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LETTER FROM THE HEADTEACHER

Dear Parents/Carers

As your new Head Teacher I am delighted to take this opportunity to contact you through our first Newsletter of the new session.

Following another impressive set of SQA exam results we are now settled into the rhythm of a new school session and as you will see from the Newsletter it is business as usual at Mearns Castle. The school is an exciting hive of activity both in and out of the classroom and there is never a dull moment for pupils and staff alike.

I am well aware that Mearns Castle is a good school. There is, nonetheless, still room for improvement and it is my ambition, as I am sure it is yours, that we continue to strive to provide our pupils with the highest quality of educational experience. I am looking forward to working in partnership with you to ensure that Mearns Castle is an excellent school in every dimension.

In addition to leading the school in operational matters, I will be using my first term as Head Teacher as an opportunity to gather information on the quality of educational experience we currently offer. To this end I will be surveying the opinions of pupil, staff and parents on this issue. Thereafter I will analyse the information provided with a view to formulating an agenda for the future strategic direction of the school. I will contact you with more information on both the survey and ultimately its findings at an appropriate time in the future.

One issue that is currently causing me concern is the congestion at the front of the building at the start and the end of the school day. I would appreciate it if you would help us to keep this 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.

I hope you find our Newsletter both interesting and enjoyable and if you wish any further information on any of the items covered, or indeed want to raise any other issues please do not hesitate to contact us. Also please remember to complete the tear-off slip at the end of the Newsletter and add any comments you wish to make.

I look forward to meeting you at some time in the near future but for the moment I hope you and your family enjoy the long weekend and the October holiday when it comes.

Dean Smith
Head Teacher

How to contact us



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



0141 577 2314



College/University Applications



By Mr H Cairney

Careers Fair

From mid September to the end of November senior pupils will be given a great deal of support to assist them with their College or University applications. This will be done during S6 PSE time which is on a Tuesday P5 (S5

All forms to be returned to advisors on or before these dates

Early applicants	Personal Statements Friday 28 th September Forms completed and fees paid Monday 8 th October
Other applicants Including Route A Art & Design	Personal Statements Friday 26 th October Forms completed and fees paid Friday 16 th November
Route B Art & Design	See Mr Cairney
Fees	£15.00 for two or more choices £ 5.00 for one choice

There is no deadline for College applicants but this process should be completed as early as possible.

I would like to invite you and your child to attend our annual Careers Convention. This event will be held on Wednesday 3rd October in the Open Area.

It promises to be an interesting and informative evening with representatives from Universities and Colleges and from many diverse careers such as the Armed Forces, Construction and Medicine. In order to cope with the large number we expect to attend, we would ask that pupils and parents from S2 and S3 attend from 7pm to 8pm and S4, 5 and 6 from 8pm to 9pm.

The event will comprise of stands for each represented organisation where pupils and parents will be able to collect information and ask questions of the representative. This is an invaluable opportunity to obtain information about course choices and career options.

Advanced Higher English Trip

By Sarah Weir S6, Marc Argo S6 & Dean Turner S6

With the excellent planning of Mrs McMahon, the Advanced Higher

English class set forth on a grand expedition of self-discovery, theatrical productions and the odd spot of busking to the thespian-filled capital. The trip began well with all pupils arriving on time, unfortunately this could not also be said for the teachers. So after barely catching the train, they set off with coffee in one hand and high spirits (or a Greggs) in the other. Little did they know the wonders which awaited them.

After a timely train journey, we finally arrived at Edinburgh Waverly station. We were then briefed by Mrs Macpherson who gave us a sketchy idea of our current location and vague directions to the theatre where we would meet. Time passed quite quickly with relatively few arrests and soon it was time for our first play, 'Truth in Translation'. The play itself received a mixed reaction with the majority of the class agreeing that it was an accurate and interesting depiction of the situation in South Africa at that time. However, a small minority found it too long and insisted that the frequency with which the cast saw it necessary to burst into song was not only *unnecessary* but extremely confusing. Nonetheless, everyone agreed that it was thoroughly entertaining if not a little hard to follow.

