

Fife Education Authority

MADRAS COLLEGE, ST. ANDREWS

South Street Building
KY16 9EJ
Tel. No. (0334) 75733.

Kilrymont Road Building
KY16 8DE
Tel. No. (0334) 75777.

D.D. GALLOWAY, Rector.

J.L. HODGE, Depute Rector.



Please reply to ----- July, 1986 -----

Dear Parent,

Although the end of session creeps ever further into July without any corresponding extension at the other end of the holidays, the delay merely increases the eagerness with which staff and pupils look forward to the prospect of enjoying sunlit summer days unhampered by the demands of the school routine.

By comparison with its immediate predecessors the term has been pleasantly uneventful. Because of the welcome end to strikes, many people outside the teaching profession make the mistake of assuming that the conflict is over and schools have returned to normal. However, it has to be emphasised that action of various kinds is continuing and this still has a very considerable impact. We are not yet in a position to meet parents or send home reports. Since curriculum development still cannot take place, the introduction of Standard Grade examinations and 16+ modules is further delayed, while the important recommendations contained in the recently published 10 - 14 report look like being shelved for the foreseeable future. Worst of all, the ban on extra-curricular activities remains in force and because its effects are more obvious and immediate, it bites more deeply than any of the others. One hopes that the collective wisdom of the Main Committee will provide a route out of the present impasse, but it would be foolish to be too hopeful, since the outcome is not entirely in their hands. The uncompromising line which appears in the evidence submitted by the SED and COSLA is not encouraging, and even if the final proposals are acceptable to the unions, the government still has to agree to the necessary funding. Even on the most optimistic forecast, agreement before Christmas seems no more than a remote possibility.

An analysis of this term's 3rd Year results suggests that although there are areas of concern, no irretrievable harm has been done, and in fact the general picture is much more encouraging than might have been supposed. The effect of the action seems to have been reflected in an unsettled attitude rather than in the quality of the work itself.

Thanks to the efforts of Mrs Gilroy and her team of invigilators, the SCE examinations were administered without a hitch, but, even with this good start, the real test will be the results. Even in normal circumstances it is always difficult to predict in advance of results how many pupils will return to S5 and S6. However, present indications are that the numbers returning in August will be much larger than usual. Although a greater degree of uncertainty is understandable this year, I would advise parents to think carefully about the wisdom of making pupils return, particularly to S6, although it is also true of S5, if the results suggest that they have reached the ceiling of their achievement. If it is evident that they are not coping with the type of work we offer in S5/6, which of necessity is fairly academic, then it is much better to face up to the situation and make a fresh start, whether it is employment or college or YTS, instead of returning to school simply to leave one year older and no better off in terms of results, when finding something else will be much more difficult. I say this not because I wish to turn people away, but because I believe it to be in the best interests of quite a number of pupils not to remain in the sheltered environment of school after they have outgrown its usefulness. I very much hope that in the not too distant future we shall be able to offer 16+ modules which will offer pupils whose talents do not lie in an academic

direction better opportunities than the traditional subjects. Since this is something we cannot do at present, it is sensible for those in this category to seek appropriate courses elsewhere.

For those who are returning to S5/6, the time between one set of Certificate examinations and the next is all too short for all that has to be done. The school has always tried to use the month of July as profitably as possible to gain much needed extra teaching time. It is, therefore, disappointing to find so many parents having to take children away from school at this time because of family holiday commitments. While I have deliberately placed the emphasis on the Certificate years, a fortnight's unscheduled break in the work pattern is inopportune at any stage. If several pupils are absent from a class, it is difficult to introduce new work, the momentum of the teaching is lost and the interest of those who are present is harder to maintain. Also, since it suggests both to those who are away and to the others that school does not really matter, the quite widespread absence of pupils on holiday inevitably devalues the whole importance of school. While I recognise the difficulties that parents face in timing their holidays, I think they perhaps forget that it is not the one individual absence which creates the difficulty, it is the cumulative effect of many. In the South Street building the absence rate, for holidays only and not for other reasons, is 8%. That seems to me to be too high. If a holiday during term is absolutely unavoidable, it is helpful if parents give us some advance notice, so that there is time for the pupil to find out what the work of the class will be and if there is anything they can do during the holiday. Maintaining a routine of study is important and, for instance, even an hour a day spent reading a book during the holiday would be of great value later in the course and no great hardship at the time.

