



# Elgin Academy Newsletter

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Issue 2 - Friday 7 October 2011

## Head Teacher's News

Here we are already at the end of the first term. Eight weeks have flashed past as pupils and staff continue to work hard on courses at the same time as enjoying the many opportunities on offer in the school. This final week of term alone represents how busy the school can be. As well as all the learning and teaching which goes on normally, we have seen International Week, the S2 Farm Visit, special assemblies on dress code, the S3 Parents' Evening, the annual Talent Show, and the end-of-term Harvest assemblies.

I have written to parents and carers separately on our plans to address concerns with regard to the dress code, and, indeed, have received many messages of support. We look forward to many pupils having a new, more positive attitude towards the dress code at the start of the new term on 24 October.

During the course of term, we will be working on developing a new vision for the school, with everyone who has an interest in the school having the chance to contribute. We will be identifying the school we want Elgin Academy to be over the course of the next few years, and the direction in which we want to take the school. Of course, with the prospect of the new school, we have a great opportunity to build a vision which will see Elgin Academy develop as an excellent place to learn and to teach.

In the meantime, on behalf of everyone at the school, I'd like to wish you and your family a pleasant October break.

David Barnett  
Head Teacher

## Visit from Taekwondo World Champion

Elgin Academy was honoured to have a visit from Chu Mu-yen recently to teach a class and put an exhibition on for a group of fourth year students. **Chu Mu-yen** is a Taekwondo athlete from Taiwan. He is the second Taiwanese athlete and first male to win a gold medal at the Olympics, winning in men's under 58-kilogram class in Taekwondo at the Athens 2004 Games. He was 22 years old and 1.73 meters tall when he won the Gold at Athens, and frequently competed against larger, stronger players in his Olympic Fly division. In the 2008 Olympics, Chu won the bronze medal in the men's under 58-kilogram class in Taekwondo. He also won the gold medal in the 2003 World Taekwondo Championships. Chu Mu-yen came in to the PE department and taught pupils the basics of his sport, as well as giving them an exhibition of his skills. The pupils thoroughly enjoyed the experience and the opportunity to try a new sport and be coached by one of the world's best athletes.



## Wear It Pink

### Friday 28 October 2011

Staff and pupils will once again be encouraged to wear something pink, as well as bringing a small donation to show their support for such a worthwhile cause. Advanced Higher Biology pupils have also been involved as part of their studies and will be attending a talk by Dr A Schofield whose research is paid for by the Breast Cancer Campaign charity. With over £1000 raised last year, we're hoping 2011 will be just as successful.

**Sic itur ad astra**

## “Kes” in Inverness

S2 pupil Lewis Clarke wrote the following account of his trip to Inverness to see ‘Kes’:

On Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> September 30 Elgin Academy pupils joined the English department and travelled by coach to Eden Court Theatre to see the theatre production of ‘Kes’. The play was about a 15 year old boy who fell in love with his kestrel and used it to block out the upsetting and rough situation that his family was in. The performance was acted out by only two gentlemen, one of whom played six characters. The play was emotional, surprising, imaginative and really good at diving into the sadness of the characters. The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year pupils who attended watched intently throughout the whole performance, spellbound to see the amazement that is ‘Kes’.

## Former Pupils Graduate

We have been informed of successful graduations of former pupils as follows:

### **Heriot-Watt University:**

Amelie Heuer – MChem in Chemistry with Biochemistry

David Kearney – MEng in Architectural Engineering

Catriona Strachan – MEng in Architectural Engineering

### **University of Aberdeen:**

Ian Garioch – BSc in Geography-Geoscience

Robert Ross – Bachelor of Music (Education)

Alistair Smailes - MA in Management Studies

Rebecca Swann – MA in Geography

Jane Thomson – MBA

Kirsty Thomson – Bachelor of Laws

The school’s congratulations go to all of the above former pupils on their success.

## Maths Appointment

We are delighted to have appointed Mrs Anna Gowanlock to the post of Maths Teacher. She will start in post on 24 October 2011. Mrs Gowanlock is currently teaching at Buckie High School. We are very grateful to Mr Peter Geddes who has been covering the post over the past few weeks.

## Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme

Another two groups of intrepid adventurers from Elgin Academy completed the expedition section of their D of E Bronze award this month, bringing this year’s total to four groups. In weather conditions ranging from dreich to appalling, our heroes and heroines battled on without pause or complaint, finishing the two-day trip tired but happy, and with a real sense of achievement. Having survived the epic journey equipped with only what they could carry, our students left with the knowledge that they had nurtured the inner strength and courage to persevere through whatever pitfalls life may throw at them. Hopefully when they come to do their Silver award the sun might be shining...



All pupils are encouraged  
to address the six ‘A’s  
needed for success at  
Elgin Academy:  
**Attendance**  
**Appearance**  
**Attitudes**  
**Ambition**  
**Attainment**  
**Achievement**

## Drama News

Pupils studying Higher Drama have been working intensively on writing, directing and producing an original script. Performances of their work took place in the Drama dept week beginning 20<sup>th</sup> September. Staff, parents and friends were all invited to attend the week long showcase of pieces, with audience members completing questionnaires, to evaluate the pupils work. Each director examined themes and issues such as family loyalty and power in original and inventive ways. Pupils took full responsibility for organising every element of the productions including costume lighting and sound design.

# 9/11 Wall

Modern Studies pupils of Elgin Academy from across the year groups marked the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the tragic events of 9/11 by finding out more about some of the victims from that awful day. It was an idea supplemented by two of the Modern Studies teachers at Elgin Academy, Mr. Abenheimer and Ms. Sharp. When asked where the idea came from they said, "The idea came from 2 places. One being the fact they studied terrorism with the 2<sup>nd</sup> year course and they were discussing terrorism and spoke about the event everyone knows such as 9/11. They spent roughly 5 to 6 lessons on 9/11."

Both teachers agreed that the idea was very successful to which Ms. Sharp added "All pupils have been fully involved and have clearly enjoyed the project." Mr Abenheimer even described it as "One of the most successful projects S2 pupils have done in Modern Studies" and that "Even people not taking Modern Studies have been asking to do it."

It was not a small project with over 150 pupils having been involved. The pupils from S2-S4 were given the task of researching 1 person while the Higher and Advanced Higher pupils researched 3 people. Mr Abenheimer concluded with, "It gives a good idea of how big and tragic the event was. If everyone in the school joined the project they would need to have 3 people each to cover all the victims".

*Brekhna Aftab,*



*Mr Abenheimer  
and Miss Sharp  
in front of the 9/11 wall*

## New School Update

The construction of the new school is on target for the projected completion date of 26 February 2012. Coming to school in the mornings, you notice changes every day, and it is amazing to think that in only five months from now (that's 150 sleeps), we will be moving in to the new building.

That is of course a very exciting thought, but when you look around the school and think of everything that has to be packed, labelled and taken across to the new building, you may appreciate that there will be lots of hard work to do so that the move goes as smoothly as possible. We also have to make sure that anything that we don't need but might be useful to another school finds a good home.

You will be glad to know then that this work has already started with Mr Webster speaking with the PPP Team and with Education Resources to plan and prepare.

Most of the staff and several pupils at the school have now had the opportunity to go to the site and see round the building under construction, so they can get a feel for the space and plan how to use it to best advantage. Some pupils have also now been across, and there will be further visits as work progresses. It is very

encouraging that the reactions so far have been very positive about the building, and of the spaces that are being created. We really do want to have a first class teaching and learning environment so that pupils will enjoy their time at school and achieve their goals.

*Andy Oliver  
PPP Project Manager*



## S2 Down On The Farm...

Around 200 S2 pupils participated in a farm visit on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> October to Pitgaveny Farm Estate, Elgin. Pupils have been studying farming in Home Economics this term and planning their own Farmers' Market, which is due to be held in the school assembly hall on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> December.

Many have little or no idea of how their food travels from the "Field to the Fork" or the skills and knowledge required by farmers. They had the opportunity to meet several people who are involved with Pitgaveny Estate and were able to see a small part of some of the tasks carried out on the farm.

