1

Hello, and welcome to this session’s Coursing Information Event for pupils currently in S4 and S5. I’m Miss Bones, depute headteacher in charge of curriculum and timetable. What we have for you here are several presentations that will help with the course choice decisions that need to be made over the course of the next few weeks.

To begin with, I’ll recap on the workings of the senior phase curriculum at Dalkeith High School, highlighting what is of greatest importance to young people in S5 and S6. Next will follow some advice and information, first from the school’s careers adviser, Barbara Moir, and then from our Developing the Young Workforce Coordinator, Bahiya Basheikh. Finally, I will explain the system for submitting course choice requests this session.

2.

* I’ll start with a reminder of what the senior phase in Scotland is designed to offer young people
* Well, the senior phase clearly comes after the broad general education of S1 to S3 so it builds on what you experience in the first three years of high school.
* When you move into S4, and then into S5 and S6, you choose what you like and what you are good at and you learn much more about subjects and what you learn takes you much deeper into the ideas, the concepts, the theories.
* If you work hard, you will leave with the qualifications that will take you on to the next stage, whatever that may be.
* And also, as you gain your qualifications, you develop the skills that you need whether you decide to continue with learning or go into work. And skills such as problem solving, independence and resilience are ones that will help you through whatever life might throw at you.

3.

* So what has to be done in the way of courses in S5 and s6?
* In S5, you take six courses, plus Health and Wellbeing and PSE. You also get a study period during the course of the week. If you are taking 5 Highers, a wee word of warning - choose that sixth subject carefully. Perhaps a sixth Higher is right for you but, if not, think about taking Duke of Edinburgh – you’ll get time to do some of your volunteering if it can be made to work and Mr Duncan will use some of the time to get you ready for your expeditions. Certainly, you’ll gain a couple of study periods. Or why not choose a lighter subject without a final exam. Or take a subject at Nat 5 level, that you can then take to Higher the next year.
* In S6, you study five courses, plus Health and Wellbeing and PSE. And you have a bit more study time, this year for five periods. Often, sensible progression in S6 is to a different type of course rather than to an Advanced Higher. Advanced Highers are most appropriate for students who wish to continue with study in the chosen subject at university.
* And you also need to continue with English and maths if you haven’t yet achieved your full potential

1. And do you remember from S4 all the new subjects there are for you to choose from in the senior phase? Here they are.

5.

* And the opportunities to learn outside the classroom?
* There’s subjects you can do run by teachers in the school such as Beekeeping and The Environment, and the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award,
* as well as other ways you can learn outside the classroom, for example, by taking on a college course or a Foundation Apprenticeship.
* And in S6 there is the opportunity for more independent study through Open University courses.

6.

* Now, a wee bit about college courses.
* There are more courses available in S5 and S6 than was the case in S4.
* On-campus college courses run on a Tuesday and a Thursday afternoon. There are a few courses which run on a Friday afternoon.
* Some courses are virtual and when you study these courses is more flexible
* You have to be committed to take on one of the college courses. You won’t be home until around 4. 30 or after. And lunch can be a bit of a rush. And the virtual courses, where you don’t travel to a college campus, require self-discipline and good organisation skills. But it’s worth it if you want to do one of the interesting courses on offer.
* For more information on the courses available, see the college website as well as the video on our school website. The full 2023-24 college provision will be available for viewing late January. Please note that Granton courses cannot be accessed due to the travel time involved.

7.

* Next, Foundation Apprenticeships. Foundation Apprenticeships are a work-based learning opportunity for senior-phase secondary school pupils. Lasting one or two years, pupils begin their Foundation Apprenticeship in S5 or S6.
* The qualification is designated level 6, so the same level of difficulty as Highers. But the experience of undertaking an FA is quite different from studying, say, Higher English.
* FAs focus on particular areas of the job market
* Some of the time you spend with what is called a learning provider – that is where you get the theory connected to the employment area. A learning provider in Midlothian could be Communities, Lifelong Learning and Employability, a school, or it could be Edinburgh College.
* The other type of input in the course comes from industry – you’ll work in companies or workplaces connected to the subject of your FA and you’ll work with your experienced colleagues on real projects. We’ve had pupils working in local nurseries and care homes in Midlothian, as well as at Microsoft in Edinburgh.

8.

* So what do you get out of doing an FA?
* Well, from the quality work experience and teaching you learn the essential skills in specialised areas that employers want. And even if you decide you don’t want to go into the area in which you did your FA, the skills you learn and the experience you gain will strengthen your CV or your personal statement for college or university.
* If you successfully complete your FA and you want go on to a Modern Apprenticeship immediately on leaving school, your FA will support your application and you will actually have already completed some of the learning required for the Modern Apprenticeship so you will be ahead of the game.
* If college or university is your thing, the FA qualification is recognised by all colleges and universities. But a word of warning. Always check the university or college website for the specific entry requirements for any course in which you might be interested. Or give them a phone. It could be the case that a university counts an FA as an entry qualification but only if you are applying to study a course in the same area.

9.

* Over recent years, Midlothian Council has offered four FAs: in Business Skills, Social Services Children and Young People, and Social Services and Healthcare, and IT: Software Development. All were 1-year courses, apart from IT which required 2 years and had to be started in S5. Information should be available soon about the FAs on offer for next session. And there are more FAs available through Edinburgh College.
* We will keep you updated on what is on offer and keep looking at the Midlothian Council and Edinburgh College websites for further details.
* FAs have proved to be a very successful choice for Dalkeith High School pupils over the last few years. Intending applicants must note, however, that similar to the college courses it will be a long day with young people not arriving home until late afternoon. Personal commitments such as jobs need to be factored into the decision to apply.

