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LETTER FROM THE HEADTEACHER

Dear Parent/Carer

I am delighted to contact you through our first Newsletter of the new session.

Following another set of impressive SQA results, our best in recent years, we are now settled into the rhythm of a new school session and as you can see from the Newsletter, it is business as usual at Mearns Castle. The school, as always, 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.

You will perhaps recollect that in our last Newsletter in June, I expressed some concerns about the standard of school uniform. I am delighted to say that standards have improved with the start of the new session. In particular it is pleasing to see an increasing number of blazers being worn across the school. I would ask for your support in ensuring that the current high standards are maintained for the rest of the session. On a practical note, unfortunately our suppliers have increased the cost of school ties. If your child requires a new tie they are now available from the school office at a cost of £7. As I have stated previously it is my ambition that our school is excellent in every dimension and I am sure you will agree that high standards in school uniform have a role to play in achieving this ambition.

How to contact us



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



0141 577 2314



You will be aware from my communications in June that we have now set up our school House System. We now have our S6 House Captains and S3 Vice Captains in place and are finalising a calendar of events that will comprise of our inter-house championship. The championship will culminate in the award of a House Cup in June 2011 and each June thereafter. The first event of this session that will qualify for house points is the fancy dress competition for S1 and S6 pupils that forms part of the S1 Fun Run on Wednesday 22nd September. Thereafter there will be many events and activities that will offer our pupils opportunities to gain house points in the competition for the House Cup.

Our intention is that this friendly rivalry will encourage pupil's motivation, enthusiasm and commitment to the school thereby further improving our already impressive school ethos. Other gains will be made through pupils from different year groups working with and supporting each other. Hopefully we can also have a lot of fun along the way.

The first meeting of the Parent Council in August was very well attended with a good number of new members joining the group.

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The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 18th October at 7.00pm in the school's Conference Room. If you are interested in joining either the Council or the PTA please contact Anne Beattie in the school office or turn up at the meeting or even better, do both.

One issue that continues to cause me concern is the traffic congestion at the front of the building at the start and the end of the school day. I would appreciate it if, for the safety of our young people and staff you would help us to keep this problem 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. I am delighted to see that our bike shed at the front of the school is increasingly busy. If cycling to school is an option you could encourage your child to travel by that method when the weather is appropriate. As well as being a healthy option this would also help to ease the congestion around the school. Thank you for your support in this matter.

As a strategy for saving resources and as part of our quest to achieve a Eco Schools Green Flag we are considering moving to an electronic newsletter that would be emailed to parents. I would welcome your view on this proposal on the feedback form at the end of the Newsletter. In addition, should we decide to move to this arrangement it would be helpful to have an email address to which we could send the Newsletter. This can also be communicated via the feedback form.

It is my intention to set up focus groups of parents/carers during the session to discuss any issues raised as a result of parental consultations. Focus Groups may also be set up to discuss other aspects of the work of the school. If you are interested in being involved in a parent's focus group please indicate your interest on the feedback form at the back of the Newsletter.

Finally can I draw your attention to various ERC Education Department meetings for parents detailed towards the end of the Newsletter. The meetings are a valuable forum for discussion and support and if the meeting is relevant to your family circumstances I would encourage you to attend.

I hope you and your family enjoy the long weekend and the forthcoming October break.

Yours faithfully

Dean Smith
Head Teacher

Pakistan flood Appeal

By Mrs Herald DHT

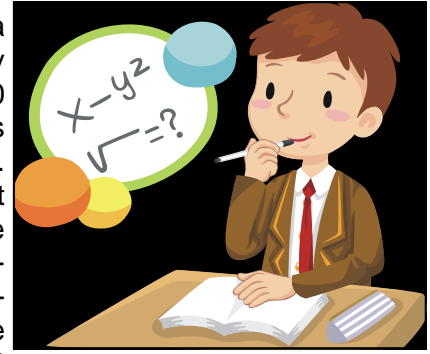
We are holding a non uniform day on Wednesday 22nd September to raise funds for the Pakistan Flood Appeal. Mearns Castle pupils have been very generous in the past when we have raised funds for different countries. In February we raised over £2600 for Haiti. We hope that once again we can donate a sizeable amount of money for such a worthy cause.

