

Pauline Walker, Rector August 2015 to present day

Before Pauline joined the Royal High, she was head teacher at Gracemount High School for five years.

Pauline's reminiscence is in the form of an informal summary of topics, along with her first three summaries of the School year in the 2014, 2015 and 2016 Annual Reports.



Curriculum

A major curriculum change has taken place during my tenure. The 2014-2015 Full in-School review, in response to the CFE national review, produced a new Curriculum.

This involved S1-S3 following a fourteen subject programme, centred on skills acquisition, with a maximum class size of 33. S4-S6 pupils followed a cohort approach to their education, with a free choice of up to seven subjects, with a maximum class size of 30.

Careers advice is available continuously, with a careers pathway approach. Developing Young Workforce (DYP), support with CV authoring, and working with over 50 business partners with frequent short term work placements.

Building

My time at School has seen disasters and triumphs in the building front.

The enquiry into the building failure and subsequent closure has been concluded and reported. On the credit side, many improvements have been made, including the following:

- £1 million PE facilities improvement, including new changing and additional storage
- A new gym in the old grubby
- Refurbished grubby quad with new outdoor dining facilities
- New curtains in the assembly hall
- Digital projectors and Apple TVs in all classrooms
- New AstroTurf field (2014)

Memorable moments

- New teachers practice for the School song. Other teachers hiding nearby during the embarrassing result
- Ice bucket challenge
- St Giles academic service, with senior pupils trying on the Lord Provosts chain of office
- S3 Battlefield trip
- Eric Brown Mountbatten lecture
- Hong Kong visit – Leung Leung No 1 school

Memorable people

- Frank Lagan, Ruffitybuffs instigator and inspirational leader. They create a pantomimes which are performed at retirement homes and local primary schools. The probationer teachers have to perform in Babygro suits. Frank has been unwell, but has recovered and moved on to another school.
- Tom Baciarelli, inspirational English teacher, started the Dance shows.
- Maria Anderson, specialised in leading foreign trips.
- Dave Hill, started the Duke of Edinburgh Award participation. RHS is now has the largest Scottish schools participation in the scheme.
- Luke McCullough, tireless parent Council leader.
- The wonderful work that many volunteers undertake throughout the School.
- The Pupils, the Staff.

What's next?

- The 50th anniversary of the Barnton campus
- The excavation of the Barnton House grotto
- ICT refresh
- First year pupils entering School through the Memorial Door
- Creation of Brass Plaques for the 1939-1945 FP War dead

Annual Report overviews

2016-2017

- Very positive set of SQA results
- In S1-3 students have made very good progress in their Curriculum for Excellence courses
- Within National 5 65% of learners achieved at least 5 passes and 21 young people achieved excellent results with 8 passes at A.
- The majority of our students are now able to gain an award in at least one Higher by the end of S5 (78%). A significant number of pupils gained 5 A band awards at Higher in S5 and 3 A band awards at Advanced Higher in S6.
- Wider achievement also continues to be an area of strength, with pupils being presented for a number of volunteering awards, as well as engaging with programmes such as JET (Jobs, Education and Training), Career Academies and the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative. Opportunities to perform, participate and compete in a wide range of extra-curricular activities such as Sports, Arts, Music and Dance.
- We continue to lead the way nationally in our ICT provision and all our S3-6 pupils are now equipped with iPad devices which they use both in school and at home.
- One of our key projects this year has been developing our Outdoor Classroom space which opened in February 2016 with a wonderful torch lit ceremony led by the fantastic Davidson Mains Pipe Band.
- Our Parent Staff Association (PSA) changed their name this year to The Royal High School Parent Fundraising Group to enable them to be more informally involved with the school.
- We provide a wide variety of opportunities for our pupils including residential trips. So far this session we had a very successful German exchange in December followed by a very enjoyable ski trip to France in March and our Romanian Habitat for Humanity trip will also take place.
- We also planned an action-packed Activities Week in May. Our S1 pupils travelled to Belmont Outdoor Centre for a week of outdoor education and gained many fantastic memories. 140 of our S3 pupils travelled to the Belgian WW1 battlefields for a real life-changing experience.
- Our Former Pupils Edinburgh and London clubs continue to work very closely with the school and support us in many ways including attending our events and services, providing work experience, giving inspirational talks and mentoring. Our School and Nation Captains again attended the Edinburgh dinner, while School Captain Angus Farquhar gave excellent after-dinner speeches at both Edinburgh and London dinners