10.

* Now a recap on the types of qualification that are offered in the senior phase.
* The ones you’ll know most about are what are called the national qualifications – that is National 3, 4, 5, Higher and Advanced Higher.
* There is no exam for Nat 3 and Nat 4, and exams for the other levels.
* I want to encourage you to think in terms of ‘levels’. So, Nat 3 is level 3, Nat 4 is level 4 and so on up to Advanced Higher that is level 7.

11.

* And why is this?
* Well, because you can do other kinds of qualifications and you need to be able to compare them with each other so you can judge difficulty and the amount of work.
* There’s something called the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework that will help you make sense of all the different types of qualification. Look in the option booklet and on the SCQF website for more information.

12.

* One of the other types of course open to you in our senior phase is Skills for Work courses.
* These practical courses, which don’t have an exam, all encourage you to practise the sort of skills needed no matter the particular job you do, for example working as a team; using initiative and so on.
* You can practise these skills by choosing courses that focus on quite different areas of employment.
* And you can see here the ones we’re offering in school.

13.

* Another type of course you can do is one that leads to what is called a National Progression Award.
* Again, it’s skills sought after by employers that you’ll get but this time what you achieve is linked to a workplace standard so that if you put these qualifications down on an application form, an employer will know exactly the sort of skills you have – and the level of those skills.
* NPAs are available at levels 2 to 6
* And look here at what you can do in school.

14.

* SQA Awards
* These courses help you develop personal skills you will need when you leave school
* - skills that will motivate you to be successful, and to participate positively in the communities in which you live
* And here’s the courses the school offers

15.

* Finally, a word about Open University courses for a particular group of young people in S6.
* These courses – called YASS courses (Young Applicants in Schools Scheme) give S6 students in Scotland the unique opportunity to study a range of university level courses in school alongside their other studies.
* A YASS course is designed to bridge the gap between school and university, college or employment, helping motivated students stand out from the crowd. It encourages independent learning and builds confidence. Taking part in YASS develops key skills such as time management and using an online study environment.
* Registration for YASS modules is organised through the school, although students deal directly with The OU when it comes to their course work and assessment.
* These courses are perfect for young people who have already achieved 4 or 5 A or B Higher qualifications, and who are ready to take that step towards university study. Or they are for those with the necessary qualifications who simply wish to explore a particular area of interest in more depth.
* More information about YASS and the courses offered is available on their website and in the school option choice booklet.

**Coursing Process**

1.

* How will the coursing process work this year?
* Basing requests on the recommendations of subject teachers, and having done all the research, pupils write down six course requests – or five plus study in S6. Then, pupils number these courses 1 to 6 in S5, or 1 to 5 in S6, in order of importance, with number 1 being the course that is most important to a young person.
* Finally, pupils also write down two reserve courses. It’s very important that students are happy to study these options for reasons I will explain next.

2.

* Reserve choices are necessary because a student might not be able to do every course requested – and this could be for a variety of reasons
* Maybe not enough students have selected a course so it’s not running
* Or, on the other hand, too many pupils may have signed up for a course and decisions have to be made for the greatest good
* Or, a pupil might have requested two subjects that have had to be timetabled at the same time
* So you can see why it’s vital that young people make reserve choices on which they are happy to follow through
* We will try to give pupils what you want, but sometimes it’s just not possible

3.

* Right, on to the timescale for this year’s coursing
* Pupils should be ready for a meeting with their PSL between Monday 23 January and Friday 3 February
* Pupils must bring their signed option form to that meeting
* Once all the requests are in, they will be fed into a computer program and the program sorts out the choices to the overall highest satisfaction rate
* Individual coursing is then reviewed and, if necessary, we’ll talk to pupils then about their requests
* This is a complex and lengthy process, with lots of things to be balanced, so confirmed choices are available just prior to the start of the new timetable at the beginning of June

4.

* This is all quite a lot to take in but there’s plenty of support out there to help
* Pupils should take on board what teachers say in reports and look at the progression routes teachers have recommended
* Work through all the materials on the school website. Don’t just look at course names on the option form – take time to explore the course descriptions in the option booklet. Materials will be posted on the website around 16 January. Pupils will also be given an option sheet.
* And ask at the school office if a hard copy of the option booklet is required
* Then, there are people available to speak to: Barbara and Bahiya, both of whom you’ve heard from tonight, as well as myself
* And, of course, pupils should always approach their pupil support leader whenever they require guidance. Over the next few weeks PSLs will be focussing in PSE on all matters course choice so it should be easy to ask any questions.

5.

* Finally, the message that I would like to go to young people is that in their deliberations over course choice they should be ambitious about what they can achieve but realistic about any barriers that could hold them back.
* And they should ask themselves why they are choosing to continue with a subject- or not. Are they making the choice for the right reasons? They need to be honest with themselves. Is it their choice? Or their friend’s? It’s far too late for that kind of decision-making now.
* And whilst students in S5 and S6 should try to make sure that their S5 and S6 experience paves the way for whatever they wish to do on leaving school, not every course needs to be directly related to that pathway. There is still time and space for learning for learning’s sake.
* We will provide an interesting and carefully-considered selection of courses and what we ask from our students in S5 and S6 is commitment, hard work and good attendance.
* And on that note, we come to the end of tonight’s presentation. Now this isn’t the best forum, perhaps, for posing questions but in a second I will ask if there is anything anyone wants to ask. And all of tonight’s speakers will be available at the end if you would like to speak to us privately. So … any questions?
* Okay, I thing we will draw things to a conclusion there. Thank you very much for coming out on this dark January evening and I hope it won’t be long until you’re sitting at home with a nice, warming cup of tea. Good night.