

Dear Parents

It is my pleasure to report our 2009-2010 SQA examinations results to you.

As a small school, often with very small presentation numbers both in whole year groups and in individual subjects, we are subject to wide statistical variations from year to year in terms of the overall baseline ability of a given age group cohort and in terms of the performances “on the day” of individual pupils. We have always focused on the attainment of each individual child in the context of their baseline ability as being of the greatest importance to us but the way in which some results are now reported in the national media, often in isolation, out of context and without reference to the whole picture, has resulted in a change to our previous policy in this regard. I trust, therefore, that you find the following information helpful and informative and, as always, I am happy to discuss these matters in even greater detail with any individual parent.

This letter outlines in some detail the overall picture in terms of percentage pass rates at different levels and also compares key statistics against recent years and places them in the context of national results. A large number of pupils at all levels, and across the ability range, attained some outstanding levels of individual success, and they are to be congratulated on their achievements.

I will also endeavour to explain to you the statistical basis on which the results are calculated nationally. Also it is important to note that these results are pre-Appeals and we would expect a number of pupils to be awarded improved grades after this process is completed

### **Advanced Higher**

From our Senior 6 cohort of only 9 pupils this year there were a total of 13 presentations in Advanced Higher examinations, across 7 different subjects, in addition to a number of Highers, the SQA Community Involvement module and the *ifs* Foundation Certificate in Personal Finance, which are both compulsory elements of our Senior 6 programme. Our Senior 6 achieved a commendable A-C pass rate of 71%, this figure being comparable with the results at this level in recent years [75% in 0809].

The range of presentation subjects at Advanced Higher level varies from year to year based upon demand from pupils, and this forthcoming session’s array of 10 subjects is typical of the School’s provision at this level.

### **Higher Grade**

The School offers SQA presentation in no fewer than 17 different subjects at Higher Grade. In 2009-2010 our Senior 5 & 6 groups, taken together, tackled a total of 154 individual Higher Grade examinations, achieving a pass rate of just over 75%. This represents an improvement on the equivalent statistic in recent years. It is important to note that the School’s revised Presentation Policy, introduced in August 2009, while strengthening the position of the School in withdrawing some pupils in Senior 5 from Higher examinations for which there is little or no evidence of a possible pass in that year, does continue to allow Senior 6 pupils to attempt Highers in which there is, at best, limited prospect of success and Senior 5 pupils where there is only some prospective of success – therefore, in some subjects and in the overall position, there is still a commensurate negative impact on these raw statistics.

**However, it is important to remember that the manner in which the “pass rate” at Higher Grade is quoted in the media expresses the number of examinations passed at the end of Senior 5 as a percentage of the roll in that year group in the preceding Senior 4. In the case of our current Senior 5 cohort of 33 pupils sitting their Highers in May 2010, the number of pupils in the group in September 2008, when the group commenced Senior 4 was, in fact, 40.** This means, for example, that even if all 33 pupils were capable of tackling 5 Highers and successfully passed them, the quoted statistic would still only be

83% instead of 100%. Each of our Senior 5 group this year represents 3.0% of our results. The impact of this statistical methodology this year is as detailed below.

Of our 33 pupils, 12 pupils achieved passes in 5 or more Highers [6 of these pupils passed 6 Highers], a percentage of 36%; however, this percentage will appear in any media "league tables" as 30%. 21 pupils achieved passes in 3 or more Highers, a percentage of 64% but will appear as 53% and 30 pupils achieved passes in 1 or more Highers, a percentage of 91% but it will appear as 75%.

You will note from the table below that these results reflect significant improvement in recent years but also our usual wide statistical variations which can result from small year group sizes.

