I am writing this on the last day of January, reflecting on what a wonderful end to the month we have had. The S2 skiers are on their way back home after a very successful trip (with no broken bones!), and the S2s in school thoroughly enjoyed their activities last week – despite missing their trip to the zoo because of the awful weather. The Scottish Seabird Centre very kindly stepped in at the last minute and the pupils had fun learning about the local marine environment. I have had so many lovely, positive comments and thanks from parents and from members of the public – both at home and abroad – about how polite and pleasant our young people are. The teachers, too, have said it has been a real pleasure to lead these trips for our S2 pupils.

On Friday evening, I was hugely proud of our senior pupils at the Burns Supper, organised by our amazing PTA. It was a truly joyful occasion, with accomplished S5 and S6 pupils singing, dancing, piping, reciting and making speeches. To top it all off, pupils, parents and staff danced together to the music of the Clappy Doo ceilidh band. There is no doubt that the Burns Supper is one of the highlights of the school year for the senior pupils, and it is a wonderful tradition. The following evening, many of our pupils performed again in front of a distinguished audience at the town Burns Supper in the Marine Hotel. Calum and Isla, our Head Boy and Girl, gave their excellent Toast to the Lassies and Reply, and the singers gave beautiful renditions of Burns songs.

**Staffing**

- Midway through this month our drama teacher, Ms Monaghan, moved to a post in another school and we wish her well in her new role. We hope to appoint a new drama teacher shortly, with a view to them starting soon after the February break. In the meantime, we are pleased that we have been able to get two experienced drama teachers to take most of the classes and Mr Fell, formerly an English teacher at NBHS, is also taking some of the classes.
- In my previous Update, I mentioned that the post of business education teacher was being re-advertised. Unfortunately, we were again unable to recruit. I am delighted, however, that we have been able to appoint an experienced business education teacher, Mr Heron, to the role on a temporary basis and he will be with us until May.
- In chemistry, Dr Scott is about to go on maternity leave and Mrs Healy, sadly, is likely to be absent for some time. Unfortunately, we have not yet been able to recruit a chemistry subject specialist from the East Lothian supply list, but we are pleased that Ms Blair has increased her hours.
- Perhaps inevitably at this time of year, there have been a number of staff absences and I am extremely grateful to our teachers and support staff who really do go the extra mile to ensure our young people continue to receive a positive learning experience. If one of your child’s teachers is absent at a parents’ consultation evening, please contact his/her guidance teacher if you would like an update on their progress in a particular subject.

**Parent School Partnership**

All members of the Parent Forum were informed last term of a proposed change to the Parent School Partnership constitution. This followed on from our Parent Council AGM on 15 September 2015, when a new proposed Constitution was approved by the members of the Parent Forum present at the meeting. At that meeting, the Parent Forum accepted a slight change in the wording of one point in the proposed Constitution (paragraph 18 change ‘Council’ to ‘Forum’) and agreed that the name of the Parent Council should be changed to the Parent School Partnership. To ratify these changes, the proposed Constitution had to go to all members of the Parent Forum and the change then had to be agreed at the AGM or at an extraordinary meeting. An extraordinary meeting was therefore held immediately before the Parent School Partnership meeting on Tuesday 19 January 2016. At that meeting, the proposed changes to the Constitution were approved. The new, agreed Constitution can be found on the website.
The members of the PSP would welcome volunteers from the Parent Forum to serve on a subgroup; you do not have to be a member of the PSP to do so. As I explained in a previous Update, there are three subgroups of the PSP, each focusing on an identified priority: Communications; Planning & Development; and Education (including curriculum and learning & teaching). If you are interested, please contact me and I will pass on your details to the chair of the relevant subgroup.

- The Communications subgroup met this month to consider further ways of improving communication between the Parent Forum, the PSP and the school. As part of this, PSP members have been in attendance at recent parents’ consultation evenings.
- The Planning & Development subgroup and Mr. Jeffries, PT of health & wellbeing, will shortly be meeting with representatives from ELC and a local councillor to consider the impact of new housing developments on the future needs of the school.
- The Education subgroup met with Mrs. Moore just before Christmas to consider the further development of the Senior Phase curriculum structure and they fed back to the whole PSP at the January meeting.

So far this session, we have held three PSP meetings and they have been very enjoyable, with some excellent discussion. Do take time to have a look at the Minutes of these meetings, which are available on the school website. All members of the Parent Forum are welcome to attend PSP meetings. As head teacher, I appreciate hugely the support given to the school by our PSP parents and councillors.

Mental Health Awareness Week

In the week beginning Monday 8 February, we have a new initiative for NBHS: a Mental Health Awareness Week. Various activities, talks and events will take place during the week, all with a focus on raising awareness of mental health issues for young people. We are delighted that the initiative is being supported by members of the wider community, in particular the Youth Network. Do have a look at our website for more details. The event mentioned below will also be of interest to parents in this respect, I am sure.

The Teenage Brain

*** The Teenage Brain by Nicola Morgan ***
Monday 21 March, 7.00 pm, School Hall

If you are watching the series ‘The Brain’ on Channel 4 at the moment, you will know that the human brain is a fascinating organ – and the teenage brain especially so. We are delighted that renowned author Nicola Morgan is coming to give a talk on that very topic to NBHS parents and staff on Monday 21 March. As well as writing wonderful fiction for teenagers, Nicola has published excellent non-fiction work for teenagers, including Blame My Brain, Know Your Brain and The Teenage Guide to Stress. She is also the co-author of NS and Higher Study Skills, recently published by Leckie & Leckie. Check out her website for more information and perhaps subscribe to her regular ‘Brain Sane’ newsletter.