Following another period of sightseeing and general chaos in which one of our number tried – much to the disdain of the event co-ordinators – to get involved with the busking, we met once again for our second play, Faustus. Mrs McMahon had decided to take a chance in seeing this particular rendition of the play in the hope that it would prove to be worth the money. The play *was* certainly dramatic. Although Mrs McMahon did not look at all impressed upon exiting the theatre trying not to laugh, she agreed that the play was indeed particularly 'interesting'.

So that was that. All in all the day was thoroughly enjoyable and a great success thanks to the superb organizational and planning skills of our beloved English teachers without whom we would still be in Edinburgh to this day.

Young Engineers Club

By Alex Gilmour & Sarah Cameron S2



On Friday 22nd June we went to the Crowne Plaza Hotel for the Young Engineers Technology Challenge. This was a competition organised to test our teamwork and problem solving skills. Firstly we had to fly a helicopter – well actually a flight simulator. Our next challenge was to work as a team and dismantle a valve and then assemble it back together in as quick a time as possible. For our last challenge we then had to design the layout of an oil rig after taking into consideration all the different rules regarding their layout and design. It was great to see all the different companies taking an interest in what we were learning at school and showing us what they do in their jobs. Although we did not win the competition we learned a lot about ourselves, especially that we all had different skills and needed to work together to overcome the challenges.

After the Technology Challenge we were able to view what other schools had been making in their Young Engineers Club. This ranged from designing speaking bus stops to systems that collect rain water from the school roof to water plants and flower beds.

To finish the day off we got to go to the Science Centre for a couple of hours to learn more about the application of science and technology.

AifL

Assesment is for Learning

By Mr G Stewart

Last session parents of the new S1 had an opportunity to come to Mearns Castle and view a DVD showing how Assessment for Learning is being used across the whole of the Mearns Castle Cluster.

All our partner Primaries and Nurseries were represented in the 20-minute film that contained classroom footage. The film also aired the views and opinions of pupils from Nursery, Primary and Secondary on the AifL strategies that their teachers are using on a daily basis.

After viewing the film, parents had an opportunity to experience first hand the latest teaching methods that their children experience by attending one of two workshops led by two teachers in the school. In these workshops parents used traffic light cards, 'show-me' boards and were taught from an interactive white board. At the end of the lesson parents completed an exit question giving the teacher a chance to quality control their teaching by seeing how well the lesson had been followed by the majority of parents.

Feedback was very positive from parents who were invited to fill out an evaluation form at the end of the evening.

One Parent commented:

'The great thing about this evening was the opportunity to see how positive learning can be.'

ENTERPRISE EVENTS

September 2007

By Mr S Gooch

Finally the 'Pixel this' technology road shows reaches MCHS. The show features image capture and manipulation using camera phones and highlights the exciting and rapidly developing technology involved. The event will be for S1 and S4 pupils.

The BBC's CBeebies channel are coming in to film pupils from across the school for a brand new programme

"Carrie and David's Popshop" (from Fame Academy)

As well as being directed by a professional director the pupils will also have opportunity to experience the other roles within a film production.

We are fortunate enough to have 2 astronauts (and possibly a cosmonaut!) coming in to speak to a variety of S2 – S6 pupils on the 19th September. It is part of the 20th Association of Space Explorers congress that takes place in Edinburgh. It is the first time this conference has taken place outside America and Russia so this is a rare opportunity for our pupils. The event promises to be informative and fun for those who have aspirations to boldly go!

In the next newsletter there will be feedback reports from a selection of pupils about their experiences at these enterprising events.

Young Enterprise 07/08

By Paul Livingston S6



David Stewart, Paul Livingston, Daniel McKirdy,
Mark Stern, David McDonald & Anmol Gangi

Our journey has begun! With some of the sharpest business minds, the most creative brains and the hardest working people in the UK cherry picked to be part of our team — Young Enterprise 07/08 has kicked off at a furious pace. With our list of possible products and services being continuously refined and our Managing Director (Paul Livingston S6), Financial Director (Anmol Gangi S6) and Company Secretary (Daniel McKirdy S6) already chosen, we are all looking to hit the ground running!

The Mearns Castle family, which you are all a part of, will play a major role in our future success, so we ask you to keep watching this space for up dates of when, where and how you will be able to purchase whatever fantastic idea we decide upon.