2015-2016

- Both National 5 and Higher pass rates were over target and outperformed our comparator schools
- Positive destinations – 98% for 2015 Leavers with 50% to Higher Education
- ICT provision – all S4 to S6 now have iPads
- Wider Achievement an area of strength from the Duke of Edinburgh Awards to participation in a wide variety of programmes, including Sports, Outdoor activities, Music, Dance and travel
- Overseas visits and exchange: many European destinations were involved, including the Belgian Battlefields; a German exchange, also the Romanian Habitat for Humanity project. In Scotland, the Dounans trip enabled a vast range of activities, enjoyed by many despite the midges!
- There was a major and widely reported and condemned building disruption after Easter, when much of the School was declared unsafe and out of bounds, due to structural building defects which were found to be endemic, the cause being faulty building practices. Portacabins were erected in the playground to accommodate S1 and S2, and much disruption was experienced by all, included those sitting SQA examinations in May. Administration and the Senior Leadership team were excluded from their premises, and the Rector was to be seen ensconced on the memorial chair in one of the interview rooms near the hall (serving as her office), with her hi-vis jacket and hard hat hanging on the chair.
- The parent Council mobilised many Parents in campaigning via TV, Radio and the Press to find a quick solution to what was to become a nationally critical state of events.
- On the Staffing front, it was goodbye to Maria Anderson (teacher from 1989-2016) and Evelyn Smith, Librarian since 1993. It was also goodbye in October to Tom Baciarelli, who as Head of English shared fifty years in the post with his predecessor Sandy Forsyth and gave 35 years' service to the school

2014-2015

- SQA National 5 – 63% gained 5 passes, 36% 8 passes
- Positive destinations – 93% for 2014 Leavers with 50% to Higher Education
- ICT provision – from August, all S4 to S6 will have iPads, while S1 to S3 have access via ‘labs’ and roaming iPads
- Wider curriculum supports a huge number of initiatives, including Strictly Come Dancing, Christmas Concert, Summer dance show and Music concerts
- Overseas visits and exchange: Many European destinations were involved, including the WWI Battlefields in Alsace and Belgium, also skiing in Les Deux Alpes. A German exchange (Mannheim) took place, also the Romanian Habitat for Humanity project. In Scotland, the Dounans trip enabled a vast range of activities for S1.
- Sporting success was achieved in many sports, including Rugby, where Charlie Shiel and Ross McCann played in the Scotland U18 side. Other highlights included the U16’s who reached the final of the National Plate competition, while the Edinburgh 7’s Trophy was retained. The Rugby Tour to South Africa had the impressive record of 5 wins in 7 games. In Athletics, Ellie McGinty was the talisman (woman?), representing Scotland along with several others. Badminton, Curling, Football, Gymnastics, Netball and Volleyball all had International representation by our students, while Squash and Swimming had Regional representatives.
- On the Staffing front, it was goodbye to Carol Stewart of the Mathematics Department after 36 years, Helen McHarrie, teacher of English after 28 years, and Joan Scott, curricular leader in Support for Learning after 22 years.

Pauline’s personal CV

I believe the post of Rector in a school should ensure all pupils have the opportunity to work hard, enjoy their school experience and maximise their potential for high attainment and wider achievement

It is vital the school community has confidence in the leadership of a school and throughout my time in senior management I have developed the skills necessary to engender trust and confidence. I believe I have successfully led during my time as Headteacher and achieved good attainment trends across a 5 year span as well as a recent strong, positive Inspection report. My experience across a wide variety of senior management remits has enabled me to evolve a strong vision for an innovative educational provision.

I studied a BSC in Computer Science in Heriot Watt followed by a PGDE at Edinburgh University. I qualified in 1998 as a teacher of Computing and Maths. I am passionate about lifelong learning and attained my Scottish Qualification in Headship through Edinburgh University in 2006.

I am married to an ICT geek and have two small boys (5 and 9 in 2017). I am an addicted horse rider of some 35+ years and have a Warmblood called Mini whom I regularly compete in dressage and show jumping. In any spare time left I am an avid reader of anything I can get my hands on!

I am passionate about education and dedicated to improving outcomes for all young people. I firmly believe we need to continually strive for excellence in Scotland to improve attainment at all levels and provide innovative opportunities for learners to gain a wide skill set relevant for their destination of choice.