

Thomas Guy  
Head Pupil Manifesto 2020-21  
Knox Academy



Ambition

Respect

Community

Resilience

## Why I'm running for Head pupil

I have attended Knox Academy since 2015 when I was just an S1. The school has allowed me to grow and achieve into who I am today. This has meant that Knox has become a fond place in my life, as I'm sure is the same with you. During my time here I have been faced with many challenges, from incidents requiring support from teachers to needing support with my dyslexia as I began to find it harder to keep up with the workload in my more recent years. The school has been there to help and support me overcome challenges and celebrate my achievements. I'm proud to be a student at Knox Academy, because of the teachers I've gotten to know so well, and the genuine students who attend Knox with me.

My true sense of admiration and personal involvement for Knox is the reason I am running for Head Pupil. I want to be able to give back to the school in any way I can.

## Personal qualities, skills and experience

Within the Haddington community I am also a member of the Haddington Amateur Swimming Club. This is something I have been committed to for over 8 years now. Within my time at the club I've picked up and put into practice a range of skills not only in, but out of the water too, having been an assistant coach within the club for 5 years, and one of the two club captains in 2019. Being a coach has required me to develop and have a range of skills like; good patience, understanding of the tasks at hand and of swimmers' needs, good communication skills and an open mind towards others' different opinions and techniques. Being a certified coach requires taking exams and courses in order to prove you are qualified and learn new ways in which you can teach swimmers. I'm currently a level one and I'm hoping to achieve my level two when swimming returns.

I took great pride in being Club Captain. The job required me to be a familiar and easily contactable face for all the members of the club -Something I'd like to continue to do in the role of Head Pupil. It gave me and my partnering Club Captain the responsibility to organise club events and attend meetings, being included in important decision making for the club.

Overall I believe my personal qualities e.g: my optimism, positive mindset and drive to do well and achieve, along with the skills and experience I have picked up in similar roles, as talked about above, makes me an excellent candidate for Head Pupil.

## My Ambitions

As Head Pupil I would love to become a friendly and contactable face for anyone around the school who wishes to have their say, voice or concerns heard. I would fight for what I believe is right with every student's best interests at heart and do everything in my power to improve upon all that I can at Knox, giving back to the school that has given me so much.

## Policies

1. Increase awareness of current world issues such as racism and mental health in Health and Wellbeing classes and around the school, and online.

In light of recent world events I believe that it is extremely important that the school look to actively teach and educate students on what is happening in the world around them right here and now, of course the prime example of this today is racism and the current protests taking place. I think it is all too common for people to think with living in Scotland that “Thats just a problem in America” or “Theres nothing I can do about it” and its time that those ideas are changed. If the school can take a larger stand in openly talking about racism throughout the school and especially with the younger year groups in lessons such as Health and Wellbeing, then we can all seek to be better educated on subjects like this, and help in the fight against racism in our own personal way.

2. Encourage a larger sense of school community in the current online learning environment using Google Classroom.

At this time I think its important to keep and build upon our wider school community. Its sometimes hard to remember just how many people we share the school with when work is being sent directly to us with no classmates involved. I believe that virtual sports day came up with a great solution to this: being in a classroom with so many other students from right across all years of the school was a really interesting and inspiring thing to be a part of. I’d like to propose a whole school classroom where anyone across the school can join, and teachers such as Mrs Cook, the deputies, guidance and others (with possibly the inclusion of the pupil leadership team) can all post bulletins, information and news, and whole school tasks that everyone can actively partake in. Thus allowing us all to come together as a school on a wide range of occasions, whilst simultaneously allowing an easier and more convenient way to keep up to date with what may be going on in school by keeping everything on the same platform that they receive their school work.

3. Spark a debate about the recent school times changing.

While I cannot promise to “return them to normal” myself, I can promise that I would bring the issue up with staff members and the local authority. The reason I believe that this is something worth campaigning for is because I and

many others have expressed the inappropriate nature of the changes and the manner that it was introduced - with little true consultation with the school and wider community. Being an East Lothian initiative meant that little consideration was given to each school's individual requirements and did not reflect our school's specific demands. The driving force behind these changes has now left the role of head of education and it would be valuable to inform those who are now in charge what impact the changes have had on our health, well-being and education.

Some of the challenges we have faced due to the unexplained change in school day have included;

- having to wake up earlier, losing sleep, or risk missing breakfast - an important meal of the day and has made it increasingly difficult to attend school on time.
- having less time to eat at lunch time means trying to digest our meals at twice the speed, all while walking just to be able to make it to our local shops and back in time for afternoon classes.
- many of our school community live outwith Haddington and their transport links have been severely disrupted, leading to long waits in all weathers to get home or arriving late to school in the morning.
- Sending us to empty homes much earlier in the day, long before any business or full time job is finished having a direct impact on our parents who work and not preparing us for life and work in the real world.

#### 4. Clearly labelled pricing on all products sold in the Food Court.

This has been something I have found slightly odd since my start at Knox and even stranger that it appears to go by unthought about by many of the staff. For most of us, Young Scot Cards are our first experience of using what is in essence, a bank card. However unlike any other shop I know of, the food court fails to have any sort of pricing upon its products making it a lottery when choosing what you'd like to buy. Now eventually after buying the same thing repeatedly you may get to know the price yourself which is all fine and good, until the prices go up without any warning. I'm aware this is no life saving policy but I do think that this is something that should not be left unnoticed. When using the foodcourt in their initial years pupils should be learning the life skill of using their Young Scot Card to handle their own money and delegate how they would like to spend it. As well as helping in growing our skills for the outside world I think this would also greatly help all pupils in the school, make using the food court much more convenient and ease any anxiety in younger pupils surrounding the issue.

## 5. Encouraging outdoor learning and allowing classes access to the court yard upon returning to school.

As you are all aware, current Government guidelines ask all meetings with other house holds to be done with a safe 2 meter distance, and also to take place outside. Upon returning to school in August things will not yet be back to how we once knew it. Instead there may be many different protocols in place to ensure our own and others safety, such as the possibility of social distancing and smaller class sizes. In addition to this, I believe it is an excellent time to make some light out of the situation by encouraging the occasional outside lesson, thus allowing pupils and teacher to not just social distance with ease, but also incorporate a new learning environment and bringing some variety to lessons, a refreshing change with us all being fairly stuck recently. The decision to have a lesson outside would be made by the teacher themselves, to make sure that they are teaching their lessons in a way that suits their personal style, and would not be a mandatory thing for each teacher to do. Just something that is more widely encouraged throughout the school, with the option of using the courtyard to go with it.

### A final note

I have great confidence that these policies can leave a lasting positive impact on our school. I hope now that you have had the chance to look over them and read into what I would like to achieve for our community, that you will feel confident in my ability to support you as a pupil body and represent your voice in school.

Thank you for your support.