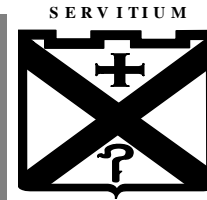


MEARNS CASTLE HIGH SCHOOL



September 2011

Issue 1

LETTER FROM THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

Dear Parent/Carer

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Work Experience</i>	2
<i>Performing Art News</i>	3
<i>Recognising Pupil Achievement</i>	4/5
<i>Careers Fair</i>	6
<i>Rome Trip June 2011</i>	7
<i>Paris Trip June 2011</i>	8
<i>Connecting Classrooms</i>	9
<i>Parent/Teacher Association news</i>	9

I am delighted to contact you through our first Newsletter of the new session. You may be aware that I missed the last three weeks of last session due to illness. I am indebted to Jim McKenna, DHT, the rest of the Senior Leadership Team and indeed all of the staff in the school for ensuring it was business as usual in the school during my absence. I am also very grateful to the parents who contacted me either in person or in writing to wish me a speedy recovery, your good wishes were much appreciated. I returned to school in much better health at the start of term and I am genuinely glad to be back.

Following another set of impressive SOA results, again in S5 and S6 our best in recent years, we are now settled into the rhythm of the new school session and as you can see from the Newsletter it is business as usual at Mearns Castle. The school continues to be 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 our last Newsletter in June featured reference to school uniform standards. I am pleased to see an increasing number, of blazers being worn across the school. I am concerned, however, that some pupils are attending school wearing inappropriate hoodies and that some girls continue to wear skirts that are inappropriately short. I would ask for your support in ensuring that high standards of school uniform are maintained consistently throughout the session.

How to contact us



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



0141 577 2314



Still on the subject of school uniform you may be aware from our June Newsletter that the ERC Education Department recently reviewed and revised its policy on the school uniform matter which then was ratified at the Education Committee as Local Authority policy in August. Following on from the publication of the revised policy it is our intention to consult with parents, pupils and staff on school uniform during the course of the session, with a view to reaching a revised school policy in good time for the start of the new session in August 2012. I will be discussing the matter with the Parent Council and thereafter wider parental views will be sought through questionnaires and focus groups as the session progresses. It is my hope that at the end of this process we will arrive at greater clarity in relation to school uniform expectations and that our current uniform standard will improve even further.

Can I take an opportunity to remind you about our advice in relation to pupils bringing valuables to school, in particular in days when they have PE. Our preference would be that pupils avoid bringing valuable items to school if at all possible. If this is not possible it is vitally important for pupils in PE to hand any valuables into their PE teacher at the start of the lesson for safe keeping. The valuables can then be collected again at the end of the lesson. It is important for security purposes that pupils follow this advice as due to pupil movement it is not always possible to lock the PE changing rooms during class time.

One issue that even this early in the term 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.

schoolmail@mearnscastle.e-renfrew.sch.uk

www.ea.renfrew.sch.uk/mearnscastle

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 remains increasingly busy. If cycling to school is an option perhaps you could encourage your child to travel by this method when the weather is appropriate. In addition another alternative, if appropriate could be to encourage your child to walk all or part of the way to school. As well as being healthy option both of these alternatives would help to ease the congestion around the school. Thank you for your support in this matter.

We have been asked to distribute a letter on behalf of Michael Russell, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning to parents and carers of pupils in S2. The letter will be in school bags on Tuesday 27th September. The letter deals with Curriculum for Excellence and I am sure you will find it both interesting and informative. You will note however that in paragraph one it refers to your child being in the year group of learners who... 'will be the first to take the new qualifications from 2013-14'. I would take this opportunity to remind you of the information shared with you at our Curriculum for Excellence Information Evening in January 2011. Mearns Castle, as with all secondary schools in East Renfrewshire presents pupils for Intermediate examinations at the end of S4. The final opportunity for pupils to be presented for these examinations according to the SQA timeline is session 2014-15. In these circumstances you will hopefully recall that my intention is that pupils currently in S2 will continue to be presented for Intermediate examinations at the end of S4 in 2013/14. That position seemed to meet with the agreement of parents in attendance at the meeting.

Can I draw your attention to our school website as an ongoing source of valuable information for events in the school including our calendar for this session. The address for the website is shown on the front page of the Newsletter.

