



## LETTER FROM THE HEADTEACHER

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Dear Parent/Carer

Yet again another term has flown by and as always it has been an action packed few months in our school.

Welcome to our first Electronic Newsletter! You will remember that in the first Newsletter of this session I consulted with you as to my intentions to move to an Electronic Newsletter. The parents who replied to the consultations were very much in favour of this change. One parent stated:

***'we think this is a fantastic idea....about time too!' Another parent responded; 'I think this is an excellent idea. Much more appropriate' then continued .... 'the need to ensure that parents and children without email can still access this information'!***

We will of course ensure that parents who do not have an email address receive a paper copy of the Newsletter. If you receive a paper copy of the newsletter but would rather receive it by email then please contact the school office with an appropriate email address for the next Newsletter. I am hopeful that all of the arrangements for this new venture will go smoothly but if there are any problems please let us know by email or by returning the feedback form on page 14 of the Newsletter. I will take your comments on board and resolve any difficulties prior to the next Newsletter.

I will take this opportunity to thank the whole school community, pupils, parents and staff for their impressive efforts in trying to ensure that we continued with business as usual despite some very difficult weather conditions. Unfortunately as you know we were required to close for a few days earlier in December but we have done everything possible to make appropriate alternative arrangements for the time lost. In particular we have worked hard to minimise the disruption to the S4 Prelim Exams. Hopefully we have succeeded in ensuring that our S4 pupils have had as normal an experience in their Prelims as possible and we will see an impressive set of results come January.

Sticking with S4 I will also take this opportunity to welcome Mr Alan Dick to our school. As I am sure you know by now Mr Dick was appointed as Depute Head Teacher to replace Mrs Joan Herald who retired at the end of October. Mrs Herald made an outstanding contribution during her time at the school and I know you will join with me in wishing her a long and happy retirement. I am confident that Mr Dick will pick up where she left off and as well as leading the current S4 pupils to the end of their time in Mearns Castle he will also go on to make an equally impressive contribution to the school.  
**Contd.....**

### How to contact us



0141 577 2300  
08:20am - 4:30pm  
(3.15pm Fridays)



0141 577 2314



.....Unless you have just joined our school community very recently you will by now be familiar with my regular plea to reduce the traffic congestion at the front of the building at the start and the end of the school day. It would seem that I am not the only one frustrated by this situation. I recently received an email from a parent that stated the following:

***I have noticed a substantial number of parents using the main car parks as a drop off zone for their children when it is expressly noted that they shouldn't . Similarly I've noticed parents parking in the drop off zone across the road from the school next to the pitches. The school congestion is bad enough but people breaking these rules create traffic jams and it impacts on the children's safety!***

As you would expect I endorse these sentiments. I would appreciate it if, for the safety of our young people you would help us keep this congestion to a minimum by ensuring that if you have to drop off your child by car you use the drop-off zones identified for that purpose. Thank you for your support in this matter.

You may be aware that in the current financial climate the Local Authority is planning to make around £32m of savings between 2011—2014. These savings will have an impact on the Education Service. I would encourage you to read the information contained in the Newsletter and participate in the online consultation on the Budget Savings Option Package.

Finally I will draw your attention to the summary of our schools Standard and Quality Report for session 2009 –2010 (Appendix 1). I think that it makes impressive reading and gives you a real flavour of the progress we continue to make in the school. If you are interested in reading the full report it is available on our website.

The school closes for the holiday at 2.30pm on Thursday 23rd of December. We re open again at 8.45am on Wednesday the 5th January 2011. I hope you and your family have a wonderful festive season.

Dean Smith  
Head Teacher

### *East Renfrewshire Council Budget Savings Options 2011-2012*

You will be aware that in June this year the Chancellor announced £84 billion of public sector cuts by 2015. As a result Scotland's £34 billion public sector budget will fall by more than £1 billion per year. Consequently East Renfrewshire Council estimates a budget shortfall of around £32 million between 2011 and 2014. The total savings proposed for the Education service are £9.8 million or 8.7% of the 2010-2011 budget. There are also some savings proposed for other services that would have an impact on Education provision.

The Local Authority has now published its draft Savings Options Package for the next three years. They are keen to emphasise that at the moment the package is neither a proposal nor a recommendation but a list of choices that are available to Elected Members.

The document 'Shaping our Future: Budget Savings Options Package 2010-2014' has been posted on the Council Website at [www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/budget](http://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/budget) There is also an online survey and parents are being asked to provide their views on the options contained within the package up to 7 January 2011. Thereafter, in late January, there will be an update on the final Savings Options Package that elected members will consider at the Council meeting on 10 February 2011.

I would strongly urge you to read the document 'Shaping our Future: Budget Savings Options Package 2010-2014' in its entirety. I would also urge you to participate in the consultation on the Options Package and share your views on the proposals with the Elected Members at the Local Authority.

## ONLINE PAYMENT FACILITY PAYMENTS REMINDER



East Renfrewshire Council has developed a new online payment facility to make it easier for parents to pay for school trips, school meals etc. With the new 'Payments 4 Schools' service, you will be able to pay online via the school or council website instead of sending your child to school with cash or cheques.

The 'Payments 4 Schools' service is part of the Council's wider public service excellence programme aimed at offering an increasing range of services online. In addition to giving access to services at a time that is convenient to all, it will also help to save money.

Should you wish to use the online payment facility, simply visit the school or council website and click on the 'Pay' icon. The system will then take you through the payment process. All major credit and debit cards are accepted, with the exception of American Express (AMEX) and Diners (DINE) cards. **NOTE: A 2% bank administration charge will be added to all payments made by credit card.**

To make a payment you will need to know your child's Scottish Candidate Number. This can be found on the letter issued to you in November or from the school office.