S6 girls have already been holding tuck shops and henna painting sessions at lunchtimes over the last few weeks to raise funds

Maths Challenge

By Christopher Russell S5

The Maths Challenge is a competition held every year in which over 600,000 pupils from 4000 schools across the UK participate. Last year, in S4, I took part



in the Intermediate Maths Challenge and in the first round, a 50 minute long paper containing 25 multiple choice questions of increasing difficulty. I scored very highly. I was, in fact, one of around 500 of the highest scoring across the UK and was subsequently invited to participate in the second (Olympiad) round – a two hour paper consisting of 6 problems (worth 10 marks each) that require detailed answers containing clear and thorough mathematical proofs. When the results came in I also got a letter offering me the chance to attend a maths summer school for 5 days in June. This was a brilliant opportunity as only two such events are held every year, with only 40 people invited to each one, so I accepted.

The summer school was held in Queen's College, Birmingham and was run by maths lecturers from various universities across England (and one from Scotland.) Each day was structured so that there were three or four 2 hour long lectures, each taken by a different lecturer. Each lectured in their own area of expertise so we had very specialised tuition. There were also team work sessions in which we were given problems to investigate in groups before taking it in turns to present our findings to every other group. Between lessons, as well as meals, there were breaks in which we could relax or play football and these were especially enjoyable thanks to the brilliant weather all week long.

By the end of the week I was feeling tired, it's a great deal of effort to stay focused for two hours at a time several times a day, and sad that I'd probably not see again any of the friends I had made. It was, however, an amazing week as I had the opportunity to learn interesting and complex mathematics that I otherwise wouldn't get the opportunity to try until 6th year or even university. I am very glad to have taken part in the school as it was an experience which was both greatly useful for the knowledge I have gained and enjoyable for the people I spent it with.

Recognising and Celebrating Achievement

By Mr Gooch

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.

At the end of the Parents' Newsletter is a form that you can fill in with your child to highlight successes they have achieved 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!

Application to University

By Mrs Crilley



It's that time of year again! A large number of our students are applying to University for 2011 entry.

To date, many of our S6 and indeed some of our S5 students are now registered and going through the application process.

All students have been given a presentation from Mrs Crilley and step by step written instructions. Students have also been directed to useful websites to assist them with their career choices.

Our school Careers Adviser has spoken to S6. If any student wishes an appointment with the Careers Adviser, they have been told to complete an interview request form and hand it in to the Pupil Support office. Personal Statements are one of the most important parts of the student's application. Help and guidance will be given to students with this, however, they must ensure that this is their own work as UCAS will not accept personal statements which have similarities to previous applicants. There will be a curricular evening on Thursday 30 September 2010 for the parents of S6 students where Mrs Crilley will be giving a talk on UCAS.

Students must adhere to all deadlines for return of their forms.

Deadlines for Applicants are as follows:

EARLY APPLICANTS DEADLINES

(ie. Those applying for the following):

MEDICINE
DENTISTRY
OXFORD
CAMBRIDGE
VET MEDICINE
VET SCIENCE

Curs and referee forms -Thursday 9th September
Personal statements -Thursday 23rd September
Forms completed and fees paid by -Monday 4th October

DEAD LINES FOR APPLICANTS

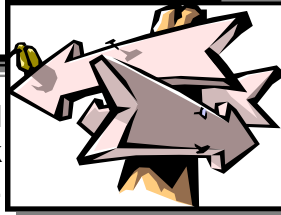
Curs and referee form – Thursday 7th October
Personal statements – Friday 22nd October

Forms completed and fees paid – Friday 12th November
Cost £11 for 1 choice £21 for 2 – 5 choices

Work Experience

By Mr Cairney

This is just a reminder to parents that all S4 pupils should be going out on work experience during the week 4-8th October. At time of writing, 8 pupils have still not arranged a placement. We are assisting these pupils all we can in school and would appreciate your help from home.



Careers Fair

By Mr Cairney

Our annual Careers Fair will take place on Wednesday 27 October from 6.00—8.00 pm. All pupils will be given a letter with more details nearer the time.

Global Citizenship Connecting Classrooms

By Mrs Herald DHT

In May we received work from our partner schools in New Delhi. Their pupils had prepared written accounts of life in their schools and art work to



illustrate their writing. They also sent power point presentations and DVDs of their school activities. You can see a display of Indian art work and information in the school foyer. We are able to keep it until the end of October before passing it on to Eaglesham Primary.

