



Headteacher Newsletter

21st September 2018

Mr Andrew M Hunter

Dear Families,

I hope you and your children all had an enjoyable holiday Monday.

Tuesday was the start of our Outdoor Learning week. Tuesday was also the start of some unkind weather for outdoor learning! Some of our events had to be cancelled, but over the week we still managed some super learning outdoors. We are a hardy bunch!

P1A and P1B went outside to use the new maths resources and made domino patterns using the loose parts.

P2a went to the nature garden as part of their literacy lesson on adjectives. They found an item and then had to think of an adjective to describe it.

Unfortunately, their trip to the Community Garden in the Meadows was postponed due to the rubbish weather!

P3c went outside the huts on Tuesday and just soaked up being outside and thought about how the outside makes them feel. They drew pictures outside, which are on the wall in the classroom, and some photos are on the blog.

All the P3's went on a bug hunt over in the Nature Strip, found everything from slaters and spiders to wasps, and shield beetles. The classes were also keen to make Bug Hotels for the little critters they found...only 4 Star of course with all amenities. P3C also did a maths treasure hunt around the huts. Great fun had by all.

Visitors from Port Edgar provided a fun workshop, which introduced our P5 learners to the basics of sailing. Using a small sailing dinghy, the names of various parts of the boat were pointed out and reinforced through the use of a simple team game. The importance of knot tying in sailing was established. Learners first identified where knots were used on the dinghy and were then taught how to create some of the basic knots for themselves.

Josh C (5a) has the following to say:

'It was really fun because we learned about different parts of a sail boat. We also developed our knot tying skills. Another thing that was good was finding out where Port Edgar is and where to go if you want to learn to sail.'

Primary 5 also enjoyed using the outdoors to enhance their maths and literacy learning.

Changeworks, an Edinburgh based organisation with a focus on recycling and sustainability, worked with P7 on Thursday.

Laila and Rehma from P7a said that:

'This week was outdoor learning week. P7 have been collecting crisp packets to reuse as coasters. We learned that it is bad for the environment and we should try to reduce the amount of plastic that we use on a daily basis'.

Storm Ali couldn't stop us from enjoying our outdoor learning even though some of our events had to be cancelled. A big thank you to Kirstin Unger and Phoebe Cochrane, along with the school staff, for helping to organise this week. Despite the conditions, the children experienced some fantastic learning.

On Tuesday, I visited James Gillespie's High School for the first Headteacher Cluster meeting of the session. On entering the school, I was immediately impressed by the helpfulness and politeness of the pupils there. If first impressions are anything to go by your children will be moving on to a great school! We had a very productive meeting and one of the first tasks we are going to do is to moderate standards of writing across all cluster schools. This will help ensure consistency in assessing pupil work.

On Tuesday afternoon, I attended equalities training where I learned about being a culturally proficient leader. I found this very interesting and was able to explore my core values and beliefs and reflect on how this interacts in my relationships with other people. The session also included a presentation by Derek Allan (Head Teacher) and students from Kirkcaldy High School who spoke about the great work they did in tackling homophobia in their school. The students from the school LGBT group were inspiring and through their presentations, they took us on their journey that resulted in all pupils and staff signing a pledge to work towards eradicating homophobia. Sir Ian McKellen even visited their school and they got a mention on the Graham Norton Show. I will reflect further on the training and think about how my learning will impact on what we do at Sciennes.

On Wednesday all three P3 classes braved Storm Ali and visited various Pizza Express restaurants in Edinburgh. They learned how to make a pizza. They did not need to learn how to eat one! I had been due to visit the Scottish Learning Festival in Glasgow but due to the adverse weather I decided it was best I should remain in school.