### Mearns Castle High School – Online payment options to date are:

School Meals

Rome Trip, June 2011 – Mrs Thomson

More online payment options will be added as and when future trips are arranged.

If you have any queries regarding the online payment service, please do not hesitate to contact Anne Beattie, in the school office.

## Christmas Dances

By Mr Dick



Unfortunately due to the extreme weather conditions last week, we have taken the decision to postpone all of the Christmas Dances and these have been rescheduled as Homecoming Ceilidhs in mid-January. Tickets will still be £5 and pupils will only be eligible to buy a ticket if they are ON COLOUR with UPBEAT.

S1/2 Thursday 13th January 7.30 - 10.00pm

S3/4 Thursday 20th January 7.30 - 10.00pm

S5/6 Monday 17th January 7.30 - 10.30pm

# College Applications

By Mrs Gordon ADHT

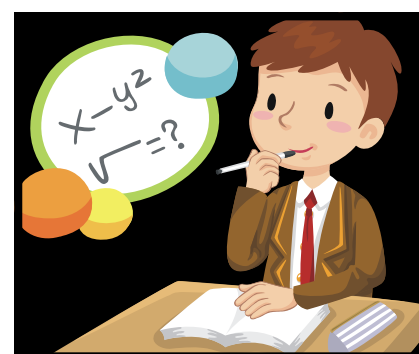
Any pupil who is considering going to college next year (September 2011) should apply now. Due to the current economic situation there will be a much higher number of applications for

college. As college places are often offered on a first come, first served basis, it has been reasonable to apply in January, but the school has been advised by our school careers advisors and from Skills Development Scotland, that the best time to apply is December. Any pupil wanting to apply can do so directly through their chosen college's website. Of course, Pupil Support teachers and June Cunningham, our careers adviser are available to give guidance. Similarly, there are likely to be many more people applying to university than in previous years and as a result it is likely many people applying through UCAS will not be given a place, therefore it is recommended that S6 pupils ensure they have a back up plan, which may involve applying to college.

## Maths Matters

By Mrs Gibson

It is always a pleasure to report on pupil success in the school and this term has been no exception in terms of achievement.



### Four Nations Maths Challenge

This competition lasted a whole week in November. We had some outstanding results from our junior pupils – here are some of them:

Nicola Dunn (S1)	19049 points
Hannah McLintock (S2)	18038 points
Nicola Williamson (S3)	8244 points

A further six pupils from S1 and S2 scored more than 10,000 points. In addition to this:

Mearns Castle was placed in the top fifty schools in Scotland  
 Three classes were placed in the top fifty classes in Scotland  
 Two pupils were placed in the top one hundred pupils in Scotland.

Well done to everyone who took part!

Our appetites are whetted as we look forward to World Maths Day in March.

### Enterprising Maths Competition

Fifty eight schools from all over Scotland, including many from the private sector took part in this competition which lasted a whole day. Our team consisted of Ellen Parkinson and Craig McQuillan (S3) and Michelle Latter and Grant West (S4).

All four pupils entered the spirit of the competition with great gusto, earning themselves a very creditable thirty-second place.

# Mary's Meals Backpack Appeal 2010-11

By Mr Hutchinson

Last year Mearns Castle donated 60 backpacks to school children in Malawi. In the summer, sixteen S6 pupils had the opportunity to distribute backpacks to children in Thantwe primary in Blantyre, Malawi. The backpacks include items which enable children to gain the education that they deserve and also improve their quality of life. Our

S6 pupils were able to see first hand the benefit that one small gift can have on a child's life in the developing world and as a result we are asking for your help this year.

What we are looking for are items which can fit into a school bag such as stationery and clothes. The items should be aimed at children between the ages of 4 and 12. Below are a list of items which can be donated to the appeal and they can be handed in to Amy Dawson and Elisabeth Ferrell in S6 or to Mr Hutchison.



## Wanted Items

- Backpack/School Bag
- Exercise Book/Notepad
- Pencils
- Pens
- Crayons
- Eraser
- Ruler
- Sharpener
- Pencil Case
- Towel
- shorts / skirt & t-shirt, or dress
- Flip Flops/Sandals
- Small Ball eg Tennis Ball
- Soap
- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Spoon

# All Blacks

By Michael Owen (S3)

On the 13th of November, Miss Blanc took a group of pupils to the Scotland versus the All Blacks of New Zealand rugby match at the Scottish national stadium, Murrayfield, in Edinburgh. It was a fantastic trip despite Scotland's disappointing performance on the pitch.



The trip got off to a slow but amusing start when the bus taking us was too small for our group! This resulted in some minor panic but was resolved when a bigger coach arrived.

Even though we arrived a little later than expected, we still managed to see the famous Haka performed by New Zealand. The Haka is the traditional pre-match 'greeting' or ritual whereby the teams face each other across the half-way line. It is an intimidating experience to be on the receiving end of the Haka but I guess that's the point!

When we went to take our seats a group of girls were already in them. After a long debate we managed to find some seats in an empty area and settled down for the match.

Scotland began the match on the front foot, even putting the first few points on the board through Dan Parks, the Scotland number ten. Unfortunately, the match went downhill from there as the All Blacks showed their true quality, running in seven unanswered tries to finish the match at 49-3.

The return journey was without a hitch and the mood on the bus was positive despite the result. Thank you Miss Blanc and here's looking forward to our next trip, please, maybe against France?



## The Duke of Edinburgh's Award

By Mr Hutchison

The success of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award continues to grow and we recently had a number of pupils achieve their Bronze and Silver Awards.

The following pupils have achieved their Bronze Award. Eilish Young, Fraser Smith, Alex Fletcher, Eilidh Dunn and Amy White (All S6)

The following pupils have achieved their Silver Award: Rebecca Murchie, Zara Mohammed, Eve Lucas, Zeenat Ali, Amy Dawson, Kaitlin Mayne, Jasmine Latter (All S6) and Jaquelyn Foulds (S5).