There were some excellent individual performances, with one pupil achieving 6 A passes, a further three achieving 5 As, five pupils achieving 4 A passes among their five Highers and a number achieving 3 A passes. **An excellent 38% of all Senior 5 presentations resulted in "A" passes.**

**Percentage of Senior 5 cohort [expressed as a percentage of the September Senior 4 roll] achieving:**

	<b>0910</b>	0809	0708	0607	0506	0405
5 or more Highers:	<b>30%</b>	25%	7%	19%	21%	25%
3 or more Highers:	<b>53%</b>	43%	32%	35%	50%	47%
1 or more Highers:	<b>75%</b>	82%	93%	69%	75%	72%

As always, it is our policy to put the interests of individual pupils ahead of any considerations of the overall position for the School and once again this year, as in all preceding years, there are several pupils who did not sit a full range of 5 Highers in order to maximise their grades in the three or four which they undertook. You will appreciate that in such a small sample such decisions also have a negative impact on overall statistics.

A number of pupils in Senior 4, 5 & 6 were also presented for Intermediate 2 examinations in a range of subjects. A total of 82 examinations were tackled, with a pass rate of 71%. Pupils also tackled a total of 15 examinations at Intermediate 1 level with a pass rate of 80%.

**Standard Grade**

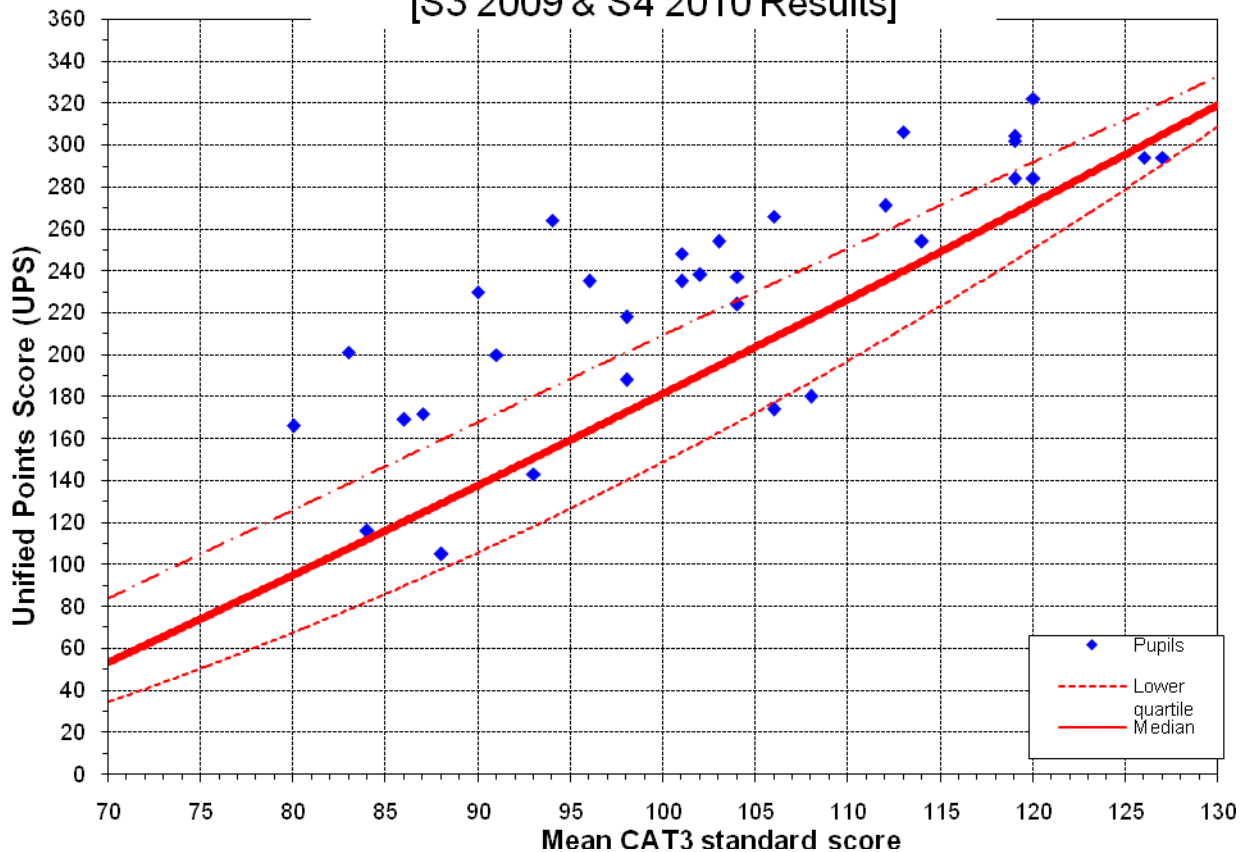
Our Senior 3 cohort was again presented for Standard Grade examinations. 31 pupils tackled a total of 239 examinations, with 79% of all results at Grades 1-3. The equivalent statistic has consistently been in the range of approximately 80% of all results at Grade 1-3 for the last few academic sessions, including presentations at both Senior 3 and Senior 4.