Mearns Castle and our cluster primaries along with Hazeldene Nursery are now working on the next part of the project which will give our Indian partners information about important Scottish landmarks. Mearns Castle is providing information on the Scottish Parliament. S1 pupils will visit the Parliament building at the end of September during which they will meet MSPs and experience a debate in the debating chamber. The knowledge they gain will be passed on to our Indian partners along with the information on the monuments being studied by primary pupils.

To commemorate the handover of the Commonwealth Games from Delhi to Glasgow, Mearns Castle Cluster is holding its own games but we have chosen Highland Games to highlight Scottish traditional games. Approximately 150 pupils from across the schools will participate during the afternoon of Wednesday 6th October. Our Opening Ceremony will include Highland dancers, gymnasts and a parade of the teams led by a piper. We are sure this will be a very colourful and exciting afternoon and we intend to film the event in order to share it with our Indian schools.



The seven members of staff from Mearns Castle, Calderwood Lodge, Eaglesham Primary, Hazeldene Nursery, Kirkhill Primary and Mearns Primary, who are leading the project, are flying off to New Delhi on 21st October to visit the 8 Indian schools and learn more about the Indian education system. We will take samples of our pupils' work to share with them and we hope to foster lasting relationships with the schools. We intend to write a blog during our trip and you will be able to access this through the school website. Our Indian partners will visit our schools again next June.

Malawi Expedition

23rd June - 23rd July 2010

By Amy Dawson, Elisabeth Ferrell and Fiona Martin

After a lot of fundraising and preparation we finally completed our 4 week expedition to Malawi. Our journey was long, with three flights and four airports we arrived in Lilongwe after managing to lose a passport and a boarding pass. Our expedition was split into three phases; trekking, project and rest and relaxation. On the first day we spent time in the country's capital, Lilongwe, where we first experienced the vast cultural differences.



In groups we all visited the local market which ranged from mud huts to 20 metres high hand made wooden bridges. Then we set off to the Zomba Plateau to begin our trekking phase. Our first "camp site" aka a field that called itself the Trout Farm was infested to our misfortune with killer, biting, ants and BA-BOONS! Some of the group were quite terrified i.e. Luke Traynor.

During our time on Zomba we visited several view points including the Emperor's View, Queen's View and Chingwe's hole. At first we had the delight of porridge every morning until it became apparent to us that this was the food we would be eating for the next few weeks of our lives! After a few a days on Zomba we travelled to one of Malawi's cities, Blantyre. Arriving in Blantyre we all knew that the challenge of climbing the Mulanje Massive was looming over us, quite literally. We stocked up on food and had an awful night's sleep camping next to a bus station with howling dogs and squawking chickens. Trusty Leister our bus driver turned up half an hour late to take us to the town of Mulanje where we would begin our ascent of the mountain.

Night one on Mulanje was at the CCAP hut when the local children came to show off their amazing acrobatics and making a skipping rope out of branches, not to mention we made quite an impression with our six man pyramid. The base of the mountain appeared much like Scotland with the foggy weather and scenic views. After a few days of heaving up the mountain we were ready to attempt Sapitwa Peak. Working as a team and after a hard rock climb we made it to the 3,002m peak, being very proud that we were the highest people in Central Africa. However the decent seemed more challenging as Lewis clearly demonstrated by straddling a rock and trying out his backwards rolls down the mountain.



Mr Hutchison set the way for falls as he tumbled down a rock face whilst taking out Amy. Nearing the bottom of the peak Rebecca fell down a hole into the mountain although no one believed her calls for help and we just left her there.

On day seven we finally made it back down to the bottom of Mulanje to celebrate with crisps and some Fanta and the occasional toothbrush.

Malawi Expedition

23rd June - 23rd July 2010

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We

all were looking forward to the next phase of our expedition – the project phase. Leister began to drive us to Thanthwe Primary School where we would be spending the next nine days helping with teaching and construction work. Unfortunately we had a minor set back by getting a bus stuck in a river. Darkness drew in and we were forced to walk with over a weeks worth of food, two rucksacks each, and three kit bags over a long, bumpy, dirt track. But to our rescue around two hours later Leister finally freed the bus. The teachers had prepared a meal for us on arrival and all the children were singing which was a nice welcome after our eventful evening.