To my surprise, a number of people have commented unfavourably on the standard of dress of our pupils even to the extent of wondering whether there had been a change of policy since my arrival. I should, therefore, perhaps take this opportunity to make my position clear and lay to rest forever, I hope, the implied suggestion that I am not in favour of uniform. One of the school's most noticeable features is its strong sense of identity as a community. Wearing the uniform is one of the obvious ways for pupils to identify with the school and feel that they belong. A school is very often judged by appearances and, even though that may be an entirely superficial method of judgement, I am in no doubt about the value to the school and to everyone in it of a good public image. I think that most people, parents, staff and even pupils themselves, recognise that appearances count and support the idea that Madras should continue to be a uniform wearing school. I believe that is one of the reasons why so many parents make the effort to provide uniform and why the general standard of dress throughout the school, whatever the critics may say, is, in my opinion, very good indeed. Of course, that is not to say that it could not be improved. For instance, greys and blacks are sometimes worn when the official colour is navy. Extremes of fashion creep in. Boys in jeans, sweat shirts, black leather jackets and military style combat boots and girls in short tight skirts and high heels, which incidentally are damaging some of the floors quite badly, do nothing for the image of the school. Blazers unfortunately, in spite of the blazer exchange scheme about which you should already have information, are perhaps being worn less than they once were. They are costly and they are difficult to wear with outdoor clothing of the anorak type. However, there is now a navy sweater with the school badge to which neither of these objections apply. What is important is that the total effect of a uniform wearing school is maintained. That is where we depend on your support and we appreciate the effort you make. I am convinced it is worthwhile. And, please, do not lend too much credence to stories which may come home suggesting that no one bothers and everyone wears what they like. We want uniform to be worn, and, if you have taken the trouble to provide it, you can help us more than anyone else by insisting that it is worn every school day.

I have known people, usually fellow members of the teaching profession, who were unkind enough to wonder what Rectors found to do. One of my major preoccupations this

term has been with the staffing for next session. In spite of everything that is said about surplus teachers, they still remain remarkably difficult to find, no matter what the vacancy is. In some subjects such as Physics and Business Studies, they are almost a vanishing species, since better pay and conditions make other professions far more attractive. However, this year's difficulties appear to have been overcome and we should start the session with our full quota of staff.

Nevertheless, we are always anxious to supplement our list of part-time teachers who can be called on to provide the extra help which is almost invariably required sooner or later. It may be that among the readers of this letter or their friends there are former teachers who may have recently moved into this area or whose families are now old enough to allow them to return to the classroom, at least on a part-time basis. If so, we would very much like to hear from anyone who is interested in returning, especially if they happen to be qualified in Science.

Apart from staffing, the other main task of the term has been a restructuring of the Assistant Rector posts within the school. While there were sound internal reasons for doing this, the changes are also in accordance with Regional and national recommendations for greater flexibility in the management of schools. The old titles of Administration, Curriculum (Guidance) and Leisure disappear and each of the Assistant Rectors now has a range of administrative, curricular and pastoral responsibilities. Instead of an Assistant Rector, Guidance, having total responsibility for pastoral care throughout the school, this function is now shared by them all through the assignment of each Assistant Rector to a particular year group. Although the Assistant Rectors will primarily be concerned with organisation and co-ordination, while the Yearteachers retain their present day to day responsibility and remain the first point of reference for parents with enquiries or problems, the Assistant Rectors are likely to be much more directly involved than in the past with parents and individual pupils over questions of discipline, attendance and progress. The time consuming process of restructuring has meant a delay in filling the vacant Assistant Rector post, currently held on an acting basis, by Mr Christie, but arrangements are now in hand for a permanent appointment to be made early next session. The allocation of Assistant Rectors to year groups is: S5/6 - Miss Taylor; S4 - Mr Paterson; S3 - Mr Halliday; S2 - Mr Christie; S1 - Mr Edgar.

The term has brought the usual crop of staff changes. Mr William Macmillan joined the Chemistry Department after Easter and we welcome him to the school.

Miss Alison MacDonald of the Home Economics Department becomes the second member of our staff to be promoted this year to an APT post at Woodmill High School. Mr Alan MacLean, who has made a considerable contribution to the musical life of the school by his skilled piano teaching and his assistance at concerts, is leaving for a promoted post at Cheltenham Ladies College. Mr Neil Ronaldson remains with us, but succeeds Mr Neilson as APT PE. To these three hard working young teachers we offer our congratulations on promotions which are well-deserved.

Mr David Stewart (Business Studies) and Mr Peter Lindsay (Physics) leave to take up teaching posts elsewhere. Mr Andrew English, who was temporarily attached to the P E Department, leaves to complete his training on the primary schools circuit. Miss Gloria Dunsire (Mathematics) is leaving teaching for the world of computing. We thank them all for their work for the school and wish them every success in their future careers.

Transfer of staff, brought about by government restrictions on local authority spending and by the effect of falling rolls, is a category of staff change that the school has hitherto managed to avoid. However, this year in order to meet the Regional staffing quota, we have been very reluctantly obliged to put Mr Michael Williams of the Technical Department on the transfer list. It is perhaps some consolation that his move is no further than Bell Baxter and we wish him well there.

Because of SCE examinations and the May leaving date, the services of supply teachers are less in demand in the summer term. However, we are extremely grateful to Mrs Neil, Mrs Tait and, in the last few days, Mr Reid for so willingly providing the help that has been necessary.