Thursday started with me helping Kirsty Spence, Head Teacher of the Additional Support for Learning Service (ASL), in interviewing candidates for the post of Depute Head Teacher (ASL). On Thursday evening, we held the Primary 1 curriculum evening. Ms Anstruther and I started the evening with some short presentations. The Primary 1 parents then attended four workshops run by the Primary 1 teachers, Lauren Thomas, Kirsty Gallagher, Samanda Campbell, Fiona Barker and Rhona Kennedy, one of our ASL teachers. The workshops covered Health and Wellbeing, Literacy, and numeracy. I tagged along with one of the groups and had a great time learning all about the teaching and learning that is taking place in our Primary 1 classrooms. The evening finished with a cheese and wine event run by the Parent Council to welcome our new Primary 1 families to Sciennes. The cheese, wine, nibbles and cake were donated by Victor Hugo Delicatessen. We are very grateful for their generous donation!

We had our staff meeting this morning. We discussed the setting up of staff and pupil groups to take forward priorities from our school improvement plan. Hopscotch Theatre company presented their production of 'Check one, Two' to P4- P7 today. Music and Maths collided in this space themed gaming adventure. The children loved it and it tied in with our Maths focus from last week!

I mentioned in a previous newsletter that I would give you some more details on our switch from Golden Time to Play Rite.

At Sciennes, we have been reviewing our Positive Behaviour Policy to take account of recent research, particularly Paul Dix's book "When The Adults Change, Everything Changes." Following consultation with pupils, we have decided to stop our whole school practice of collecting House merit points. However, each stage in the school will maintain their own rewards and praise systems in class. Children felt that the awarding of such points was irregular, inconsistent and too competitive.

We have also reviewed our use of Golden Time. As part of our school wide Positive Behaviour Strategy, loss of Golden Time has been used as a sanction for inappropriate behaviour. Again in consultation with pupils, we have decided to stop this practice. However, we will still maintain a space in the curriculum for structured, purposeful play and socialising but this will no longer be linked to our behaviour policy. As a 1 in 5 Child Poverty Awareness school, we are also conscious that the practice of bringing toys and games from home can lead to challenges and pressures for families and potential scope for inequalities. Therefore, the structured play activities will be resourced in school from now on.

We are extremely fortunate that our Parent Council Chess Club has recently donated twenty chess sets for school use. On some occasions, a year group may opt for a games session and so we would greatly welcome any donations of any preloved board games, which can be handed in to the School Office. It is also a good excuse for a clear out and a happy new home for these games! This would help us to provide some exciting opportunities to encourage children to play board games together.

One of our P7 pupils, Essie McLeod, suggested renaming Golden Time as 'Play Right' Time. We like the link to UNCRC Article 31 'The right to play' and the implied meanings of playing fair, including everyone and social etiquette. Respect, Inclusion, Teamwork and Effort (RITE) are our school values so we have slightly adapted Essie's idea and will use the term 'Play RITE Time' rather than 'Golden Time.'

We hope you will support the changes to our programme though please feel welcome to contact us if you have any comments or enquiries.

Our exciting pupil news this week is that Daniel Hogg, P6a won the Stephen Gallacher Foundation U10 Golf Final on Saturday at Kingsfield Golf Club in Linlithgow. What a fantastic achievement, Daniel. Well done to you!

A couple of reminders... School orchestra begins in the main hall on Monday 24 September at 2.40pm and all children who cycle to school should wear a helmet.

At Sciennes we use an online booking system for Parent Consultation Evenings, which will go live today. Our Parent Consultations are on 2nd and 4th October from 4-7pm. The system will allow you to choose appointments for your child/children and bookings.

PLEASE NOTE: Online booking will open today, **FRIDAY 21st September at 3pm** and **CLOSE** on **SUNDAY 30th September at 11.55pm.**

See separate email for detailed information and use this link to book your appointment:

<https://www.parents-booking.co.uk/sciennes>

This is quite a long newsletter for a short week. I now finally feel part of Sciennes as my Sciennes school hoodie arrived this week. It came in very handy when Storm Ali was in full swing on Wednesday. I can confirm the hoodies do keep you very warm!

Let's hope for calmer weather over the weekend.

Andrew

Key Dates



Key dates

Tuesday 2 October and Thursday 4 October - Parent Consultations 4pm - 7pm

Monday 8th – Friday 12th October P7 Lagganlia Residential

Friday 12 October - school closes at the normal time for the October week holiday and resumes for pupils on Tuesday 23 October.