During project most of us spent time playing with the children and taking part in teaching their lessons, as well as concreting the floors, painting the walls and putting lime on the windows. Most probably the most memorable part of the project phase was when we helped the charity Mary Meals hand out a backpack full of clothes and stationary to each child at Thanthwe. The children were so happy, including a girl who screamed when she got a pair of flip flops and finally looked like proper school children. Also as part of our time at the school we went to the local church with the surrounding villagers. Dancing with bibles on our heads and on the spot singing of the Loch Lomond song we managed to interact with the service which was in Chichewa so we had no clue what was being said.

The end of our project was sad as the school had a ceremony for us to say thank you, giving out hand made gifts. We left to head to Liwonde National Park to begin our final phase – rest and relaxation. The road to the national park was incredibly bumpy with many of us flying around in our minibus however we all made it there after a boat ride across a river. Our camp site was full of wild warthogs running around and monkeys that were determined to steal our tomatoes which added some hilarity to this stage...plus the baboons were back! We were only at this camp for one full day so most of the group went on the boat and the game drive safari where we saw a massive heard of elephants with cute baby ones, some hippos and crocodiles! The final few days of our expedition was spent at Fat Monkey's Camp. We all just relaxed next to Lake Malawi and spent some time in the near by village, this allowed us all to reflect on our month expedition and prepare for heading home.



S5 /S6 Vocational Programme

By Mrs Gordon ADHT

Congratulations to Mearns Castle pupils who have started their courses at Cardonald, Langside, Reid Kerr, Glasgow Metropolitan Colleges, along with Glasgow Caledonian University, River-

side Music Complex and East Renfrewshire Council Training Centre.

Our pupils have impressed with their punctuality, attendance, maturity and enthusiasm, on a wide variety of courses including Engineering, Fashion and Design, Culinary Arts, Childcare, Hair & Cosmetology, Sport, Sound Engineering, Digital Photography, Digital Media and Construction.

Parents of pupils on these courses can contact either myself at school or Linda Clinton (ERC Vocational Programme Co-ordinator) at 577 3305.

Music News

By Miss Borland

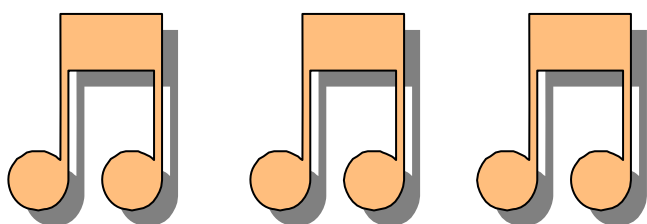
RSNO CLUSTER BRASS CONCERT

During May we were delighted to welcome members of the RSNO Brass Quartet into the Cluster to deliver a series of workshops with pupils.

Brass players from the Mearns Castle Primary Cluster joined forces with Brass pupils in Mearns Castle High to work and play alongside the talented musicians from the orchestra.

We were then all treated to a fabulous concert in Eastwood theatre where our pupils took to the stage with the professional musicians – all under the expert baton of Mr Blackwood our Brass Instructor.

Well done to all pupils who took part and thanks to Mr Blackwood and the RSNO players for such an amazing experience!



INSTRUMENTAL INSTRUCTION

All pupils who received musical instruction in the Primary School should now be on timetables. If any pupil who should be getting tuition in school and who has not yet made themselves known – then please see Miss Borland in music ASAP.

THE SOUND OF MUSIC

June saw yet another fantastic musical production in Mearns Castle High! The Sound of Music was a great success and well done again to everyone who played their part in creating our fabulous show.

S1 GUITAR CLUB

Three of our talented S6 pupils have started a Guitar Club for S1 pupils. This club is free and is open to any pupil in S1 who would like to learn how to play some chords or their favourite guitar riff - come and learn from the experts!

Fraser, David and Joe run the club every Monday lunchtime in Music Room C4. Bring a packed lunch.

PULSE RADIO

We are looking for any soloists, groups or bands who would like to perform on Pulse Community Radio station. There are opportunities for Pre-recorded tracks to be aired or if chosen, a live performance on the radio! Please see Miss Borland in Music if you are interested.

