order to get round all of those who came. It has raised awareness of the Chinese culture in the school and has certainly encouraged many more young people to learn this beautiful language. James Rennie S5 who wrote this article was awarded a grant to study Mandarin in China this coming Summer

as he has been a very active member of the Mandarin club. We wish James all the very best in this immersion language course in Taijin.

## UK Intermediate Mathematics Challenge

### Gold Certificate and Best in School

Felix Barley

### Silver certificate

Basma Khan, Peter Lazarowicz, Sean McCrone,  
Fergal O'Donohoe Mark Robertson, Natalia Rucka  
Emma Simpson, Moray Stiven, Oliwier Woroniecki  
Moray Stiven

### Bronze certificate

Mark Brooks, Leon Charlton, Kirstie Cronin, Anna Flynn,  
Mikolay Figiel, Michael Gray, Joanna Hedley, Joseph Jarvis,  
Jack Lindsay, Julia Magnucka, Caragh McLeod,  
Caitlin Midgley, Clodagh Mullan, Sian Phillips,  
Juliet Pinto, Stephen Rennie, Ollie Slater,  
Jack Stephenson. Sinead Thin, Sarah Thomson,  
Rosa Williamson, Killian Willis-Cleary

## Duke of Edinburgh Update

Congratulations to the following pupils who have achieved their Duke of Edinburgh Award since the last newsletter.

D of E Bronze Award

- Sula castle and Michael Gray

D of E Silver Award

- Matthew McNairney

Some pictures from the recent Silver Bothy Training weekend. Well done teams.



## Duke of Edinburgh Gold Team

Also well done to our Gold team - Lydia Dowling-Clarke, Lauren Stephenson, Joanna Thomson, Ittihad Ahmed and Matthew Deponio – who successfully completed a demanding Gold practice expedition earlier this month. Their Qualifier will take place up north from 25 – 29 March starting at Poolewe and finishing at Inveralligan.

43 S3 pupils will be out in the Pentland hills for their practice and qualifying expeditions in April and May respectively. Look out for an update in June to see who has achieved their Bronze Award.

## Library

This has been a busy term in the Library, with celebrations of Robert Burns' life and poetry in January, Fairtrade Fortnight in February and International Women's Day in March. Other activities have included -

- **Book Award shadowing:** members of S1-3 Book group and other pupils in school have been reading and rating books nominated for various book awards. Our choice for the Scottish Children's Book Awards was Danny Weston's The Piper, which went on to become the overall winner in the 12-16 age group. Pupils are still reviewing the graphic novels and Manga titles nominated for the Stan Lee Excelsior Award, which closes in late April. Thanks to a donation from Parent Council, we've been able to buy these books for our school library and hope to follow up the experience with a related author visit in the months ahead.
- **World Book Day:** to mark the occasion, all of our pupils received a £1 book voucher to spend on a book of their choice. S1 & S2 pupils also enjoyed a 'guess the book by the props' activity (artefacts were used to suggest book titles) and related quiz. The usual opportunity for pupils to 'dress up as your favourite book character' was postponed this year due to the concurrent fancy-dress Fun Run. Ms Nealon's bid to become a World Book Night 'giver' was successful, and the school will soon receive free copies of the books Am I Normal Yet by Holly Bourne and Treachery by S J Parris to distribute to readers.
- **Teen Titles:** our pupils continue to be enthusiastic reviewers for 'Teen Titles' magazine and are currently reading through the latest batch of books, hoping to uncover the next Hunger Games or Harry Potter sensation ...

## 'Thank You' – Swish Event

On Thursday 3 December a group of S1-S6 pupils along with staff, hosted a charity Swish Event for all pupils, parents and staff. (**Swishing** refers to swapping an item or items of clothing or shoes or an accessory with friends or acquaintances).

A Big 'Thank You' to everyone who donated and brought in clothes for the event.

**£225.00 was raised on the night which was shared between 2 charities. Diabetes Scotland and The Society of St Vincent de Paul. All left over clothes were donated to Sue Ryder and a further £82.73 was raised for the charity.**



## Career Ready (PE and Dance)

A group of 24 girls from S3-5 were given the opportunity to perform a surprise Dance at the end of the Career Ready Graduation in the Perth Concert Hall on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> of March. After months of hard work, their practise really paid off as they performed exceptionally well in front of a full audience of around 1000 people! They were treated like stars for the day as they were given their own private dressing room and did dress rehearsals prior to the performance which were professionally filmed and photographed. It really was a fantastic day and I am sure that the girls will remember this event for years to come. They were a credit to the school as they all performed like professionals and they all thoroughly enjoyed their day.

### Girls involved:

#### S3

Amber Chisti, Molly-Rose Cordiner  
Sophie Cranston, Rosie Francis-Freeman  
Yoyo Gancheva, Lucy Gromett, Iona Henderson  
Tara Lyons, Honor McDonald, Claireann Mochan

Amber Maywood, Robyn Mitchell, Eilidh Thomson  
Sarah Thomson, Aysa Yildirim, Francesca Vita

#### S4

Mia Burns, Sula Castle, Erin Heatlie, Courtney Severtson

#### S5

Kimberley Anderson, Emily Harkin, Joanna Thomson  
Natalie Thomson



## Career Ready Programme 2014-2016

In August 2014 we had 8 students who embarked on the Career Ready Programme. This is an initiative supported by CEC to support young people in bridging the gap in their transition from school. Career Ready students followed a two-year enrichment programme, alongside their school curriculum, enabling students to positively and successfully progress to higher education, further education or the world of work. Each student was allocated a mentor from the business world and met in the mentor's workplace every 4 - 6 weeks during the two year programme. In October 2014, we had a launch in school inviting all of our mentors and student families into St Thomas of Aquin's High School where they met with the students and had a tour of our school – they were very impressed with the work ethic and positive ethos experienced. As well as having their own mentor students attended a series of master classes and workplace visits on some Friday afternoons during the two year programme.