Finally we always welcome feedback on the Newsletter or indeed any other aspect of the school. You can share your views with us via the return slip at the back of the Newsletter, via email at the address on the front or by any other means of communication that suits you. I look forward to hearing from you.

I hope you and your family enjoy the long weekend and the forthcoming October break. The next Newsletter will be published prior to the Christmas week.

Dean Smith
Head Teacher

S4 Work Experience 10th - 14th October 2011

By Mr Cairney PT



All S4 pupils will be out of school on a Work Experience Placement from Monday 10th October until Friday 14th October.

Congratulations to the vast majority of S4 pupils who have now arranged their work experience placements on their own.

However, there are still a few who have not yet completed this process.

It is now too late for self found placements to be checked by the company employed to carry out Health and Safety checks.

As a result pupils currently without a placement will be allocated one by the school.



Performing Arts News

By Miss Borland PT

Music Examinations Congratulations to;

Emily Raine, S4; who recently passed her Grade 7 LCM on Piano.

Ellen Parkinson S4; recently passed Grade 5 Theory with Merit.

All the Music Extra-Curricular Groups are now up and running and as you can see the department is offering a very wide and extensive range of activities for pupils.

There is still time to get involved and if your son or daughter is interested in joining any of the music groups on offer then they should come and speak to a member of the music department as soon as possible.

S1 Guitar Club



Two of our S6 pupils have offered to run a beginners Guitar club for S1 pupils.

This club will run on a Thursday lunchtime. If you are interested in joining please give your name to a member of the music department.

Places will be limited so hurry!

Dates for the diary



Sunday 30th October Broom Church 7pm

Five of our Senior pupils will be performing solo items at a concert given by Paisley Philharmonic Choir. Tickets are available at the door priced £8.

Thursday 1st December MCHS Winter Concert 7pm



Extra Curricular Music Groups



Monday

Theory Classes Mrs Haughan C5 Lunchtime
(Prep for AB aural tests etc..)

Chamber Group Miss Borland C4 Lunchtime

Tuesday

Senior Choir Miss Evans C5 Lunchtime

Wednesday

Celtic Ensemble Mrs Haughan C5 Lunchtime

Steel Band Miss Borland Band Room Lunchtime

Thursday

Junior Choir Miss Evans C5 Lunchtime

String Ensemble Miss Bailie D1 Lunchtime

Jazz Band Mr Sorley C5 3.35 – 4.45pm

Friday

Guitar Ensemble Mrs Miller D1 Lunchtime

Junior Concert Miss Evans Theatre Lunchtime
Band

Senior Concert Miss Borland Theatre 2.45 – 4.30pm
Band

Percussion Ensemble and Woodwind Ensemble will start in a few weeks time – please see department notice board for details.

Lunchtime groups – please bring a packed lunch with you to the rehearsal room!

Recognising Pupil Achievement (Colours)

By Mr Sorley DHT

Mearns Castle High School is striving to gain more and more information about the wide and varied range of activities that our young people are involved in. For many years we have been able to recognise these wonderful achievements through our school COLOURS programme.

Like many other organisations in the sporting, expressive arts, citizenship and enterprise fields, COLOURS systems have been used to help identify outstanding success and helps organisations to award certification and insignia to show their continued support.

In Mearns Castle, our COLOURS programme has already gone through a review in the past year (session 2010-2011) at the end of which a further evaluation took place. The results of the evaluation have shown that:

- we have been furnished with a vast quantity of knowledge about the activities that our young people are involved and having success in and
- we needed to add an 'entry' level of award.

Our 'Recognising Pupil Achievement' programme will include three meeting points throughout our school year, where members of staff and members from our senior school will pull together the information gathered and decide if our outstanding young people should be having their successes certified.

These meetings will take place as follows:

w/c 10th October 2011

w/c 12th March 2012

w/c 30th April 2012

At these meetings the Recognising Achievement Committee will decide if pupils' successes are worthy of COLOURS recognition and also the levels at which they should be recognised. The categories for recognition are under Enterprise, Citizenship, Sport and Expressive Arts.