Congratulations to all pupils and look out for more pupils achieving their respective Awards in the next edition of the newsletter.

# Recognising and Celebrating Achievement

## Celebrating Your Success

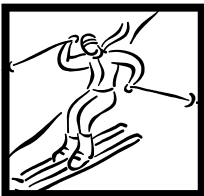
By Mr Gooch



In the last Parent Newsletter we asked you to celebrate your child's success by completing a form that was attached. The same form is included in this term's newsletter. We would like to keep a record and promote all the excellent work that pupils contribute in and out of school.

Below are some examples of the types of achievement we have received since last time. Please complete a form and pass it to the Pupil Support team – it can count towards House points.

### Sport



Zak Vinter (S1) for being selected to be part of the British children's Ski team. Zak already holds the British, English, European and Scottish indoor titles as well as having the Irish, European and Scottish artificial championships.

Kirsty Miller (S3) Cameron Stirling (S1), Cameron McIntosh (S1), Zoe Blundell (S2) for competing in the Winter Age Group swimming meet.

Particular congratulations to Kirsty Miller, S3 who finished in first place in the 100m Fly, 100m Free, 100m Back, 200M and 50m Free - Incredible performance! For her efforts, she also won 'Top Girl Award'.

Well done also to Zoe Blundell of S2 who finished 3rd in the 100m Breast and Cameron Stirling of S1 who finished 3rd in the 100m Fly.



### Expressive Arts

Congratulations to Monica Pearson (S2) for passing grade 2 Piano June 2010.

### Citizenship

Congratulations to Murray Weir (S5) who received his cadet of the year award 2009-2010 and was promoted to Corporal in September 2010.



# Recognising and Celebrating Achievement

We would like to find out what our pupils get up to and more importantly what they are doing well at. Every year we find out about sporting achievements, musical contributions, charitable ventures and personal triumphs. However we are sure that there are some pupils who are too modest to come forward and that's where you at home come in.

On the back of this newsletter (P13) is a form that you can fill in with successes that you would like us to know about. We've put it into 4 categories: Enterprise, Citizenship, Sporting and Performing arts, however if you are not sure just write it down and we'll decide!

Passing a musical qualification.

Leading a worthy cause.

Helping others'

Taking part in a drama production

Participating in sporting activities

There is also a Pupil Feedback form that can be collected from the Pupil Support office for pupils to share their own achievements.

We look forward to receiving them and then celebrating the successes within school!

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## RMPS on Facebook!

By Mrs Thomson



Have your say on different ethical, moral and religious issues. Join us on the discussion boards at **Mearns Castle RMPS** on Facebook. Spot prizes for the best comments (from students!)

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## ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

By Miss McLachlan

A new website for parents of children with additional support needs has recently been launched. This website provides important advice for parents, as well as up-to-date information on parent forums and is up-dated on a regular basis. It can be found at <http://www.ea.e-renfrew.sch.uk/parents/asn/>. A further website parents may find helpful is <http://enquire.org.uk/publications/parents-guide>. Enquire is a national organisation which offers free, independent, confidential advice to parents. The website also provides a range of publications and leaflets on additional support for learning written especially for parents.

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## Connecting Classrooms Visit to Delhi India

By Mrs Thomson



We met at Glasgow airport, full of excitement to begin our journey to Delhi! Our flight was delayed but this did not dampen our spirits!!! The flight was comfortable and we were well looked after by the Emirates staff who were waiting to welcome us at our Glasgow airport. We were already infamous as the Emirates staff had heard about the trip on Radio Clyde!

On our arrival in Delhi we were warmly welcomed by representatives of our partner schools who presented us with beautiful marigold garlands. We were whisked away for a small rest in our hotel before embarking on our first sight seeing trip.

We travelled to India Gate which is a memorial to Indian soldiers. We drove past the Parliament; we experienced our first Delhi thunderstorm with hailstones! The locals of Delhi were so pleased that we had brought the Scottish weather with us!!! We finished our evening over-looking the Commonwealth Games stadium.

### Over the next week we visited 7 schools

Pragyan School is a 'Green School'; they have paperless days and days when they don't bring their bags.

Nehru World School -the school was holding a Virtual World Tour event and we were given passports in order to visit all of the "countries" (classes).



DLF- School we were greeted by School Captains, the School Principal and the Vice Principal and treated to a traditional Indian welcome. This included the Bindi, a presentation of hand made scarves which were made by the pupils and beautiful banners which welcomed us.

Delhi Public School - We met with senior members of the school before being entertained at a special assembly. We were welcomed warmly by the pupils and enjoyed watching traditional dancing and a Power-Point on Scotland. We talked about our own schools before teaching the children how to Ceilidh dance the Gay Gordons. The Scottish and the Indian National Anthems were played as a finale to the assembly.



Red Roses School: Once again we were warmly greeted with floral garlands. The Citizenship group told us about a project on Cyber bullying and internet safety for which they had won an award the previous day. We also listened to a parliamentary debate where the pupils re-enacted the Indian parliament.

Alchon International School - Pupils welcomed us through song, traditional dance and music. We were given a tour of the school by staff and pupils. This school has many activity rooms where the children learn Music, Yoga, Pottery, Rifle Shooting, Maths and Listening Skills. They also have many sports facilities including a swimming pool, a basketball court, table tennis and squash courts. We were very impressed with the schools recycling plant. They have an Eco Club who recycle paper on a weekly basis and create new paper from this.