The pupils took part in several varied activities on the farm which included Carrot Harvesting. All pupils were actively involved throughout the day, but particularly during the carrot activity, with lots of souvenir carrots making their way

Home!

The visit was organised in conjunction with The Royal Northern Countryside Initiative (RNCI), who also funded the transport required for the day. The pupils also took part in a challenge in school assembly hall and they have produced some eye catching PR material for their own Farmers' Market.



## National Award for Elgin Academy

On September 26<sup>th</sup>, the European Day of Languages, Mr Lestienne, Principal Teacher of Modern Languages, was presented with a certificate for the Modern Languages Department's Highly Commended project which links Modern Languages with local and international businesses. The "Language Labels Awards" ceremony took place at the European Commission building in London. Only 15 projects received prizes out of over 150 entries from all over Britain. The Modern Languages department at Elgin Academy and St Rochs (Glasgow) are the only Scottish schools to have received a prize.

During the ceremony, business leaders - including representatives from British Airways - reminded us of the importance of languages in the world of work and the penury of such talent in Britain.



## Music Notes

Lunch time activities continue to flourish in the music department. Junior vocalists, brass group and the S1-3 brass/woodwind group already meet throughout the week and the senior vocal group will start rehearsals after the October break. Orchestra rehearse on a Monday after school and the Gleek club meet on Thursdays. Details of rehearsal times are on the Music department notice boards and there are still spaces in all groups for any new members. The Christmas concert is on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> December and it is hoped to include all the groups mentioned. Details of ticket sales will

follow but make sure to mark the date in your diaries before they fill up with other Christmas activities.

The department also offers lessons in guitar and drum kit and there are still a few places available. Lessons cost £5 for groups and £8 for individual lessons. Please ask for details from the music department if you are interested.

Moray Council lessons are also available in brass and percussion. Again, please contact the department for details.

## Shakespeare in the Dark

A group of S3 pupils recently went to see Shakespeare's comedy "Twelfth Night", performed at the Steading, by Forres. Despite the midges, rain and the cold, as well as soaking wet pyjamas, the group behaved impeccably, and their good humour, despite the weather, was remarked upon by members of the public. Well done all - you did the Academy proud.



# Elgin Academy Talent Show 2011

A huge audience enjoyed the Elgin Academy Talent Show which took place on the evening of Wednesday 5 October 2011. Twenty three student acts and one staff Act (The Midlife Crisis Blues Band) provided superb entertainment. Well done and thank you to everyone involved—a great team effort. However, there could only be one winner. The judges had a very difficult job in choosing a winner, but their choice was very popular indeed. Congratulations to *Chasing Tasco* for their winning performance of 'I'm Yours'.



# Elgin Academy

## Homework Policy

**“Effective teaching is not enough. Success for young people also relies (along with good teaching) on the homework and self directed learning that they do out of school hours, and classroom teaching flourishes when good teaching and self directed learning meet. We know that those who are going to do well in life are marked out by their self esteem, their motivation and their ability to take responsibility for their own learning.”**

Professor John MacBeath



### Purpose of homework

- To develop independent learning skills
- To develop study skills
- To enhance in class learning
- To synthesise/consolidate what has been learnt
- To develop higher order thinking skills
- To provide opportunity for enhancement/extension
- To develop a ‘love of learning’ leading into ‘lifelong learning habits’

### Features of homework at Elgin Academy

- Related to class work and related to teachers’ curricular objectives
- Well explained and with a clear purpose
- All pupils have plenty of time to copy down what is expected

- Well planned by the teacher or department
- Varied
- Manageable in the time given
- Challenging but not too difficult
- Homework is differentiated to meet the needs of all pupils
- Likely to promote confidence through success
- Recognised and rewarded
- Supported by teachers and/or parents

### Organising homework

- Each pupil is given a homework diary at the beginning of the year. It is used to record each piece of homework for each subject area and when it is due in.
- A timetable of departmental homework allocation is available on the school’s website.
- While the classroom teacher will ask pupils to use their diaries, the ultimate responsibility of recording homework and understanding the task rests with the pupil. If a pupil is absent on the day the homework was issued, it is the pupil’s responsibility to contact the classroom teacher on return.
- Parents are asked to sign the homework diary on a weekly basis. This is monitored during registration every Tuesday. Those who have their homework diaries signed consecutively for 4 weeks will receive a merit, while those who don’t will be referred to PT Guidance by registration teachers.
- PT Guidance will monitor use of the diary for those pupils highlighted via registration teachers during their PSE class.