**Value-Added**

In order to compare success at different presentation levels, the Scottish Qualifications Authority uses what are referred to as Unified Points Scores (UPS) – this system assigns a number of points that compares, for example, A-C passes in Intermediate 1, 2, Higher or Advanced Higher courses with Grade 1-7 awards at Standard Grade. For example, a Grade 1 at Standard Grade is worth 38 points, a Grade 2, 28 points and a Grade 3, 22 points. Similarly, a top band "A" pass at Intermediate 2 is worth 45 points, a lower band "A" 42 points, a "B" 38 or 35 points, and a "C" pass 31 or 28 points.

Using this classification, we measure the results of our Senior 4 pupils in relation to their baseline Cognitive Abilities Test scores and compare them with pupils of comparable ability nationwide. This data is graphically represented below for last year's Senior 4 group, incorporating their successes at S-Grade in Senior 3 in 2009 and also reflecting Intermediate 1 and 2 examinations taken in their Senior 4 year in 2010.

CAT3 to S4 Unified Points Score - August 2010  
[S3 2009 & S4 2010 Results]



Nationally, we would expect 25% of all pupils to lie below the lower dotted line (the Lower Quartile), 50% to lie between the Lower Quartile and the Upper Quartile (the higher dotted line) and 25% to lie above the Upper Quartile. The Median line [the solid line on the graph above] splits the dataset in half and so shows the UPS achieved nationally by a typical pupil for any given mean Cognitive Abilities Test score. The upper line (Upper Quartile) shows the UPS achieved by pupils at the top 25 per cent of the distribution; the lower line (Lower Quartile) shows the results achieved by pupils at the bottom 25 per cent of the distribution. Half of the pupils, 50% of the national sample, fall on or between the upper and lower quartile lines.

As is reflected visually on the graph above, 63% of Belmont pupils achieve results that place them in the Upper Quartile and, indeed, 81% are above the Median – only 19% lie below the Median and only 2 pupils [6%] are in the lowest Quartile, representing genuine “value-added” against baseline assessment scores across the ability range. By the end of Senior 4 our pupils gain, on average, 35 UPS points more than they would be reasonably expected to do in relation to their baseline ability – this equates to Grade 1 or A passes that would otherwise have been Grade 2 or B passes etc, Grade 2s that would otherwise have been Grade 3s etc.

We believe this form of analysis demonstrates the true “value-added” across the entire ability range that a Belmont House education affords. In effect it shows that Belmont delivers results which are better than could be expected of each of our pupils having regard to their innate, baseline abilities.

**Summary**

I trust that you find the above information helpful. Please do bear in mind, as we repeatedly say, that our very small class sizes can produce wide statistical variations from year to year, reflecting variations in the baseline ability of pupils and also individual circumstances which are much more evident in such small sample sizes.

As always I would be delighted to discuss these matters in greater depth with any parent.

For those of you interested in further statistical analysis, please refer to the attached Appendix which explores these results in the context of nationally produced data.

## Appendix – Detailed Analysis

In the context of any statistical analysis of our academic results, you will appreciate that several key factors must be borne in mind. The School has always had a strong sibling policy in relation to admissions and the reality is that this can potentially have a negative impact on the academic “strength” of any given year group; our presentations groups, both in terms of overall year group size and the number of pupils sitting individual examinations, particularly at Higher and Advanced Higher level, can be very small, and therefore we can be subject to wide statistical variations from year-to-year; and large variations in annual performance can also be evident through the impact [positive or negative] of a few individual pupils.