Chiranjiv Bharati School - We were welcomed in the traditional way and then taken to meet the Principal. Again, the staff and pupils were so kind and pleased to have us in their school. We visited the Infant, Middle and Senior schools and sampled a variety of lessons including table tennis, chemistry, rollerblading, yoga and physics. We were entertained by the school orchestra and also saw three traditional Indian dances.



It was an emotional goodbye with the friends that we had made, although we have decided that it is not a 'goodbye' but an 'until we meet again'. We look forward to seeing our Indian friends next year and hope we can reciprocate their welcome and hospitality when they visit East Renfrewshire. It was a truly amazing week.

# Charities Week 2010

By Mr O'Donnell, Mrs Hamilton & Miss Boyne



The school's main fundraising event of the year – Charities Week – was held during the last week of October. The now familiar mixture of Lunchtime Talent Shows and the usual plethora of other events throughout the school combined to make a highly enjoyable week for both pupils and staff whilst raising almost £7,000 for people who are less fortunate than ourselves.

Events this year were many and varied, as ever and included a very successful 5-a-side Football Tournament, Sponge the Teacher, the hair raising Van de Graph Generator Experience, the Great Balloon Race, Raffles for Signed Football Tops and the Golden Ticket, Nail Painting, Circus Skills Workshops, Pupil Mastermind Competition, Sponsored DJ, Dookin for Apples . . . the list goes on and on . . . Disappointingly, Mr Guidi's Pie Mafia were again not able to make an appearance but we will shortly be making the Don an offer he can't refuse to ensure that he and his mobsters will be making a very welcome return in time for next year's extravaganza.

On a more positive side, this year's S6 'Helper for a Day' was a roaring success, with S6 students being snapped up for a day's service by pupils of all years, some clubbing their money together to maximise their bids.



The lunchtime talent shows were crammed with singers, dancers, comedians, gymnasts, pipers and performers of all descriptions and from all year groups. The acts played out in front of capacity audiences in the Theatre every day and were hugely enjoyable, for both participants and watchers.

'Look Back in Laughter', the two evening events which showcase the very best of the acts from the shows, took place a few weeks later and were also a notable success, with parents, aunts, uncles and grannies all coming along to enjoy the entertainment and contribute even more to the coffers.



The final instalment of the programme of events took place on a beautiful sunny, calm day in November, when we set off 300 balloons to see where the elements would take them. It was beautiful sight as the multi coloured inflatables rose high into the clear blue sky before drifting northwards towards the distant hills and mountains. The farthest reported balloon came to rest in Aberfoyle and Jill Degan of S3 is now £50 better off as result. Congratulations to Jill and thanks to Mrs Munro, from Aberfoyle, who found the balloon and sent it back to us.

Actually, congratulations are due to everyone in the school community for their contribution to the wonderful success of this year's Charities Week. It would be wrong to mention individual names but special mention has to be made of the small band of highly committed S6 students who, together with other dedicated staff members, were responsible for staging the many activities during the week.

Their quiet, understated and completely dependable contribution in many ways sums up what Charities Week is and will always be – an intense collaborative effort between all members of the school community to help others who have less than we have.

The money gathered in as a result of that effort will shortly be allocated to each House group and every pupil will then have the opportunity to vote for the charities they wish to donate to.

As a result, each member of the school community will be making a real difference to the lives of others around them. The value of that is beyond stating and that is what makes the whole event so worthwhile.



<b>Event</b>	<b>£</b>
Lunch Time Show Ticket Sales	£2,049.41
5-a- side Football	£215.86
Computing Fun 5 minutes	£4.70
Cake & Candy	£520.10
DJ in Open Area	£42.12
S6 Helper Auction	£424.05
Golden Ticket	£166.80
Circus Skills	£22.00
Celtic and Rangers Raffle	£218.20
Nail Bar	£22.00
Sponge the Teacher	£65.27
Mastermind	£34.00
Balloon Race	£303.00
Non- Uniform Day	£1,126.17
Hair Raising	£15.10
Dooking for Apples (Mrs McMahon's Class)	£60.00
Tea Money	£62.23
Ticket money LBIL	£1,315.06
Programmes	£102.87
<b>Total</b>	<b>£6,770.94</b>

## Winter Concert

By Miss Borland

The Winter Concert has been re-scheduled for Tuesday 18th Jan. All tickets purchased for the original date - 2nd December will remain valid. If however, you have bought tickets and will not be using them you can get a refund.

## Senior UK Maths Challenge

By Mrs Gibson

Ninety-five S5 and S6 students took place in the competition, amassing an amazing thirty-six certificates as follows:

Four Gold; Eleven Silver, Twenty-one Bronze

The standard of this competition is exceptionally high and we are very proud of these results. To give some context, over 65000 students from across the UK entered this competition, with approximately 6% receiving Gold, 13% silver and 21% Bronze certificates.

About 1000 students are invited to take part in the next round – three of our students, Euan McGonnigle (S6), Andrew Kirk (S5) and Christopher Russell (S5) qualified! They enjoyed the rigour of a three and a half hour gruelling paper. We eagerly await the results.....

As the end of term approaches, S1 pupils are looking forward to our annual "Who wants to be a Mathonaire?" competition. This will take place on Tuesday 21 December and promises to be a fun-filled, action packed morning!



Name:	Year:
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# Celebrate Success!

Enterprise

Citizenship

Sport

Expressive Arts

Tell us about it by completing this form.  
We want to celebrate ALL your achievements in school and outside of school! Have you won any awards, passed exams or participated in a worthwhile activity or hobby?  
It could count towards points for your House!

 Gleneagles	 Caledonia	 Balmoral
 Sutherland	 Ramsay	 Wallace

Please return to Mr Gooch in Pupil Support

# Parents Feedback

Pupil's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Year Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments on Electronic Parents' Newsletter:

Email address for Electronic Parents' Newsletter: \_\_\_\_\_

If different from the email address submitted in the Annual Data Check form (please tick)

If you do not have an email address (please tick)

I am interested in being involved in a Parent's Focus Group (please tick)

Parent's Signature:.....