EXTERNAL EXAMINATIONS

Many of our pupils at Mearns Castle High receive music lessons outwith school or the authority and sit external music exams eg. Associated Board, Trinity Guildhall. In order to recognise our talented musicians can I ask that pupils let us know the result of any external examinations they have taken.

Dates for the Diary!

By Miss Borland

SENIOR CONCERT BAND

Our award winning Concert Band are once again busy with preparations for forthcoming Competitions. We wish them well and hope to see some of you at the events.

- ◆ National Concert Band Festival – Sunday 7th Nov RSAMD
- ◆ Scottish Concert Band Festival – Sunday 5th Dec RSAMD

WINTER CONCERT

This may only be September but plans and rehearsals are already underway for our annual Winter Concert! The concert will take place in the theatre on **Thursday 2nd December at 7pm.**

Advanced Higher

Performance Evening

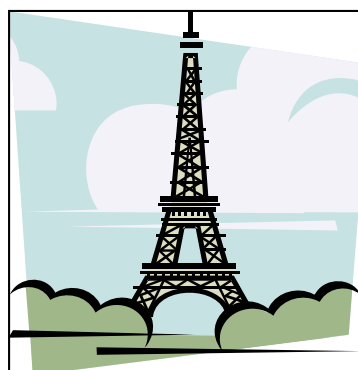
By Miss Devon

Miss Devon's Advanced Higher pupils are presenting their Devised Drama's on Monday 4th October in the Drama Department at 6.30pm. Any parent interested in seeing these 6th years work which will include multi-media are very welcome.

The event is free.

S5 PARIS TRIP FEBRUARY 2011

By Madame Naddell



Just after sitting their Prelims, 22 Higher French pupils will set out to Paris for a cultural and linguistic visit designed to give them a chance to improve their listening and speaking skills prior to their Oral.

The programme will include a variety of cultural visits – to Unesco Headquarters, La Villette Science Park, Le Palais de Tokyo Modern Art Gallery, l'Hôtel de Ville, and an array of other activities such as a bateau-mouche cruise on the river Seine, a trip to see a French film at the cinema, a visit to the Latin Quarter to interview French students, and much, much more!

Let's hope that the participants will come back energised and motivated for their French exams, and that as a result of this trip, many will become real Francophiles – just like their teachers!

Debating News.....Debating News.....Debating News

By Mr McGowne

Glasgow Bar Association Debating Competition



Congratulations go to Hazel McArthur and Olivia Gray of S3 who were runners up the Final of the Glasgow Bar Association Junior Debating competition at Glasgow Sheriff Court back in June. Both Hazel and Olivia had already won through from an earlier heat held in Mearns Castle. The motion on the night was *"This House believes that football is now more important than religion"*. Both Mearns Castle debaters competed against teams from St Columba's, Kilmacolm, Abronhill High School of Cumbernauld, Bearsden Academy, Douglas Academy and Linwood High School. The eventual winners were Bearsden Academy but the Judges commented that it was a very close decision in the end. Mearns Castle put up a very stout defence of the trophy the school won last year.

English Speaking Union Junior Debating Competition



A special mention also goes to Hayley Russell and Max Merrill of S3 who reached the Regional Final of the ESU Juniors Competition. The motion for this round was *"This House believes that nuclear weapons make the world a safer place"*. Both Hayley and Max deserve great credit for coming through two previous heats and for reaching this stage of the competition at their first attempt. Here's to next year and another successful year of junior debating at Mearns Castle.

Internet Safety

By Mr Davis, Campus Officer



During this school year I will continue to speak to Students and offer advice and information on the subject of Internet Safety. Keeping yourself safe when "Online" is not only a concern for young people but also for Parents and Carers of young people. With this in mind the information below from CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) offers practical advice and information regarding Internet Safety.

I hope you find the letter helpful however if you have any concerns which you wish to discuss please get in touch with me at the school.

Learn how to protect your child online...

The online world is integral to how children stay in touch with their friends, and access to the internet is now available like never before. However, there are inherent risks associated with new technologies and it is essential for young people and their parents / carers to understand how to reduce these risks.

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre is the UK's national child protection agency (*visit www.ceop.police.uk for more information*). At CEOP, we believe the start of the new school year is the perfect time to speak to your child about how they use the internet and how they can stay safe online.

