

Dear LGS families,

It has been a very busy start to our new term and despite the pressures of prelims, course choice and assessment deadlines on the horizon, it feels as though most everyone has come back feeling refreshed and ready to go. Hopefully we all can sustain that momentum!

1. You may have heard talk recently about national concerns over **reduced levels of attendance** in schools. By attendance we are meaning a whole host of educational activities including at school, college, educational visits, outdoor centres, extra-curricular activities, study leave, work experience and outreach teaching. Evidence demonstrates that pupil progress, attainment and achievement is affected negatively when attendance falls below 90% (ie. missing 19 days of school over a school session). Quite a startling statistic shared with us is that when a child averages 90% attendance over the course of their entire school career from P1, by the time they reach S3 they will have missed the equivalent of an entire year in school. The short absences really do add up. We are continually looking at the multifaceted causes and reasons for absence and disengagement from learning for our own context and will be sharing more guidance and support advice for families over the coming months.
2. Our main **prelim assessment diet** for S4 – S6 pupils will take place from Monday 22 January, through to Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> January inclusive. This includes study leave days on Thursday 25 and Friday 26 January. Information on the prelim timetable as well as the guide that was issued to students can be found on our website at: <https://www.lanark.s-lanark.sch.uk/Prelim-Timetable/> Remember, it is completely natural for students to feel anxious and worried about these assessments – they're tests after all – but ultimately these are meant to help everyone gauge progress and gaps in learning, in order to better focus for the final months of courses. We will do our utmost to reassure and support young people through this period of assessment.
3. It is already that time of year when we begin to draft plans for the course offering and timetable for the next academic session. This is especially relevant to those students moving into S3, S5 and S6. To help with initial exploration and support the **course choices** coming up in February, parents and carers of students in S2, S4 and S5 are welcome and encouraged to attend our Course Information Evening next Thursday 18 January at 7:00pm. A separate communication has already been issued about this and all the information you need to get started in discussions with your child/children can be found on our curriculum tab on our school website at: <https://www.lanark.s-lanark.sch.uk/Curriculum-LGS/>
4. On Monday you should have received an email regarding an upcoming **statutory consultation proposal** from South Lanarkshire Council, around an alteration to the qualifying distance for free secondary school mainstream transport. This proposal would move the entitlement to those who live over 3 miles from their catchment secondary school, from 2 miles. The proposal will be open to consultation from Monday 15 January at this link: [Comments, complaints and consultations - South](#)

[Lanarkshire Council](#) Public meetings will be held and there will be information provided on how to book a place at these meetings from next week.

5. This Monday, in place of our usual in-school Parent Council meeting, we will be holding a **wider Parent Forum Information Session** via Microsoft Teams. It is an opportunity for anyone and everyone to hear from members of our school's Senior Leadership Team on several matters including P7 transition, the Course Information Evening, Prelims and an overall update on school operations. Please don't be nervous about joining us as cameras and microphones won't be switched on, however, we aim to have a moderated Q&A function whereby participants can type questions in the sidebar and time permitting, we will answer what we can there during the meeting. Questions that we are unable to answer or don't have adequate time for, we will take away and collate responses to issue in next Friday's update. We look forward to seeing as many of you there as possible at this link: [Click here to join the meeting](#)
  
6. We have an agreement with Lanark Lifestyles that during our senior (**S5/6**) core PE, a registered group of students will attend their **gym, under supervision**. We are grateful for this offering and pleased that so many students want to engage with improving their physical fitness and boost their overall wellbeing. The challenge we have is when other students who are not on the register, show up at the gym during class time to say they are attending "as a member of the public" or "with parent permission". Unfortunately, we cannot support this during the school day and require students to attend their timetabled classes. We are absolutely happy to support families where there are specific medical/rehabilitation needs and will gladly have a dialogue around this, but otherwise, only those registered in PE classes should be at the gym during the school day. It is also out of courtesy to members of the public and facilities staff that we have these parameters around this offering.
  
7. Before Christmas I shared some information with you about a new **study support platform** for which we are trialling a subscription – **ACHIEVE**. Students studying courses at National 5 and Higher level may wish to create an account and add courses of study to their dashboard. There is a wealth of key learning points and practice questions that should help them to prepare for their final examinations. While there are many courses available, not all are yet on the platform but it is developing all the time. As we become more familiar with its features ourselves, we will share further information and guidance. Students can sign up at <https://achieve.hashtag-learning.co.uk>. The School Code for linking with Lanark Grammar School is **Vqp6Vjk4**

Lots more info and news to come in the days and weeks ahead. For now, have a good weekend everyone.

Jeff