Parents Name (please print):.....

Any other comments:

Please return this feedback form to the school office by **Monday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2011** at the latest.

Thank you for your continued support

# Standards and Quality Report

## SESSION 2009-10

A summary of our school's Standards and Quality Report, for session 2009-2010, is outlined below. The full report is available on the school website.

### **The Standards and Quality Report – key purposes:**

- To report on our progress in implementing the priorities listed in the School Improvement Plan
- To indicate the progress made in meeting agreed targets in appropriate areas
- To provide an evaluative summary of the quality of the work across a range of areas in the school
- To highlight strengths and identify priorities for next year

### **Our Main Priorities for 2009-10**

- Continue to raise attainment for all pupils
- Develop our curriculum in line with Curriculum for Excellence
- Continue to improve the quality of Learning and Teaching
- Develop further our arrangements for raising attainment and recognising achievement
- Develop further our arrangements for the Care, Welfare and Development of our pupils
- Establish a culture of self-evaluation that is focussed on improving Learning and Teaching
- Develop further the capacity of all staff in the school as leaders of learning

As will be demonstrated through the details of this Report we successfully achieved all of our Targets for Session 2009-2010.

In 2009 The Sunday Times Newspaper awarded the school the accolade of Scottish State Secondary School of the Year, stating that "Based on the school's high levels of attainment and achievement, and its track record of striving for continual improvement, Mearns Castle deservedly wins Scottish State Secondary School of the Year."

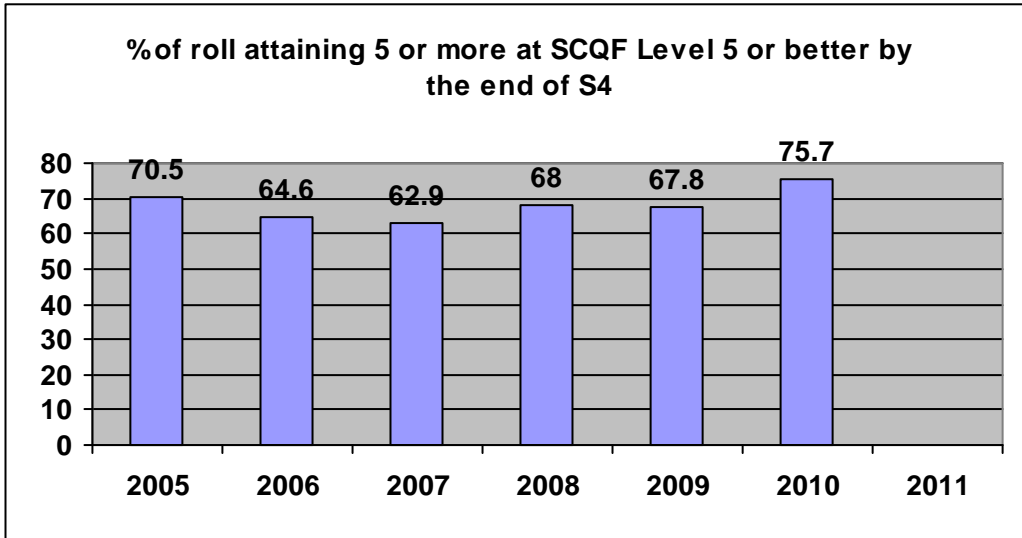
### **Raising Attainment**

As a result of the effective implementation of our 2009-2010 Improvement Plan, as can be seen from the data in the graphs below, we continue to successfully raise the attainment of our pupils as measured by their improved performance in the 2010 SQA examinations. In some categories the results are the best the school has produced to date. Our performance continues to be 'very good' in this area.

## Appendix 1

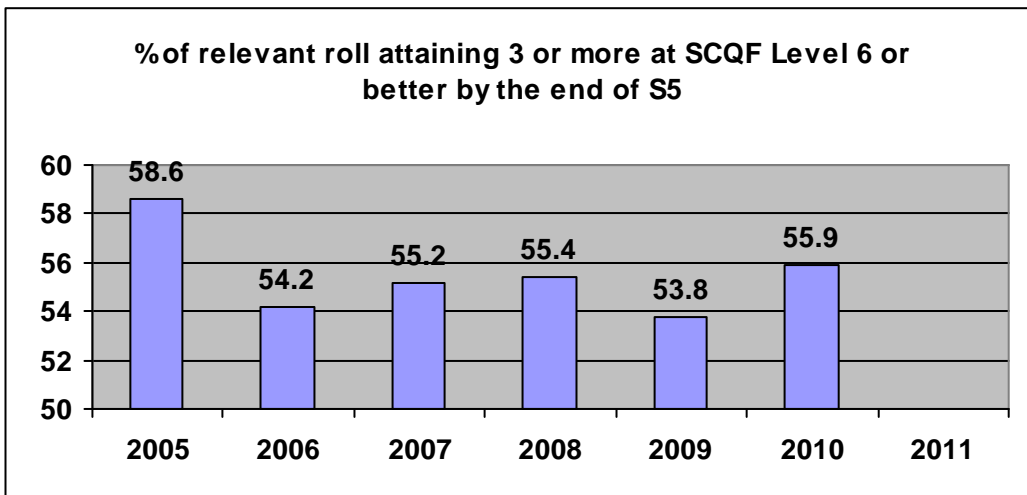
Graph 1 illustrates a substantially increased level of performance in Intermediate 2 examinations. We are pleased with our improved performance in 2010, as this was an area of priority, identified in our Improvement Plan 2009-2010. This is our best performance to date in this indicator.