Through the **ClickCEOP advice and help centre**, members of the public can access guidance on a broad range of topics to help protect their children, or alternatively report a concern directly to CEOP.

CEOP's Children and Young People's programme; *Thinkuknow*, is used in schools nationwide to educate young people about how to stay safe online. As parents, you can play a fundamental role in this aspect of their education. To stay up to date with further information and advice, please visit www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents to find information on:

- What are the risks posed to your child online?
- What can you do to protect your child?
- Where can you go if you are concerned?

We want to help you and your family stay safe online, there are some simple steps below that you can follow to achieve this.

CEOP has been working with social networking sites such as Facebook, BEBO, MSN and other major providers to put internet safety advice at the fingertips of your child, through the ClickCEOP application.

Facebook Users: Visit www.facebook.com/clickceop to **add the 'ClickCEOP' app** to your profile and ask your children to do the same. The app is free and easy to use, and gives you immediate access to internet safety advice as well as being able to report any suspicions to us. If you become a 'friend' of the page, we will invite you to our free online safety surgeries and send you updates. By clicking on 'Add the App' on the left hand side of our Facebook page you can add the 'ClickCEOP' button to your profile.

MSN & BEBO Users: Look for the ClickCEOP icon on the side of every profile page. It is a default setting and provides immediate access to internet safety advice and allows you to report any suspicions.

Web Browsers: If you use Firefox, Internet Explorer 8 or Google Chrome, you can customize your browser, enabling users to see the ClickCEOP button, regardless of which website you're on.

By following the guidance above, you can help protect your child to ensure they are enjoying the internet safely.

Sports at Mearns Castle

By Mr Giles

Cheerleading

Congratulations to the girls mentioned below who are part of the first Scottish team ever to travel to Europe for the **European Championships**. They went to Disneyland Paris on September 18th and performed superbly. They were up against tough opposition including teams from Russia and Czech Republic, but held their own and took **Bronze medal** in their division – an outstanding achievement!



Lorna Stewart S6, Tiffany Ballantyne S5, Mimi Black S3, Carla Williamson S3, Chloe Nelson S1

Volleyball

We have more players than ever this year in our volleyball clubs. 67 pupils have signed up to the S1/2 club on Mondays and another 38 S3-S6 pupils attend on Thursdays. All pupils will have the chance to represent the school at the National Festivals this year and some pupils will go on to represent the school in the Scottish Cup. The first year pupils have a tall order to live up to last year with our boys reaching the final and girls reaching the semi final. Good luck to them all in all their games.

New Sports Club

By Mr Wyroslawski

New Club: S4-6 Boys Lacrosse. Training is on Wednesdays after school till 5pm. Check out ; glasgowlacrosse.co.uk or contact Mr Wyroslawski for more details.

Tae Kwon Do

6th year pupil **Ian Monaghan** travelled to Belarus two weeks ago for the **World U18** Tae Kwon Do Championships. Ian fought superbly all week and it was only through an illegal move from another competitor which stopped him winning gold.

During Ian's penultimate fight, he was winning 3 points to 1 needing only 1 more point to secure victory when his opponent rendered him unconscious with a kick to the throat. Ian is now fighting fit again, but unfortunately couldn't make his last bout which would have won him gold. He was still awarded the **Silver medal** due to the points he had accumulated. What an incredible achievement and we are all very proud of him here at Mearns Castle!

Athletics

More congratulations to some of our top British runners. Calum McWilliam, Callum Firth and Stewart Woodhouse went down to Manchester to compete in the British Club Championships at the beginning of the month. **Callum McWilliam** won **Gold** in the **400m** with a time of **54:07s**, **Callum Firth** won **Gold** in the **100m** and **Silver** in the **200m** with times of **11:57s** and **23:54s** respectively and **Stewart Woodhouse** came **5th** in the **80m hurdles** with a time of **12:80s**.



Football

Congratulations to Shaun Alexander in S6 who has been selected to represent the U18 Paisley and District squad this year. It is a highly competitive selection process and Shaun has done extremely well to achieve this. Well done.

Congratulations to the under 14 football team who started their league campaign with a convincing 4 - 1 victory over Williamwood. Goals from **James Howard**, **John McBride** and two from **Ross Geddes** capped a fine team performance.

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 **Friday 1st October** at the latest.

Thank you for your continued support