



Headteacher Newsletter

14th September 2018

Dear Families

Mr Andrew M Hunter

Another school week has gone by in the blink of an eye!

This week was Maths week across Scotland and here at Sciennes all classes took part in extra activities to help celebrate all things maths! Do ask your child about it.

Primary 7 classes enjoyed a visit to The Water of Leith this week to reinforce their study of Rivers. The children took part in activities including river dipping and measuring river speed. It was a fantastic experience and the children impressed the staff with their curiosity and knowledge of river features.

I thoroughly enjoyed the Primary 1-3 Assembly on Monday. The theme was Being Unique. As part of the assembly the children were demonstrating sign language when singing and I enjoyed learning this with help from the children. After school the teaching staff attended a session called Signalong to enable them to use basic signing in school. We also learned our own unique sign based on our name and interests. Ms Anstruther has enrolled for a 6 week course and we look forward to learning from her.

I attended a meeting on Monday with members of the Parent Council, councillors, as well as representatives from Planning and Transport. We discussed proposals for the development of the playground and the next steps in the planning process.

On Tuesday I was out of school all day at a Headteacher National Improvement Framework day. The focus was very much on raising attainment in schools and analysing data. We also had a really good session from Jennifer Ross (Education Scotland) on evaluative report writing. The sandwiches were also very nice! We had our first fire drill of the year in school. This was one where the teachers and children were expecting it. It went very well and everyone was accounted for. We shall discuss it and look at how we can further improve procedures. The next one will be unannounced!

On Wednesday morning I attended the first Friends of Sciennes School (FSS) meeting of the year. This is a school charitable fundraising group and is run by trustees who are parents in the school. They are able to access grants and fundraise (with gift aid) and they help fund swimming and cycling in the school. They work closely with the fund raising arm of the parent council. One of their aims is for every child to leave Sciennes being able to swim and safely ride a bike. Fantastic life skills to have.

The city wide Junior Road Safety Officer Scheme was launched for 2018/2019 on Wednesday at The City Chambers. Julinne O'Connell, Matthew Nunn and Jamie Maguire all from P6 are our Junior Road Safety Officers (JRSOs) for this school year. They attended the launch accompanied by Humira Yeseem and she said the children were an absolute credit to the school. We look forward to the campaigns that the children will be involved in. Road safety is very important to us at Sciennes. Mr Hutchison accompanied four P7 boys to the Edinburgh Primary 7 select football squad trials on Wednesday. He told me the boys really gave it their best. Good luck to Lyall Ferguson, Fraser Lyons, Sean McCormack and Murray Edgar. I attended another meeting about the playground expansion with the parent council and Sustrans. We explored ways in which Sustrans may be able to help fund part of the expansion.

We had our first Parent Council meeting of the year on Thursday evening and Phoebe Cochrane (Chairperson) welcomed us all. This was really well attended and it was great to see so many new parents coming along. I spoke in general about what had been happening at Sciennes so far this term and some of my thoughts on parental engagement. The Group convenors spoke about their involvement and gave updates. This included Events and Fundraising, Communications, Eco, Building and Facilities (playground expansion), Clubs, Health and Wellbeing, including Fruit Group, School Streets, Football Club and Chess Club. There were lots of questions and useful discussions. Two hours flew by! It is just wonderful to have so many parents eager to work with us to improve our school and represent the views of the wider parent forum.

Today I had an initial meeting with Jennifer Ross from Education Scotland. We discussed the Pupil Equity Fund. This is money The Scottish Government give to schools to narrow the attainment gap between the most and least deprived children in our schools. At the staff meeting this morning teachers received an overview of the work Sciennes did in this area last year and the impact this had. This is an area that I am passionate about and we will continue to explore strategies that will help us to reduce this gap. The P4-P7 assembly today focussed on Respecting Yourself. Children shared their learning on our school values displaying writing, models, giving a presentation and showing animation. We also announced our new school ECO reps. Kirstin Unger, one of our parents also gave a short presentation to the children from the Marine Conservation Society promoting the Big British Beach Cleanup that takes place this weekend and why it is so important to clean up our beaches. It was also a great introduction to our Outdoor Learning week. It starts next week!

Finally Alison MacKintosh, one of our teachers, is leaving us today to go on maternity leave. We wish Alison all the best. Kat Watson, another one of our teachers, had her third child in August. A baby boy called Saul.

I hope you all have a great long weekend whatever you may be up to. If you are looking for a film to go and see then I recommend "Christopher Robin". I went to see it in the week and it was superb. Children will love it but adults too. It teaches us a lot about modern society and how we are sometimes too busy to enjoy the moment. My favourite quote is one I remembered from my childhood but it has greater significance as an adult.

"What day is it?" asked Pooh.

"It's today," squeaked Piglet.

"My favourite day," said Pooh.

Enjoy today and I look forward to welcoming the children back on Tuesday.

Andrew