Accordingly, we also use the extensive range of statistics produced by ScotXed, which is part of the Education and Analytical Services division within the Education Directorate of the Scottish Government, to analyse our own performance and make comparison with the national position and our own nearest competitors. The STACs data below [STACs stands for Standard Tables and Charts], taken directly from the ScotXed database, provides us with a three-year rolling average of our pupils’ performance by the end of Senior 6, again based on the Roll when that cohort were in Senior 4. We find that this form of analysis helps to counteract the wide statistical fluctuations that arise from very small presentations but it is important to bear in mind that even a three-year average for us represents a total of approximately 100 pupils, still a significantly smaller statistical base than even one year group in any of the local East Renfrewshire schools and almost all of our [generally much larger] independent neighbours.

**\*\*Please note that the data below does NOT include the 2010 results\*\***

### NP Measures for Belmont House School (Independent Schools), STACs 2009 post-appeals

**Table 1:** Belmont House School 3-Year Average Percentages and NCDs based on S4 Roll for awards achieved by the end of S6

	NP 1.1 C		NP 1.2 A		NP 1.2 B		NP 1.2 C		NP 1.2 D		NP 1.2 E		NP 1.2 F	
	Eng & Maths		5+ Level 3		5+ Level 4		5+ Level 5		1+ Level 6		3+ Level 6		5+ Level 6	
	%	NCD	%	NCD	%	NCD	%	NCD	%	NCD	%	NCD	%	NCD
2007-09	106	100	109	100	106	100	76	1	88	1	55	1	36	1
2006-08	99	1	100	100	96	1	73	1	76	1	56	1	39	1
2005-07	96	4	99	1	94	1	72	1	74	1	59	1	39	1
2004-06	96	3	98	2	95	1	76	1	77	1	56	1	39	1
2003-05	97	3	99	1	97	1	77	1	80	1	56	1	41	1

The levels referred to above are from Scottish Credit & Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and identify the % of the original Senior 4 cohort who, by the end of Senior 6, have achieved:

- NP 1.1C      Eng & Maths    S-Grade Foundation Level or better in English & Mathematics
- NP 1.2A      5+ Level 3        5 or more passes at S-Grade Foundation Level or better
- NP 1.2B      5+ Level 4        5 or more passes at S-Grade General Level or Intermediate 1 or better

NP 1.2C	5+ Level 5	5 or more passes at S-Grade Credit Level or Intermediate 2 or better
NP 1.2D	1+ Level 6	1 or more passes at H-Grade or better
NP 1.2E	3+ Level 6	3 or more passes at H-Grade or better
NP 1.2F	5+ Level 6	5 or more passes at H-Grade or better

The term NP stands for National Priority measures and refers to key government statistical benchmarks in relation to attainment. The term "NCD" refers to National Comparison Deciles and the number 1 [or 100] in each of the columns above essentially means that the School is within the top 10% of all Schools nationally.

National agreements on the use of this data does not permit the public use of any of the equivalent data for other schools or authorities but I include the national picture for comparison.

### National NP Attainment Data for Scotland, STACs 2009 post-appeals

**Table 2:** National 3-Year Average Percentages and NCDs based on S4 Roll for awards achieved by the end of S6

	NP 1.1 C	NP 1.2 A	NP 1.2 B	NP 1.2 C	NP 1.2 D	NP 1.2 E	NP 1.2 F
Year	Eng & Maths	5+ Level 3	5+ Level 4	5+ Level 5	1+ Level 6	3+ Level 6	5+ Level 6
2007-09	92	91	78	48	43	30	20
2006-08	92	91	79	48	43	30	20
2005-07	92	91	78	47	43	30	19
2004-06	92	91	79	47	43	30	20
2003-05	92	91	79	47	43	30	20

I trust that you find this highly detailed analysis of our SQA Results of some interest and, as always, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries in this regard.