The Unveiling Ceremony for the Heritage Project

By Ms A Lewis

Mr Tim Nunn, Councillor Lafferty, Councillor Fletcher,
Katherine Morley, Mr Dean Smith (HT) & Mr Alan McGinlay



Lucy Devlin, Heather Ennis, Lesley McBride,
Jonathan McKinney, Heather Miller,
Chloe Stewart & Amy Watters

By Amy Watters S4
and
Lesley McBride S4

We took part in a project involving making light boxes for the new main entrance. Every Wednesday after school the group would come together and take part in workshops for the project where we designed our light boxes. Before we could get the actual design underway we had to research the history of the area including interviews with local residents and visits to the local Heritage Society.

Over the last six months a group of S4 pupils have been involved in researching and developing art work that celebrates local heritage.

The project was funded by the Heritage Lottery fund and the £16,000 allowed for the support of local artists Tim Nunn and Katherine Morley as well as the installation of five light boxes in the main foyer of the school.

The pupils involved were supported by Mrs Nicklin (PT Enterprise), Miss Thomson, Mr Calder, Mr McGowne, (Social Subjects) and Mr Marshall & Mrs Miller from the Art department.

The Unveiling Ceremony took place on Monday 3rd September. Mr Alan McGinlay former HT of MCHS returned to unveil the landscape box which depicts characters from the local area both past and present.

The pupils then unveiled the boxes they had personally developed covering local stories and locations. Councillor Lafferty gave the background to the Heritage Project and Councillor Fletcher thanked all the staff and pupils who were involved. Mr Smith HT concluded the evening by thanking all who attended.

I am sure when you next visit the school you will be impressed by the art work the pupils have produced. They now give a creative and informative welcome to Mearns Castle and will be enjoyed by the whole community for many years to come.

On the night of the unveiling we were unsure about what to expect but when the light boxes were turned on we saw that all our hard work had paid off. It's amazing to think that from the interviews that we did and the designs that we made for the Heritage Project has lead to a permanent feature in Mearns Castle High School.

We hope you come and have a look at our hard work soon!

Modern Languages News

By Miss A Hastie

Paris Trip 2007

The new S4 took part in a visit to Paris at the end of the summer term. All the well known places were visited – the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre museum, the Musée d'Orsay, Notre Dame cathedral, Montmartre and the Sacré-Cœur. On our visit to Versailles we were fortunate to see the Hall of Mirrors which had been renovated over a 3 year period but had re-opened on the day of our visit – obviously just for us! Our guided tour of the Stade de France was excellent, everyone enjoyed their time at the Astérix theme park and the river boat trip with the Bateaux Parisiens was a lovely way to finish off our last full day in the French capital. Our pupils could not have been better behaved - they were, without a doubt, a credit to themselves and their families. The coach drivers were extremely impressed with their behaviour and the way in which they kept the coaches virtually spotless. The staff, who accompanied them, would therefore like to say a big thank you to them for making the time we spent with them in Paris a real pleasure.



Senior School Trips

For the first time ever pupils studying Spanish in the senior school are being given the opportunity to visit Madrid later this year. Mrs Stewart is busy organising the trip which will allow our students to practise their Spanish and see something of the Spanish way of life. Mrs Naddell is again organising a visit to Paris for S6 students of the language and the combined trip with Williamwood High School has, over the years, become a firm favourite with Advanced Higher candidates. Mrs Naddell ensures that French is spoken as much

French Breakfast

Since the pupils in S2 are studying the topic of food in France we had a French breakfast. 240 croissants, pains au chocolat, brioches au chocolat, 30 baguettes and litres of orange juice were bought and consumed, with great enjoyment! Asda in Govan were particularly helpful in specially placing orders to ensure that everything we had was available on the day. As they say in France "Bon appétit"!

European Day of Languages

The 26th of September is annually declared throughout Europe as the European Day of Languages and this year in Mearns Castle we have decided to celebrate in style. The head teacher has given permission for S2 pupils to spend the morning in the Modern Languages department where a variety of activities will take place. Mrs Fraser, a member of staff who comes from Poland, has agreed to give a taster lesson in Polish; Mr Guidi, of the Science department, Mrs Devlin in Support for Learning and Mrs Wolfson, the Office Manager have all volunteered to teach some Italian. Other activities will include quizzes, games, food tasting and we hope the morning will prove to be successful and become an annual event.