Graph 1



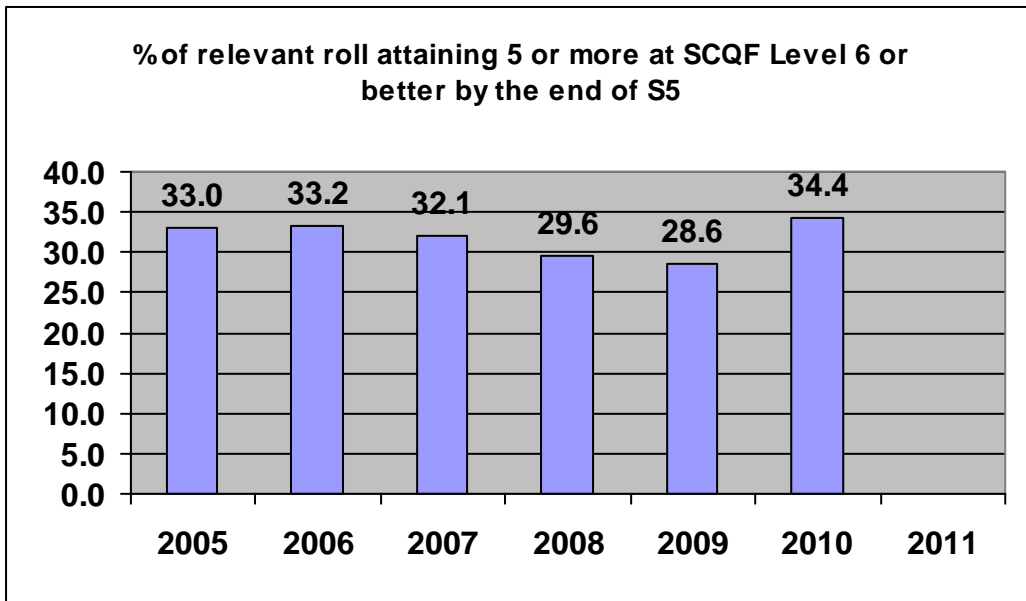
Similarly Graphs 2 and 3 demonstrate an increased level of performance by our pupils in Higher examinations. As can be seen from Graph 3 the proportion of our S5 pupils achieving 3 or more Highers is back on an upward trend. Graph 4 illustrates a substantially increased level of performance in the proportion of our S5 pupils achieving 5 or more Highers. This is our best performance to date in this indicator. We are particularly pleased with our improved performance at Higher level in 2010 as this was a key area of priority identified in our Improvement Plan 2009-2010.

Graph 2



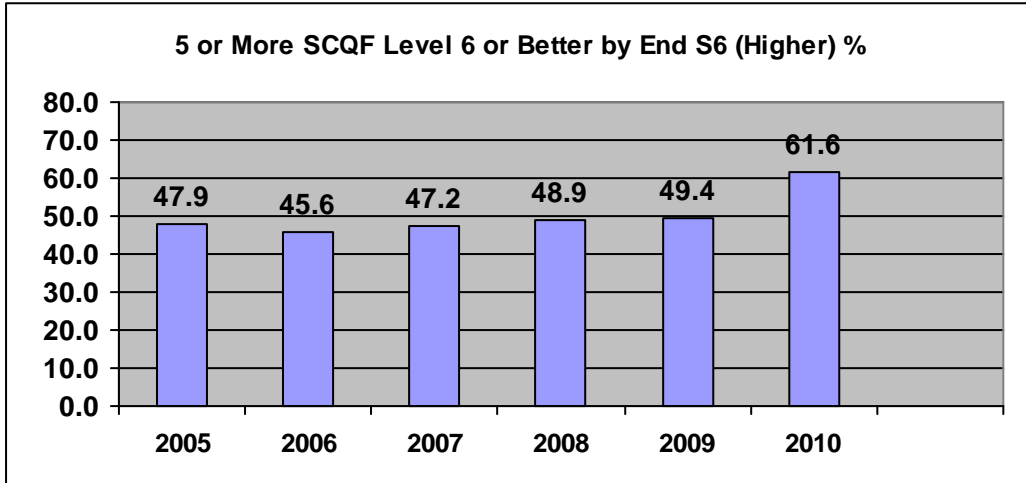


Graph 3



As can be seen from Graph 4, the proportion of pupils achieving 5 or more Highers by the end of S6 increased substantially in 2010. This indicates that our S6 pupils produced a very strong performance at Higher Level in 2010. Again, by some way, this is our best performance to date in this indicator.

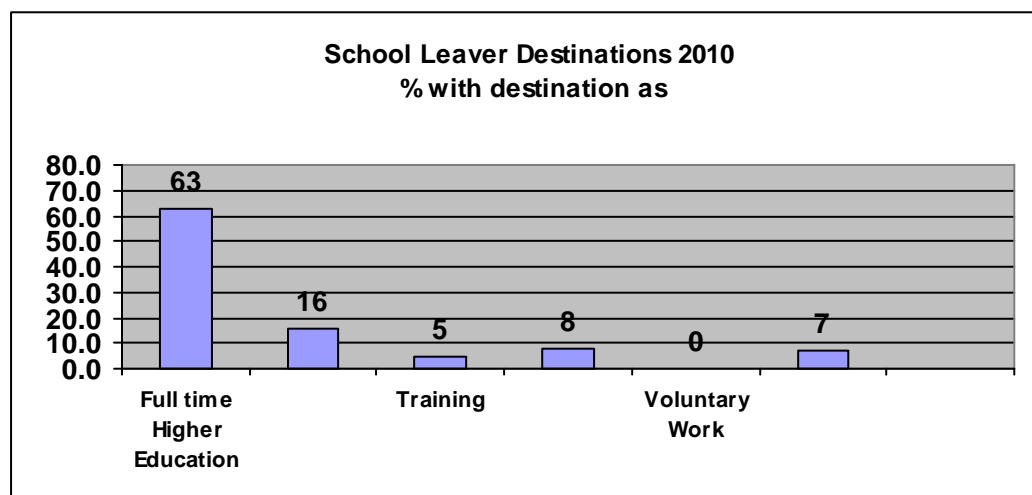
Graph 4



As can be seen from Graph 5 these impressive examination results contribute to the positive destinations achieved by our pupils on leaving school, with almost 80% moving on to Further or Higher education and 100% in a positive destination of some sort.

