

Duncan Riley

Head Pupil Manifesto

2020/21



Ambition Respect Community

Why am I running for Head Pupil?

While I have been at Knox Academy I feel I have had an excellent opportunity to learn more about myself and the world. I have felt safe and secure and I have felt like a valued member of the school community. I also feel the ambition shared across the school has driven me to be the best I can be. So having received so much from this school I feel like it's time I gave something back. I would like the opportunity to work in collaboration with others to work on weaknesses we may have within the school and ambitiously drive to improve them. To make the school better for every student.

Why would I be good in the role?

Being a part of the pupil leadership team I believe will be both a challenging and rewarding experience.

It requires great teamwork to be able to work both with the other members of the team, but also with the school leadership team and the wider school community. When we first move into the role we will all have our own manifesto promises and so only by working together effectively can we honour our promises. I have had plenty of opportunities to develop my teamwork. By playing team sports, notably rugby, I have learned to collaborate effectively with others in order to achieve goals. I have learned to put the needs of the team over the needs of the individual and I have learned to take on board criticism to improve myself. I believe these attributes are essential to be an effective head pupil.

Being a member of the pupil leadership team also requires good communication skills. In order to effectively represent the school to members of the senior leadership team and other school partners such as the council, one has to be able to clearly and concisely get their point across. Communication skills are also vital when delivering assemblies or speeches. I believe I have effective communications skills. I have demonstrated these on multiple occasions such as when partaking in Model United Nations Conferences when I had to effectively speak publicly in order to express a point of view. I also won awards in these events for effectively representing my delegation. I believe that my communication skills will help me to ensure I am representing the best interests of the school community.

A third key skill is motivation. This is essential to have the drive to enact policies and effectively represent the school. It will be difficult to enact the policies I am setting forth in my manifesto and to push them through. But I think I have the necessary motivation to do what I can for the school. I have demonstrated this with the ambitious pushing of my school work and dedication to extracurricular activities such as sport and music. Even when it has got tough and I felt like giving up I am not a quitter and have stuck at it.

Based on these skills I feel I can bring a lot to the pupil leadership team and ensure that it is a well-oiled machine working effectively for the benefit of the school community.

My Policies

I recognise the numerous responsibilities of the pupil leadership team which are not limited to achieving the policies outlined in their manifesto. I have therefore decided to select a few policies that I feel are achievable and would bring real, tangible and positive change to the school. I believe in Knox's power in education and so I would like to focus on improving the education we have here and making it available to all.

1. To create a system whereby past students of a course can pass on their knowledge and help subsequent years.
2. To allow pupils to get the basic school resources they require to complete their schoolwork through supporting hand outs of basic school supplies.
3. To build on the wonderful Christmas Boxes in order to establish more regular support for vulnerable people by establishing closer links with East Lothian Foodbank helping to ensure no one is too hungry to learn.
4. To throw open the doors of the unused central courtyard to allow more socialising space allowing social distancing to be implemented at lunch and break times.
5. To encourage and facilitate the creation of clubs which can operate online.

An In-Depth Look At My Policies

1. Students take a course for a whole year, sometimes more, sit the exam, and that's it. What an excellent resource former students of a subject are that we can tap into to enable us to improve learning in subsequent years. The teachers at Knox are excellent but they often have a shortage of time. It is also a quite different experience learning a subject as it is teaching it. Therefore I believe it would be very productive to harness the skills and knowledge of previous years' students in order to aid subsequent years. Former students of a subject would be able to sign up to give a small amount of time a week. They would then be listed as willing to help so students could go straight to them for help. Class teachers would also be able to refer questions or advice to the pupils who would be able to help. Pupils could then arrange meetings over google meets or collaborate by email. The pupils who helped would gain volunteering experience and this support network would also create a stronger sense of community within the school by traversing year boundaries.
2. Due to Covid-19, it appears at least some home working is here to stay for the foreseeable future. The school has done a commendable push to hand out Chromebooks to ensure all students have access to online work. However not all work takes place online. A lot of things such as maths problems and art are easier to do with the old fashioned medium of paper. To ensure all students have access to

these resources I would make it a school policy that pupils can ask their class teacher if they can take home resources to support their learning. The teachers can then claim these resources back from the central school so faculties are not left out of pocket by supplying students with essentials.

3. At Knox we have the fantastic tradition of annually organising food hampers to send out to local vulnerable people. But sadly food isn't just for Christmas it's for life. So in order to support those most in need in our community including some who may be members of the school community and in desperate need of food to facilitate their learning, I would establish a system where once a month we would phone up East Lothian foodbank and ask them what they're short of. We would then ask pupils to bring in donations of these items which would then be taken to the foodbank. There is already a foodbank collection in Tesco but the contribution at Knox would compliment it because it is specific and regular. We will be reminding pupils about it so we can ensure to get donations.
4. The central courtyard has always been a source of perpetual confusion to me. It seems to be a wonderful safe space which is accessible and visible. But I think I have only been out there for the rare but treasured "pie the teacher". It seems absurd to me to have a garden which no-one can enjoy. I, therefore, propose that with the social distancing guidelines which are likely to be in place for a while, we take the opportunity to use this space to allow social distancing - not to mention the numerous benefits of being outside.
5. Pupils are not only missing out on the academic schoolwork but countless opportunities to develop soft skills by collaborating and working with their peers. Lunchtime and after school clubs have been cancelled and so members of these clubs are missing out on what they would otherwise have enjoyed. I propose therefore to support and encourage the formation of clubs that can be organised online such as through google classroom. I would encourage clubs to be formed online by pupils as well as teachers and would set up systems for them to be supported. This would not only benefit the members but also those who establish them as they would gain great experience in leadership and organisation.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and remember to vote for Duncan!