### Marking Homework

- Homework (including the date it was issued) will be recorded and will be a part of each department’s scheme of work where appropriate.
- Each Principal Teacher is responsible for monitoring the setting and marking of homework.
- Homework will normally be marked and returned to pupils as soon as possible (projects/assessments will take longer) with comments and feedback. This might not apply to practical work.

### Parental Engagement

Parents can help to encourage good homework habits:

- If possible, homework should be undertaken in a situation where there are few distractions. A warm, quiet part of the house is ideal.
- An interest in ongoing class work as well as advice on set homework would be appreciated.
- Pupils should be encouraged not to leave major items of homework to the last moment if at all possible.
- There should be encouragement for pupils to keep notes in good order, to store books and jotters carefully and to check the following day’s timetable the evening before, to see that appropriate books, jotters and equipment are packed ready for the following day.
- Parents are asked to sign their child’s homework diary at the end of each week to indicate that they are aware of the homework their child has.

*Please turn to page 7 for the section on “Failure to Hand In Homework” >>>>>*

## Girls' Rugby Roadshow

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, a group of girls from Elgin Academy were lucky enough to be involved in a Rugby Roadshow promoting the sport to girls across Scotland. Car Stevenson, Women's Rugby Development Officer, and Jo Hull, Women's Performance Manager, both from the SRU, took the girls through their paces in a fun-filled rugby session before handing out prizes to individuals who had stood out, and goodie bags to all who participated. The girls had a great time and enjoyed working with Jo, who is responsible for developing our national women's squads. If anyone is interested in joining the girls' rugby team they should speak to Miss Goudie, in X13, or come along to training at Morriston from 4-5pm on Thursday nights during term time.

## Books and authors

Travel and adventure writer, Brian Wilson, visited the school and conducted a workshop with Advanced Higher English pupils. This visit was supported by the Scottish Book Trust.

Well done to Emma Huby (S2) who was recently rewarded for showing great initiative with a letter from the celebrated children's author Cathy Cassidy. Emma met the author at this year's Grampian Children's Book Award ceremony and used it as an opportunity to submit a chapter from the novel she has been writing. Not only was Ms. Cassidy keen to offer Emma tips for the future with regards to finding a publisher but she also complimented her on her work, saying that there were well written and great observations and strong, believable characters. She finished by advising Emma to 'Follow the dream!'.  
Two First Year English classes are taking part in next year's Grampian Children's Book Award. The first step is to select their favourite books to be included on the shortlist.

A small group of pupils has started reading and discussing the shortlisted books for the Scottish Children's Book Awards.

## National Poetry Day

To mark National Poetry Day, the Drama department is reopening the doors of the Culture Café, where pupils and staff are invited to share their favourite poems over some light refreshments. The poetry readings will be performed in "bistro-style" theatre in the round staging. Readers can share poems from their childhood, family favourites, or indeed from work they are currently completing in other classes.

## Amnesty International Group

Sixth year pupils at Elgin Academy have formed their own Amnesty international group.

The move is a bid by the pupils to give something back to the broader society, with the group hoping to raise funds for causes such as the fight against poverty, better treatment for women in Afghanistan and prevention of torture throughout the world.

There are also plans to expand the group to other students throughout the Moray area.

A student cross-pupil group would be an ideal scenario according to pupil Brehkna Aftab, whose idea it was to set up the group.

She said: "Students these days seem to be very sheltered from the atrocities that go on in the wider world.

"I think if we did know more about these atrocities then we'd all be a lot more grateful for what we've got.