HOUSE COLOURS (Level Two):

This is the level at which pupils are achieving personal successes in their activities. For example (and this is a change from last session):

- If pupils are sitting ABRSM Music exams at grade 1, 2 or 3 then they would be awarded House Colours.
- If our pupils are achieving great success as part of their team in a sporting activity such as Best Club Swimmer or Tennis Player of the month.
- If our pupils are helping out with Senior Citizens clubs or Brownies or Cubs and Boys Brigades or at Church, Synagogue or Temple groups.
- If our pupils have been getting involved in Enterprise activities such as recycling, or creating learning software games (but only at the initial stages and not at Steve Jobs level).
- If you are involved in dancing exams, we would be looking to award House Colours for First Steps, Pre-bronze, Bronze and Silver.

HALF COLOURS (Level Two):

This is the level at which pupils are achieving successes at school group or community group level.

For example:

- Player of the Match at an U-16s football match, between your school team and another school team in the region.
- Achieving grade 4 and 5 in ABRSM or any other affiliated Music exams.
- If pupils are achieving success in Dancing exams such as Gold, Blue Riband, British Medallion and Premier Awards, Grades 1-4.
- Continually supporting their local Theatre Group by being actively involved over a number of years in productions and maybe even gain lead roles.
- Continuous support, such as performing at the Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice and other Charity events in the school, at local Charity events or for Community groups.

FULL COLOURS (Level Three):

This is the level at which pupils are building on previous successes and taking their success to Regional, National or International level.

For example:

- Representing and gaining success for your team, your school or as an individual at Regional, National or International Athletics.
- Playing with the Concert Band at the Scottish Concert Band Festival Regionals (and Nationals) and achieving success.
- Achieving grade 6, 7 or 8 in ABRSM or any other affiliated Music exams.
- Representing the school Young Enterprise at Regional and National Competition level and being recognised for your achievements.
- Representing the school debating team at Debates
- Swimming for your club or school team at competitions and winning podium positions.
- Dancing at Grade 5 level and gaining Associate or Membership

and so much more . . . the more information we gain about our young people, the more examples we will be able to give.

HOW WILL OUR YOUNG PEOPLE BE RECOGNISED?

- After every Recognising Achievement Committee meeting, pupils will hear about their successes at every House Assembly and at the end of the session at their final Year Group assemblies, and receive a Colours Certificate

- Points will be awarded to each house total: **House Colours:** 5 Points **Half Colours:** 10 Points

Full Colours: 20 Points

- Pupils will be able to wear insignia: **House Colours:** A Colours Tie can be purchased from the school office **Half Colours:** Blue braiding can be placed on the breast pocket of school blazers in addition to the Colours Tie. **Full Colours:** Blue Braiding can be added to all three pockets of the school blazer in addition to the Colours Tie. All pupils who gain Colours recognition, and have a blazer will also be able to gain a blazer badge representing the area that they have gained Colours in.

- Pupil's names will be placed on the Colours Honours Board.

House Captains will be gathering information to be able to display 'Pride of House' bulletins

All you have to do is fill in the 'Recognising Achievement' form which can be found under the 'Recognising People Achievement' area on the school website and return it to the school office with the necessary evidence to support your applications.

Meeting One Deadline: Wednesday 5th October 2011

Meeting Two Deadline: Wednesday 7th March 2012

Meeting Three Deadline: Wednesday 25th April 2012

We are looking forward to celebrating with you and sharing your successes with your peers.

Police and Community Meeting

By Mr A Davis
Campus Officer

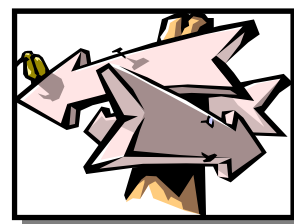
On Wednesday 28th September 2011 Sgt. Jim Boyle from Giffnock Police Office, along with the school campus officer Andy Davis, will be holding a PAC (Police & Community) Meeting in MCHS starting at 7.00pm.

The purpose of the Meeting will be to give members of the local community who reside in and around the G77 post-code an opportunity to present their views on local policing and any issues they may have with regards to policing the local area.

All members of the local community are most welcome.

Careers Fair

By Mr Cairney PT



Our annual Career's Fair will take place on Wednesday 26th October from 6.00pm—8.00pm. All pupils will be given a letter with more details nearer the time.

It promises to be an interesting and informative evening with representatives from University and colleges and from many diverse careers such as the Armed Forces, Beauty Therapists 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 6.00pm—7.00pm and S4, 5 and 6 from 7.00pm—8.00pm.