Amid the general dearth of extra-curricular activities, it is pleasant to be able to record a number of successes gained by our pupils. The Department of Special Education pupils won 2nd prize in Group 3 (3rd/4th Year Secondary) of the Royal Highland Show Schools Shield Competition for a project on farming. Their visit to the show to receive their award took place in torrential rain but, as befits future farmers, their enjoyment of the day was in no way diminished by the adverse conditions.

In the Scottish Co-operative Society's School Art Project Kathryn Millar (3H) won the 1st Local and 1st Scottish Prize, while the 2nd Local Prize was won by Richard Johnson (3D) and the 3rd by Joanna Stewart (3C).

The school did extremely well in two competitions organised by the Scottish Mathematics Council. In the junior section of the Mathematical Challenge for schools in Fife, Tayside and Central Regions, Nicola Starritt (2A) was placed 2nd out of 194 pupils. In the senior section of 185 pupils the school had two prizewinners, Thomas Richardson (3E) 5th equal and Peter Craik (4B) 11th equal, while Barry Shields (5L) 24th equal received an honourable mention. Thomas Richardson's performance was especially noteworthy, since many of his opponents were from senior classes. He also distinguished himself by gaining the 3rd Year Prize in the Council's project competition with his project on Prime Numbers. Projects on 'Gridbugs', 'Chris Maths' and 'Rising Squares' gained honourable mentions for Shona McGill (1L), Kate Bowden (2E) and Elaine Douglas (5L) in their respective categories. Since this competition is open to all schools in Scotland and there is only one prize and one or two honourable mentions in each category, the Madras College achievement is quite remarkable and augurs well for the future of Mathematics in the school.

In the Scottish Sailing Championships at North Berwick at the end of May, Graham Paton was 1st in the schools competition and Walter Mouat 4th. Along with Bradley Daniel, their combined efforts led to Madras College being placed 1st overall.

In the Scottish Golf Championship at Troon the Madras College team of Martin Hastie (4E), Finlay Coull (6A) and Brian Moffat (5Y) won the team event, while Martin Hastie won the individual title after a play-off. All three boys have been included in the Scottish team to play against the English schools team at Formby.

A success on an entirely different level is also worthy of record. A staff team, Mr Wills, Mr Cuthbert and Mr Monteith won the St Andrews Citizen Quiz Trophy for the third time in six years.

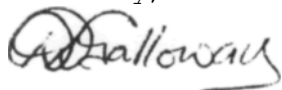
We continue to be indebted to the Rotary Club of St Andrews for the very practical interest they take in the school and its activities. They are sponsoring two of our pupils, Richard Grey (5L) and Guy Devereux (4C) on Rotary Youth International Leadership Awards which will enable them to attend an Outward Bound course at the Abernethy Outdoor Centre. The Club are also giving a £50 prize for an essay competition on 'Citizenship*' and a debating trophy for annual competition within the school.

Trips abroad, which were in a sufficiently advanced state of preparation before the extra-curricular ban tightened its grip, were able to go ahead. The ski trip to Austria at Easter was a great success in spite of a minor injury or two. A group has just returned from Kiel after taking part in the thirtieth exchange. My German opposite number has expressed the hope that next year will mark the start of another thirty equally successful exchanges and I would certainly echo his sentiments. Plans for a Classic_Department trip to Italy are well under way and a larger number of pupils than ever before will see at first hand some of the wonders of Greco-Roman civilisation.

On the musical side Jennifer Eraser (4A) has gained the TSB Music Award and David Squires (5L) the Professor Newnham Scholarship, while a recent concert in the Younger Hall not only demonstrated the range of the school's musical activities and provided an excellent evening's entertainment but helped to raise £1067 in aid of the St Andrews Hostel for the Mentally Handicapped. A collection within the school, suggested by the pupils themselves as a tribute to Mr Broom, raised the quite remarkable sum of £257. In order to encourage others to display these personal qualities which were Mr Broom's unique contribution to school life, his family is giving a trophy for annual award to a pupil who shows personal qualities of an outstanding kind. The first winner is Karen Martin (5X2). In taking this opportunity of expressing our appreciation to Mrs Broom, we would wish to thank her not only for the generous gesture but also for the thought that has gone into devising an appropriate form for the award.

I referred earlier to the school's strong sense of identity. It is the sort of quality which has, I believe, helped us to hold together and come through a troubled year without experiencing many of the difficulties which occurred elsewhere. I would thank parents, staff and pupils for their support throughout the year and end by wishing you all a pleasant and enjoyable summer holiday.

Yours sincerely,



Rector.

School Holidays

The school re-opens for pupils on Wednesday 20th August, 1986

<u>October Holiday</u>	Monday, 6th October 1986
<u>Autumn Holiday</u>	Monday 20th to Friday 24th October 1986
<u>Christmas Holiday</u>	Monday 22nd December 1986 to Friday 2nd January 1987 (All dates are inclusive)