A crucial part of the Career Academies programme was a four week paid internship from Monday 22nd June 15 (the last week of term) ending on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July 15. Students had to submit applications supported with references from school staff and their mentors. On return to school in August 2015 the students were very positive about their internship experience and in September 2015 there was a Celebration of Success where students give presentations of their internship experience – what they learnt, enjoyed most and the transferrable skills they can use in the future.

In the transition between Year 1 and Year 2, two of our students were invited to present to the Gogarburn Launch for Edinburgh Year 1 students and Fife Launch for S1 students. Owen Duddy (Edinburgh) and John Harvey (Fife) each presented to an audience of over 300 students and adults their experiences of the Career Ready programme in Year 1 – what they learnt, their relationship with their mentors, internship experience, challenges faced and their hopes for their futures. Owen and John were an absolute credit to themselves, their families and the school community, they articulated their experiences in a very thought provoking and professional manner.

The business opportunities available to our students were phenomenal, please see students, mentors and businesses involved.

Student	Mentor	Business
Melania Cilia	Donald Kelly	Royal Bank of Scotland
Alicia Delgado	Tansy Main	Scottish Government
Owen Duddy	Neil Gubby	Lockheed Martin
Dominic Emek	Mike Capaldi	Edinburgh Bioquarter
John Harvey	Barry Cameron	Standard Life
Ryan Leslie	Mark McFall	Change Recruitment
Caitlin Mackay	Jennifer Grant	Franklin Templeton
Talha Shahid	Scott Walker	Blackrock

The progress of the students has been monitored by GKelly School Co Ordinator, CEC Co Ordinators and Career Ready Director Anne Wexelstein and we would like to thank our parents/carers for their support during this Programme, particularly with the On Boarding Requirements in preparation for the Internships.

All students, their families and mentors completed the Programme, attending a Graduation Ceremony at Perth Concert Hall on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2016. We were also joined by 24 students from S3 – S5 who executed a superb surprise performance and finale to the Graduation – thank you to all the students and Mrs Fiona Gibson who choreographed and supported the students. It was a true celebration of success with over 300 students graduating across Scotland and Mark Beaumont (Broadcaster and Adventurer) was guest speaker with inspirational stories of his experiences from school to record breaking endeavours in Africa and around the world.

On behalf of our school community, Congratulations to all of our Career Ready Graduates.

GKelly Pupil Support Leader and Career Ready Co Ordinator.



Left to Right, Ryan Leslie, Dominic Emek, Owen Duddy, Talha Shahid, John Harvey, Alicia Delgado and Caitlin Mackay. Missing for the photo is Melania Cilia.

Owen Duddy at Gogarburn Edinburgh Launch



John Harvey at Fife Launch



### Ellie and Cameron Armstrong Memorial Fun Run

As part of the CSLA and SCQF level 6 Sports leadership course, the sports leaders organised this whole school event. On Friday 11 March, the whole school came together to participate in the 2016 Fun Run around The Meadows. On behalf of the Sports Leadership team, we would like to thank everybody who participated for all their effort, it was greatly appreciated as staff and pupils together helped to make the day a huge success. We had a lot of fun that day and there were some very competitive athletes. Please see opposite for the top 10.

support for any training fees, transport and or attending competitions. The sponsorship money raised from the fun run will go towards ECAAS Fund. More details and the application forms can be found on the school website in the latest news section, or pupils can get a hard copy from Mr Rizza (Curricular Leader of Physical Education).

Thank you again for all your hard work and support shown throughout.

Steven Peat & Anthony O’Neil

Finishing Position	Name	Year Group
1	Michael McDonald	S3
2	Kamil Szczesnowicz	S6
3	Sam Donegan	S5
4	Eduard Stoica	S3
5	Lewis Murray	S2
6	Alasdair Mitchell	S6
7	Felix Barley	S3
8	Kyle Cranston	S4
9	Jack Lindsay	S3
10	Adolfo San Miguel	S3



As you are all aware last year was an incredibly difficult one for the school as Cameron and Ellie Armstrong both, sadly passed away. The theme of ‘sports and sparkles’ represented the personalities of both Cameron and Ellie respectively. We would also like to thank everyone for dressing up and supporting the theme on the day. All pupils have been given a school Invictus Maneo t-shirt and we encourage the pupils to wear these to Physical Education classes, extra-curricular clubs and sports events. There have been many requests from the extended school community to donate to the Ellie and Cameron Armstrong Athlete Support Fund (ECAAS fund), these donations can be made to the school office.

The ECAAS Fund is a fund set up within the school to allow high level regional/national athletes to receive financial





Ellie & Cameron Armstrong Memorial Run