The event will comprise of stands for each of the represented organisations 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 courses and choices and career options.



Active Children Eating Smart (ACES) is a new and exciting programme running throughout East Renfrewshire to support children and young people to be a weight that is healthy for them.

Each week there is a fun and interactive workshop on a different healthy eating topic and tasters of different activities and sports. Practical cookery sessions are even included as part of the programme and the whole family can join in too!

Bookings are now being taken for the next ACES programme beginning in October 2011. The ACES programme is completely free to join but you must book a place in advance.

For more information, an informal chat or to book your child a place on ACES please call **0800 027 0291**

Rome Visit June 2011



A postcard from Rome!

In June we visited the historical city of Rome. With the help of our guide Massimo we went to the Vatican, Colosseum, Trevi Fountain, the Spanish Steps and lot of other places. The weather was amazing (thank goodness we had fans). We ate lots of ice cream and big pizzas and bought lots of souvenirs. After 3 days we were very sad to go. We would definitely recommend Rome!

Mhairi Strang, Amy Kirkpatrick, Amy Robb and Kirsty Slesser.



S3 Paris Trip June 2011

By Miss Hastie PT

We set out on what has become our annual visit to Paris on Saturday 18th June and arrived tired but enthusiastic at lunchtime the following day. We spent the next few days visiting the favourite tourist sites of the city including the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame, the Sacré-Coeur, the Louvre and the Mona Lisa by which most students were taken aback owing to the small size of the painting! The students broke a few banks with their shopping and we had previously been unaware of the range of colours in which the sweatshirt bearing the logo of "I love Paris" was available.

Throughout the trip our students' timekeeping was excellent and their behaviour was a credit to themselves and to their parents. It certainly makes a large trip like this one a lot easier for the staff involved when the students participating are as polite and well behaved as this group was.



French Breakfast

By Miss Hastie PT

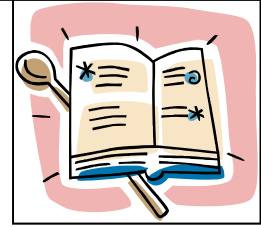
Over the course of the next few weeks all S2 pupils will experience a French breakfast to bring their course work to life. Our pupils will experience the typical French breakfast goodies such as croissant, pain au chocolat, baguette etc along with plenty of chocolate spread. We hope that they will enjoy their little taste of France.

S2 European Day of Languages

During the afternoon of 29th September S2 pupils will celebrate the European Day of Languages within the Modern Languages Department. A variety of events has been scheduled including quizzes and games in French, Mandarin Chinese, Spanish and Italian taster sessions. We hope that pupils will enjoy the activities and a report about the success of the day will appear in the next Parental Newsletter.

Connecting Classroom Recipe Book

By Mrs Thomson PT



This term our Connecting Classrooms project is focussing on a joint enterprise activity.

We, along with our partner schools in Delhi will be compiling our favourite recipes, which we will share with each other and then publish to sell in our community.

What do we need from you?

Basically, anything you like to make and eat!

We are looking for your favourite family recipes; they can be your best Scottish meal, a family favourite of any origin, a festival or celebration food.

The closing date for entries is Friday the 30th September. Send in your recipe on paper or electronically via school email (and if you can, a photograph of your delicious dish, although this is not necessary) to Mrs Thomson.



Parent/Teacher Association

With the new year ahead we are looking for new blood to come and join us on Mearns Castle High School Parent/Teacher Association. The PTA is the fundraising body and aims to raise funds to help with school excursions, team jerseys, whole school displays and many other things. Have you got fund-raising ideas, some time to spare, even if just to help out with teas and coffees and whole school events? Then why not come along to help us raise some much needed funds?

Our first meeting will take place on Thursday 13th October 2011 in the Conference Room.

School Contact: Mr S Sorley DHT

PTA Contact: Mrs Julie Woods; juliewoods248@hotmail.com

Parents Feedback

Pupil's Name _____

Year Group: _____

We Welcome any feedback on the content of the Newsletter or indeed any other aspect of the work of the school. If you wish to make an electronic reply please do so by following the link below;

<http://www.ea.e-renfrew.sch.uk/mearnscastle/contactUs/newsletter.asp>

Comment

Parent's Signature:.....

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

Please return the completed slip to the School Office by Friday the 30th September 2011.