

Copy of the letter sent to all Parents of Pupils enrolled in the opening session of the new Whitburn Academy: August 1967

Dear Parent or Guardian,

As Rector of the new Whitburn Academy, I wish to take this opportunity of welcoming your son or daughter to the new Academy and to express the hope that I shall have the opportunity of seeing all the parents not in the mass for then I see none but in class groups during the session, and from time to time over personal problems of your son or daughters education.

The first will for the great majority of pupils be a "Common Course" when classes will be grouped alphabetically. This poses problems for teacher and pupil alike. Some pupils are quick in learning, some are slow but sure and some are slow but not so sure. In consequence the pace of instruction and learning will take to the tempo from the slower pupil but the quickest will be encouraged to do more and the slowest to retain what they learn. On earth as well as elsewhere there are many mansions, many opportunities for all who are willing to work and learn. Some learn more by mental process, some learn more by doing. It is the duty of a comprehensive school to provide the opportunity for both and encourage movement if possible from the lower to the Higher grade.

There will be in the First Year Secondary Course, 11 classes of whom 80% of the pupils will have the common course which will include French, the other subjects being English, History, Geography, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Technical or Homecraft Subjects, Physical Education and Religious Instruction. The remaining 20% will have a more modified course which will not include French.

In the Second Year the classes will be streamed, 2A will have two languages other than English but will not have Technical or Homecraft Subjects. The next 7 classes of the Second Year will have one language other than English, namely French and other subjects as in first year. The ninth class will be a Practical class, French will be deleted and other modifications made as and when necessary. In their groupings the views of the parents will be taken into account.

In the Third Year, Commerce will be introduced for those who wish it and can profit by it. Apart from classes 3A and 3A2, a choice of History or Geography will be given. But the aim will be to admit as much flexibility as possible in the choice of courses for Scottish Certificate of Education presentation the door will be open fairly wide and everyone who has the remotest chance will be encouraged to sit.

Further regrouping of subjects may take place at the end of the Third Year and in the light of SCE performance again at the end of class 4 and class 5 bearing in the choice of a career.

All pupils in their Certificate Years will be invited to consult the Rector at anytime during the session about their work. In times past able students took the wrong course by wrong thinking and by choice dependent upon whim.

For some reason or other it was assumed by some that to be a technologist you had to have a practical course and therefore the library or "academic" course was unsuitable. A technological training is based on Advanced Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry through a course in Technical Drawing is desirable.

Girls too have been inclined to think that the training suitable for a secretary is chiefly Shorthand and Typing. These indeed are essential skills but every business executive knows that the most important ingredient is a good general education to which other skills are added.

The purpose therefore of a Comprehensive School is to see that the best use is made of whatever talents nature has given to each boy and girl.

In this connection I would warn parents and especially fathers not to expect their children to take up where they left off. Most of them will do, others will not but with encouragement and understanding at home and encouragement and application within the classroom the end product can be a triumph for all. To this end I invite the co-operation of parents.

D.K. Somerville

Rector