"I think we should target parents' evenings and tell people what Amnesty International is all about.

"We would also love to organise big-scale events, perhaps involving many schools in the region."

Volunteers will be needed, however, and while the group is already established at Elgin Academy, organisers are asking pupils from surrounding schools who also want to make a difference to join a group.

## Homework Policy (Continued)

### Failure to hand in homework

We expect homework to be completed to the best of each child's ability and handed in on time. If homework fails to meet the expectations of the class teacher, then the appropriate action is taken:

- The class teacher will have a discussion with the pupil to find out if there are good reasons for the failure to hand in the work. An extension may be granted based on the professional judgement of the teacher. If not, the pupil will be expected to hand on a date set by the teacher.
- If homework is not handed in to the teacher, the classroom teacher will inform Principal Teacher Guidance and their Principal Teacher [curriculum] via email and send home a letter to parents via the office staff.
- A homework club is available during certain lunchtimes of the week for students to complete homework in. The facility is supervised by a member of staff and S6 students.

The Elgin Academy pupils would also be interested in hearing from other Amnesty groups in the surrounding area.

Ms Aftab believes that if the group can be properly set up then it could have a great future. She said "I would love it if the Amnesty group didn't end with our year.

"I would like it to carry on to next year's sixth year, and then the next and on into the future.

"I would definitely like it to be the legacy of our year."

*This article was written by S6 student Alasdair Keith, and has appeared on the STV Local website.*

## Empty Bottles

Donations of empty bottles are needed for the school's greenhouse project. These can be dropped off at Technical on Tuesday and Wednesday lunchtimes at room T3 (Mr Cunningham) - please remember only clean 2 litre bottles will be accepted.

## Badminton

The school hopes to participate in the Badminton Secondary Singles League which takes place in Banchory on 30<sup>th</sup> October, 6<sup>th</sup> November and 20<sup>th</sup> of November. If pupils are interested, they should collect an entry form from the PE department.

## Swimming

If any pupils are interested in attending the Moray Schools Swimming time trial they should give their name to Mr Scott, in the PE department ASAP. The trials will take place in Forres on Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

## Cricket

If any pupils are interested in playing cricket, they should come to the PE department for information regarding 2 free taster sessions happening in Moray. The sessions will take place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of October at Gordonstoun and are a chance to try the game and get some basic coaching.

## World's Biggest Coffee Morning

As a staff we showed our support for Macmillan Cancer Support on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> September by bringing a donation at morning interval in return for coffee and homebakes.

## Parent Council

The first Parent Council meeting of the new session took place on Monday 12 September 2011. Several new members came along to the meeting. Mrs Sheila Campbell agreed to act as Chair of the Parent Council, with the next meeting scheduled for Monday 7 November 2011. If you are interested in becoming involved with the Parent Council, then please come along.



## Diary Dates

Monday 24 October 2011 - Start of term  
Wednesday 2 November 2011 - S5/6 Parents' Evening  
Thursday 17 November 2011 - S1 Parents' Evening  
Monday 21 November 2011 - In-service day  
Tuesday 22 November 2011 - In-service day  
Tuesday 6 December 2011 - S4 Parents' Evening  
Friday 9 December 2011 - Farmers' Market  
Monday 12 December 2011 - Music Concert  
Tuesday 13—Monday 19 December 2011 - Parties  
Wednesday 21 December 2011 - End of term  
Thursday 5 January 2012 - Start of term  
Wednesday 18 January 2012 - S2 Parents' Evening  
Thursday 9 February, Friday 10 February & Monday 13 February—Mid-term Holiday

## Get Moray Reading Book Festival

As part of the Get Moray Reading Book Festival, Mr Clark accompanied his S1 English class, along with Mrs. Donald, to an author visit by Elizabeth Laird at Elgin Library on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> September,

Elizabeth gave a talk on her experience as a writer and took questions from the audience; our pupils asked some perceptive and interesting questions. They then had the opportunity to buy books and have them signed. It was encouraging to see such a positive response and behaviour was excellent.

Well done to S1.2.