Le Ciné-club français

By Mme Naddell

Le Ciné-club français will run again this year, on the last Wednesday of every month.

Showings will take place in the Conference Room at 7pm and will be open to senior pupils and staff. Please contact E.Naddell for any enquiries or to express an interest!

S1 Information

By Mrs J Herald

Welcome to all our S1 pupils and their parents! 206 pupils have joined us this session. During the first week, our **Academic Family**, comprising 40 pupils from S6 guided the new S1 to and from classes. Their support and assistance was of great benefit to the S1 pupils and helped settle them into Mearns Castle.

S1 pupils would like to extend a huge thank you to all the S6 pupils who were members of the Academic Family.

S1 Open Evening : Monday 17th September

Each session we open our doors to parents of S1 pupils to allow them to see how the school functions. This year the evening was on Monday 17th September. Subject departments provided live activities and displays of work from 7- 8.30pm.

Refreshments were available from parents of our Parent Council assisted by pupils from the Modern Languages department who invited parents to a European Café.

We hope if you attended, that you were impressed by the variety of activities you experienced during the evening.

A warm welcome was extended to everyone.

Our recently formed Parent Council met for the first time on the evening of Monday 10th September.

You will hopefully be aware that following legislation by the Scottish Executive, Parent Councils are replacing School Boards as the statutory vehicle for representing parents in their partnership with schools.

Our Parent Council incorporates the PTA as a standing committee allowing the work of the PTA to continue much as it has done up to now. You will be contacted about how you can support the work of the PTA in a separate letter in the near future.

The main business of the Parent Council meeting last Monday was the election of Office Bearers and these are as follows:

Chairperson Mr David Barnett — Vice Chairperson Mr Stephen Pryce — Treasurer Mrs Morag Duthie
Fundraising Committee (PTA) Chairperson Mrs Elaine Cohen

The next meeting of the Parent Council is on Monday 22nd October at 7.00pm in the school's Conference Room. There are still some places available on the Parent Council. If you would like to become a member please contact me and I will communicate any necessary information to the Chairperson, David Barnett.

As a member of the Parent Forum you will be kept informed of the work of the Parent Council on a regular basis. In the meantime if you wish any further information please contact me.

S1 Fun Run: Thursday 20th September



Each year our S1 pupils are joined by S6 pupils to participate in a sponsored run to raise funds for our school mini-bus.

This year the run will take place during Periods 6 and 7 on Thursday 20th September.

The route is stewarded by police, staff and S6 pupils. A large number of S6 pupils and staff also run with the pupils. The emphasis is on fun and we encourage pupils to wear fancy dress.

Prizes are awarded for the best costumes and also to the class, which raises the most sponsorship. Pupils should

Peer Mentors (Buddies)

This session 108, S1 pupils have a Peer Mentor. Pupils meet with their mentor or buddy at least once a week at lunchtime.

If your son or daughter would still like to have a " Buddy" please contact Mrs Herald or Mrs Crilley on 0141 577 2300.

PARENT COUNCIL

By Mr D Smith - Head Teacher

Joint Support Team

By Mrs J Herald

Each week our Joint Support Team meets to discuss ways of supporting pupils and their families who may be experiencing difficulties, which impact on their ability to participate fully in school life.

This Team consists of Behaviour Support, Learning Support and Pupil Support staff, as well as our Educational Psychologist, School Nurse, Attendance Officer, Youth Counsellor, school based Social Worker, Campus Police Officer and Careers' Officer.

We work closely with these other agencies to ensure that all our pupils are able to achieve their full potential in Mearns Castle.

Peer Mediation

By Mrs J Herald

A number of S6 pupils have been trained in mediation skills and now run a drop in clinic for any pupil who would like to talk over any concerns they have about relationship difficulties, bullying, feeling isolated or any other matter which causes them concern.

Peer mediators hold drop in session in the:

**Pupil Support Office on Mondays, Thursdays
and Fridays from 12.30 – 1pm.**

Charities Week

By Mrs J Herald

Our annual Charities' Week Fundraising takes place from Monday 29th October – Friday 2nd November. Events will take place each lunchtime and as always we look forward to enjoying the wealth of talent which exists amongst our pupils (and staff!).