## Appendix 1

Graph 5



Following on from this very strong performance in the 2010 SQA Examinations it seems appropriate to reiterate the comment from the Education Department's Quality Improvement Service in 2009.

*"At SCQF levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 at S4, S5 and S6 the school (again) performed much better than its comparator schools and was often the top performing school".*

ERC Education Department, Quality Improvement Service.

Mearns Castle Cluster Transitions Review April 2009.

## Raising Achievement

Raising achievement was identified as a key strength of our school by the Education Department's Quality Improvement Team in April 2009. Yet again this session our pupils, encouraged, supported and challenged by our staff and parents, have excelled in a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular fields.

We ran more than 20 extra-curricular clubs for our pupils involving a similar number of staff and over 400 pupils. Sixteen of our pupils were awarded the ERC Convenor's Award for Outstanding Achievement in a wide range of fields.

Our Junior and Senior Boys' Volleyball teams both reached the Scottish Schools' finals. Our athletes also won a number of medals, including our first ever Gold Medal at the Scottish Schools' Athletics finals and Pentathlon and Relay finals. Pupils also represented the school in the Scottish Schools' Swimming Championships and, quite uniquely, the British Schools' Karting finals. Pupils also participated and had considerable success at national, and indeed international levels, in a range of other sports including cheerleading, rugby, dance, martial arts and life-saving. Other pupils were selected to represent Scotland in volleyball, athletics, martial arts, chess, rugby and basketball. One pupil achieved fourth place in World Scottish Country Dancing Championships and another is currently a member of the British Paralympic Development squad for swimming. We have introduced a Sporting Hall of Fame to celebrate the sporting achievements of both former and current pupils and staff.

Our pupils also excelled in the field of Performing Arts. A number of pupils had their work displayed as part of an ERC Art and Design exhibition. Many pupils also passed Associate Board Music Examinations in a range of instruments at a variety of levels. We hosted a very successful Winter Concert and School Show, 'The Sound of Music'. Our Concert Band won a Platinum Award at the Scottish Finals and followed that with a Gold Award at the National Finals. Two of our S6 pupils were invited to perform with the RSNO at a Masterclass Concert.

## Appendix 1

Our citizenship work is another area of strength in the school. We made further progress in our quest for Eco-schools Green Flag status. We initiated a mobile phone recycling scheme. We also carried out a litter pick in the local area in partnership with the ERC Community Wardens. We also introduced the 'Golden Bin' challenge as a further strategy for tackling litter in the school. Our Eco-committee is working in partnership with Castle Nursery to develop an Eco Garden on an area of wasteland between the school and the nursery. Also two of our S4 pupils, who are British Council International Climate Champions, were involved in a conference with the then foreign secretary, David Milliband, to coincide with a climate change event in Kyoto. An S6 pupil won the Rotary club's Euroscola French Essay competition and subsequently took part in a trip to the European Parliament in Strasbourg. In partnership with local religious groups a team of S6 pupils organised an inter-faith event to raise awareness of different religious beliefs. Over 100 pupils gained Duke of Edinburgh Bronze and Silver awards and a group of S5 pupils participated in a World Team Challenge expedition to Malawi, as part of their Gold award.

Our success in the field of debating continues. Not only did we enter an increased number of teams in more competitions but we were invited to participate in the prestigious Glasgow University Union and Oxford Union debates, as well as the St Andrew's Day debate, held in the Scottish Parliament. In addition, an S6 pupil was selected to represent Scotland in the World Debating Championships in October.

Our impressive tradition of charity fund-raising continued. Prompted by the pupils, the school community raised £2673 towards Haiti earthquake relief. In addition, we also contributed £2800 and 57 backpacks to the Mary's Meals charity work in Malawi. The group of S5 pupils who visited Malawi then distributed the backpacks to school children in a rural school. We raised £500 for St Vincent Hospice in Howwood. We also continued our long term fund-raising partnership with the Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice. We were involved in raising more than £20,000 for the hospice through our Christmas Concert in the Silverburn Centre, and our participation in 'The Hottest Night of the Year', hosted by Charan Gill.

Finally, as well as a range of newsletters, assemblies and award ceremonies, we have a 'Colours' scheme as a strategy for recognising pupil achievements in areas such as those described above. The number of pupils achieving and wearing 'Colours' currently stands at over 100 and continues to increase. It is with great pride we see them wearing their braiding and Colours ties around the school.

## **How good is the quality of our pupils' learning experience?**

As a school and cluster we dedicated a considerable amount of time and resources, this session, to developing our curriculum in line with Curriculum for Excellence. All curricular areas developed their S1 courses, based on Curriculum for Excellence Experiences, Outcomes and Skills, in readiness for introducing them for S1 pupils in August 2010.

A key target in our Improvement Plan 2009–2010 was to improve the quality of learning and teaching in the school. In particular, we continued to focus on the further development of AifL and Enterprise Strategies. We were also committed to introducing more opportunities for pupils to experience personalisation, choice and independent learning. In addition, we endeavoured to further develop the use of ICT in lessons. In particular, we developed our use of GLOW, as a learning and teaching resource. During the session we committed a lot of time and resources, in Departments and across the school, to developing our learning and teaching methodologies and to sharing good practice with colleagues.