*** This is an event not to be missed, so do put the date in your diary now. ***

Development of the Senior Phase Curriculum

Along with this Update, you will find a letter from me and the co-chairs of our Parent School Partnership which provides an update on how we are developing the Senior Phase curriculum structure at NBHS. If you have any queries about this, please do not hesitate to contact me.
**Course Choosing**
Over the coming weeks, pupils from S2 to S5 will be making some course choices. Parents of pupils in these year groups have received a letter detailing this process and giving key dates. Guidance staff play a key role in supporting our pupils to make the most appropriate choices, aided by class and principal teachers who give pupils information about specific subjects. For pupils in S3 and S4, the discussion with guidance staff will include possible pathways through the whole Senior Phase at NBHS and, indeed, possible plans for life beyond school. A course choice information evening for parents of pupils entering the Senior Phase is being held on Monday 8 February at 7.00 pm in the School Hall and Mick Burns, our Careers Adviser, will also be there.

**Career Education**
The National Parent Forum of Scotland has recently produced a leaflet on career education, a copy of which has been given to every pupil. If you have not yet seen the leaflet, do ask your child about it. The NPFS has produced some excellent resources for parents on aspects of education and I would highly recommend having a look at their website.

**’5-A-Week’**
Since last term, the depute head teachers have been meeting with up to five pupils from their year group each week, inviting them to share their thoughts and opinions on their experience in school. The pupils themselves set the agenda for these sessions; there is no doubt that they are extremely insightful when it comes to their own education. Indeed, these sessions are proving to be very valuable as part of our ongoing self-evaluation as a school. The deputes have produced a summary of last term’s sessions, which you will find on the website if you are interested.

**Breakfast Club Initiative Pilot**
Last year, a sample group of 200 pupils answered a questionnaire about breakfast habits and energy levels throughout their working day. We also asked every pupil in the school whether they ate the ‘most important’ meal of the day: the results indicated that almost 22% of our pupils often skip breakfast. Our Health and Wellbeing working group would like to raise awareness of healthy eating across the school. As part of the process, we will be piloting a breakfast club with S3 pupils for two weeks after the February break. At the club, pupils will be able to discuss what impact the school can make on their eating habits and will also eat a healthy breakfast. We will be asking S3 pupils to volunteer for this club; parents of volunteers will receive further information.

**Smoking Outside School**
I am very concerned – and, indeed, angry - that a small number of our pupils are smoking outside school and the Sports Centre, in clear view of younger children on the way to school in the morning. I understand that choosing to smoke is a lifestyle decision, but choosing to do so in front of younger, impressionable pupils is completely unacceptable. Members of the senior management team regularly patrol the area and we also have the support of our community warden, who attends when possible. Any pupil identified as taking part in this behaviour is given detention and concerns are communicated to parents. I would appreciate the support of parents in emphasising the seriousness of this matter to the young people involved. For those pupils who wish to change their lifestyle, the Healthy Respect drop-in service is available in school every Wednesday lunchtime, in Interview Room 4.
**Budget**

In February, we will receive our draft budget for the next financial year from East Lothian Council. As you will be aware from reports in the media, local government budgets are likely to be extremely tight and education will have to take its share of any efficiency savings. I will be working with our Parent School Partnership over the coming months to ensure that we do the best we can for all our pupils with the resources allocated to us.

**Adverse Weather**

Having experienced some wild, windy weather recently, it is perhaps timeous to remind parents of our adverse weather procedure. Should there be a possibility of the school being closed, you can keep up to date in the following ways: listen to local media, particularly Radio Forth and Radio Scotland; check the school and East Lothian Council website; look out for text, email or twitter messages from the school; become familiar with the information from ELC on adverse weather, available as a link on the school website. Please can you also ensure that your child’s emergency contact details are up to date and let school know of any changes.

**Communication**

If you have not already done so, please sign up for an email reminder of updates on our website. It’s easy – just enter your email address and click on the Subscribe link at the right hand side of the page. The PSP Communication subgroup is continuing to work to improve and update the website to make it as helpful to visitors as possible. You can also follow us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com), both of which can be accessed via the front page of the school website. The PTA also have a Facebook page and Twitter account, so do sign up to those in order to keep up to date with events. Should you have any comments or queries or wish to pass on any information, the first point of contact is usually your child’s guidance teacher:

- **Craig House** Mr Burgess  
  cburgess@northberwickhigh.elcschool.org.uk
- **Fidra House** Mrs McCormack  
  jmccormack@northberwickhigh.elcschool.org.uk
- **Glen House** Mrs Casson  
  gcasson@northberwickhigh.elcschool.org.uk
- **Law House** Mr Stebbing  
  cstebbing@northberwickhigh.elcschool.org.uk

You can also contact us by telephone: 01620 894661 (absence line 01620 894716) or by a general email:  
communications@northberwickhigh.elcschool.org.uk

**Dates for Your Diary**

- **Thursday 4 February**  
  Glen House Masquerade Ball
- **Monday 8 February**  
  Senior Phase Course Choice Information Evening
- **Tuesday 9 February**  
  S3 Parents’ Consultation Evening
- **Friday 12 February**  
  School closes at 12.00 pm for February break
- **Tuesday 23 February**  
  School re-opens for pupils at 8.39 am
- **Thursday 25 February**  
  S4 Parents’ Consultation Evening
- **Wednesday 2 March**  
  Parent School Partnership meeting
- **Friday 11 March**  
  Senior Phase course choice forms must be handed in
- **Tuesday 15 March**  
  E-safety evening for parents
- **Monday 21 March**  
  Nicola Morgan talk on the teenage brain
- **Thursday 24 March**  
  School closes at 3.50 pm for Easter break
- **Monday 11 April**  
  School re-opens for pupils at 8.39 am

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