London 07

By Jenna Cowan S5, Jennifer Degnan S5
and Katy Mitchell S5

Well, the fun started at 8am when we were comfortably seated and raring to go. Until we were chucked off the train because of flooding! Luckily, the team of Gooch, Cartledge, McMahon and Macpherson, used their quick wit to get us youngsters onto another train and this time we were off. Six hours later London found itself infested by the Mearns Castle Clan, who had no hesitation in making themselves at home. After surviving the suffocating tubes and lugging around enough luggage for 3 months we found the sanctuary of The Royal National Hotel. After much preening and pampering we were ready for another adventure and what an adventure it was!! Wicked! That sums it up in one word. What more could you ask for? Witches, peer-pressure and not to mention the amazing soundtrack. The show was magical and left us all desperate for more.

It was dawn at 9am in The Royal National Hotel on Wednesday morning. The Clan were gearing themselves up for another day and preparing to grace Shakespeare's Globe with their presence. To take a picture? Or not to take a picture? That was the question and believe us many pictures were taken. Not only of all our cheeky faces but of the unique, authentic structure of the globe and later on of Big Ben, The Houses of Parliament and The London Eye to name a few sites from our river cruise. And not forgetting our celeb snap of THE Graham Norton.

A second night, a second show, again our minds were blown away by Chicago. It certainly did have "All That Jazz"!! It was a welcome refuge from the sudden downpour outside which left us soaked from head to toe.

Alas, the trip was over. After a quick morning shop in Oxford Street, we were back at Kings Cross waiting for our train (unfortunately not the Hogwarts Express at platform 9 3/4). The next six hours were filled with laughter and banter of everyone's memories of the last couple of days, each as exciting as the last.

London will never be the same again.



S4 Work Experience 2007
By Mrs E Gordon



S4 Work Experience will take place from 8th – 12th October. This is a fantastic opportunity for every S4 pupil to experience for themselves the world of work; working with others, learning new skills and recognising their own personal strengths.

By now, most pupils have their placements booked and risk assessments are being carried out by Careers Scotland on employers. Thereafter letters of confirmation will be given to pupils, giving summary details of their placement. I would ask that all yellow parental consent forms be returned as soon as possible. If required, pupils will be issued with any necessary protective clothing.

Pupils will also be working in Personal Social Education, in order to achieve an Intermediate 1 Work Experience qualification. This will involve assessing their own skills, reflecting on health & safety, setting targets and reviewing their work experience. It is also essential that pupils bring back their diary and employer's report when they return to the school.

Travel expenses will be reimbursed up to £15 on return to the school. Any travel tickets should be kept as evidence.

Many, many thanks to the parents who have assisted pupils in their placements, including those who have agreed to take Mearns Castle pupils. Your support is very much appreciated by the school. Please do not hesitate to contact Mrs E Gordon if you have any questions.

East Renfrewshire Pupil Council
By Mrs J Herald

The first meeting of ERC Pupil Council is scheduled for Wednesday 19th September. A pupil from S1, S3 and S6 will attend the meeting with the Director of Education.

The next meeting will be in March.

Citizenship Matters
By Mrs J Herald

Voting for **Form Captains** and year group **Pupil Council** representatives is taking place over the next 2 weeks.

The school Pupil Council will then begin its work for this session.

Congratulations to
By Mrs D Ferguson

Craig Young (S3) who is part of the Scotland under 13 Cricket team travelled to Denmark in the summer to take part in the European Championships.

Well done Craig

Ian Monaghan (S3) who has been selected to represent Scotland at the Junior Black Belt level at the forthcoming International Tae Kwon Do Federation Competition in Estonia.

Good Luck Ian

Emily Morrison (S3) who won the Scottish National Championships for Highland Dancing at the Cowal Highland Gathering. The world qualifying heats feature 57 competitors from a variety of countries. Emily also won 2 medals and was placed 7th overall.

Well done Emily

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Please return the tear-off slip to the blue boxes at the Main Office

I have received a copy of the Newsletter

Pupil's Name:.....Class:.....

Parent's/Carer Signature:

Comments:

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