## Appendix 1

An extensive programme of lesson observation, by the Senior Leadership Team, covering 55 lessons in S5 across all subjects, confirmed for us that the quality of teaching and pupils' learning experiences was very good, and in many instances, excellent. This was further endorsed by the reports from the lesson observation programmes that took place in subject Faculties and Departments and a wide ranging programme of Probationer observations.

We also consulted over 300 pupils, from S1-S6, on their learning experiences and more than 98% stated that they were happy to be a pupil at Mearns Castle High School. One pupil stated, "I really enjoy being a pupil at Mearns Castle High because it is a really fun school to learn in and there is always something fun going on. The teachers that I have always push me to do the very best I can do! I would like to be able to stay in the school to the end of S6".

### **How actively involved are parents and carers in the life of the school?**

We have a very active Parent Council and PTA both of which make an important contribution to the life of the school. Well over 200 parents attended three Curriculum and Revision information evenings, for parents of pupils in S3, S5 and S6. A specific Parents' Information Evening was also arranged for parents of pupils in S3 with Additional Support Needs. This was also very well attended, as was our Open Evening, for parents of S1 pupils, and our Transition Information Evening, for parents of P7 pupils.

Based on the target in our Improvement Plan, we introduced Tracking Reports for pupils in all year groups, this session. These were very well received by parents.

From survey evidence, our families are very satisfied with the quality of education we provide. Based on 350 questionnaires, returned from parents of pupils in S1-S6, more than 99% stated that they are happy with the school. One set of parents sent us a card that stated, "Congratulations on your Best State School in Scotland Award. It is only too rare that hard work and dedication, in education, is recognised. Well done to all at Mearns Castle."

### **How successful are we in our engagement with the local Community?**

We are very committed to Partnership working with our Cluster Schools. We have very positive relationships in our Cluster and we continue to make impressive progress in our Cluster working. This session we had six Cluster Improvement Teams, all of which made an important contribution to improving the pupils' experience across our schools.

Through our Community Involvement programme, S6 pupils take part in a range of community placements, including in our Partner Primary Schools. Our charity work also allows us to work in partnership with our local community. We recently started working with the clothing recycling company Recatex which results in an ongoing contribution to the Local Authority's Malawi charity. In particular, we work in close partnership with the Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice, with whom we have a very close and ongoing fund-raising relationship. Our pupils were involved in the Voices for Hospices fund-raising concert. In addition, our pupils visit the Hospice to entertain and engage with the residents.

## Appendix 1

Through our Eco-schools work we arranged a litter pick in conjunction with the Community Wardens. We are also working in partnership with Castle Nursery to develop an Eco garden next to the school.

Our Campus Police Officer continues to make an excellent contribution both in the school and across the Cluster. As well as making important contributions to our PSE and Citizenship programmes, he also led a group of senior pupils through their Football Referee examinations, to allow them to qualify as referees. His appointment has been a very valuable addition to the Mearns Castle Cluster team and he has made an important contribution to the high quality of education experienced by our pupils.

We continue to be delighted that when surveyed on this issue almost 100% of parents took the view that 'The school has a good reputation in the local community'.

### **How successful are we in our engagement with the wider Community?**

Yet again, this session, we were successful in developing a range of partnerships with our wider community.

We were the only Scottish Schools Cluster to be invited by the British Council, to be involved in their prestigious Connecting Classrooms Project. We are involved in developing a learning partnership with a cluster of schools in Delhi, India. Delegates from the Delhi schools visited the Mearns Castle cluster, earlier in the session, to signal the start of a three year programme in which our pupils and staff will share and develop an awareness of each other's culture.

Through our Duke of Edinburgh Programme a large number of senior students have participated in expeditions in Scotland. A group of S5 pupils were involved in a World Team Challenge expedition, to Malawi, where they developed further our partnership with the charity Mary's Meals. In addition, we had a large number of students involved in trips to a variety of destinations in Britain and Europe.

### **How good is our Leadership?**

This session we completed our wide ranging consultation on our Vision, Values and Aims with all our stakeholders. Our shared Vision, Values and Aims were then launched, publicised and implemented with the whole school community.

Leaders in the school are committed to maintaining a high level of quality and promoting continuous improvement and excellence in educational provision for our pupils.

The Local Authority's Education Department, in the Cluster Transitions Review Report of April 2009, judged the school's performance as 'very good' in all areas. In session 2009-2010, therefore, we decided to benchmark our performance against the standard for excellence. We have embarked on a three year self-evaluative programme, to benchmark our performance against the ten dimensions of The Journey to Excellence.

We are delighted that our parents take a positive view of leadership in the school, with 97% expressing the view that "The school is well led".

## **What is our capacity for Improvement?**

We believe that we have all the ingredients, a clear and shared vision for the school, talented, hard working and motivated staff and pupils, active, caring and supportive parents, positive and successful partnership arrangements, a supportive Education Department, and very effective and committed leadership to ensure that we will continue to improve the school and achieve our goal of excellence in everything we do.

Our main priorities for session 2010 -2011, as we continue to strive towards attaining our goal of excellence in every dimension, are as follows:

- Develop our curriculum in line with Curriculum for Excellence
- Continue to improve the quality of Learning and Teaching
- Develop further our current strategies for raising attainment and recognising and celebrating achievement
- Improve the effectiveness of parental involvement in learning
- Establish a culture of self-evaluation that is focussed on improving Teaching and Learning
- Develop further our arrangements for the Care, Welfare and Development of our pupils.

More details, on each of these priorities, can be found in our Improvement Plan 2010-2011, which is available on the schools' website.

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