

## Head Teacher's Report

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### Staffing

We are delighted to welcome some new members of staff who have joined Knox Academy since the start of term: Karen Malone in business education; Susie Stewart in computing; Sean Murray in PE; and Jenn Davis at Meadowpark. We hope that they will settle quickly at Knox and we are sure they will be a real asset to the school. I am also pleased to say that Alex Redford has been appointed to the post of principal teacher of expressive arts (acting).

### Pupil Equity Fund

Knox Academy has been awarded £24,000 under the PEF Scottish Government initiative. This amount is based on the number of S1 to S3 pupils in the school who are registered for free school meals. However, the funding is not restricted to those pupils; it can be used to support all pupils who experience a barrier to learning because of financial difficulties. The school has already considered some possibilities for our PEF and we are currently clarifying what the gap is that we really need to address. We are liaising with Karen Haspolat, our Quality Improvement Officer, on how best to use our PEF. The Scottish Government has produced a leaflet for parents on PEF which can be accessed via this link: <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00517052.pdf>.

### Analysis of Senior Phase Attainment Statistics – Insight Data

As part of our analysis of exam results in the Senior Phase, Scottish secondary schools use Insight, an online benchmarking tool. This highlights strengths as well as areas for improvement. The system is updated twice annually: in September for attainment results and in February for school leavers data. A presentation on the September Insight data will be given at the meeting by deputies Caroline Falconer and Claire Slowther.

### SQA Post-results Service

As part of the analysis of SQA exam results, schools compare results attained by individual pupils with their estimated grade. If a pupil has performed well below the estimate grade and the school suspects an error may have occurred in the totalling of marks, then the school can request a **clerical check**. If the school holds clear and compelling evidence that there is a reasonable possibility an error may have occurred with the marking, then the school may request a **marking review**. This would be following discussion between the teacher, principal teacher, SQA co-ordinator and head teacher. A pupil or parent may also ask the school to look into the possibility of submitting a marking review. Before a request for a marking review is submitted to SQA, the candidate should provide written confirmation that they wish this to go ahead; this is because the candidate's mark could go down or up following a marking review. East Lothian secondary schools, in common with most other schools across Scotland, follow the SQA guidelines and the advice paper from ADES (Association of Directors of Education in Scotland) regarding the post-results service. These have been brought together in a Knox Academy policy and procedures document which can be found on the school website.

### School Improvement Planning

The HT's report to the PC in August outlined the actions to be taken in school following the June visit by the Head of Education and her team. We continue to address those action points, which link to the School Improvement Plan. The SIP is an important working document for the school, but it is lengthy. We need to have a small number of clear priorities which are easily remembered by everyone in our school community and which we can all work towards together. The senior management team, in conjunction with our QIO, is currently looking at this and we feel there are four main priorities. The wording needs to be improved, but in essence the priorities are as follows:

- excellence in learning and teaching;
- supporting the needs of all learners/equity and inclusion;
- building an ethos of ambition (including values and aims, and addressing behaviour issues);
- leadership opportunities for all.

We will be constantly returning to the SIP priorities and actions throughout the session and we will welcome input from parents.

### **Self-evaluation and Quality Assurance**

As part of our self-evaluation programme, we have three faculty review weeks coming up in October/November, for the following faculties: communication; numeracy and technology; social sciences. This includes each faculty carrying out a self-evaluation exercise, as well as classroom observations, feedback sessions and focus groups. Faculty staff are involved, as well as SMT, a principal teacher from another faculty, members of the Learning and Teaching working group, members of the Pupil Learning Team, promoted staff from other schools, our QIO and pupils. Caroline Falconer, depute, is leading this programme and I believe it will be an excellent learning experience for all those involved. On top of our in-school programme, we are due to have our next follow-up visit from local authority staff in the last week of October. Meadowpark will also be having an Additional Support Needs (ASN) review visit sometime before Christmas.

### **Advanced Higher Courses**

We are very proud that we are able to offer Advanced Higher courses in many subjects at Knox Academy. Throughout the month of June and up until the September weekend, many of these classes were timetabled for five taught periods per week. Some subjects with a very small uptake for Advanced Higher have had fewer taught periods from the beginning; rather than withdraw the course due to low uptake, the decision was taken to offer the course with reduced teaching time. I am pleased that we have been able to do this as it offers more choice to our S6 pupils. Since the September weekend, we have moved to four taught periods in most Advanced Higher courses. This is common practice for courses at this level, where a proportion of the time in school should be dedicated to independent study. This may be for folio or practical work, for example, or for more in-depth study of topics covered in taught lessons. More information on Advanced Higher courses can be found on the SQA website.

### **East Lothian Common School Day**

Head teachers and education staff at the Centre have begun looking at the possible advantages of having a common school day across all East Lothian secondary schools. Benefits could include, for example: equity of provision across the county; greater flexibility in accessing college and vocational courses; wider opportunities at Advanced Higher level. As a starting point, there will be a review of each school's curriculum structure, using a toolkit from HMI. As we move on, there will be wide consultation with parents in all clusters.

### **Press Coverage**

I have been very disappointed, to say the least, at some of the recent press coverage which Knox Academy has received, particularly the front page article in the *East Lothian Courier*. I would have liked to address this quickly with parents but I was being guided by ELC staff on how the school should respond, and when. I have been grateful for the support of all the Knox staff, as well as ELC's Head of Education, Communications Manager and legal team. I was also glad of the opportunity to talk this matter over with John, our PC Chair. There are so many wonderful, positive things happening in Knox Academy and it is these that we want to highlight to the wider community.