

PORTOBELLO HIGH SCHOOL



**CHRISTMAS
NEWSLETTER
2015**



Green Flag
Award Holder
Since 2002



Dear Parent / Carer

The end of term and the Christmas holiday has – as usual - arrived at an alarming rate! I have very much enjoyed my first few weeks as Head Teacher at Portobello High School and the process of getting to know staff, pupils and families. As we approach the final days of 2015, I appreciate being able to keep you up-to-date with school news through this newsletter.

Important Dates

- The school will close for the Christmas break on
Tuesday, 22nd December 2015 at 12:15 p.m.
- The start date for the new term for **STAFF** is
Wednesday, 6th January 2016 – (In Service Day)
- School begins for **PUPILS** on
Thursday, 7th January 2016 at 8:30 a.m.

Staffing Changes

We welcomed a new Depute Head Teacher, Mr Nigel Cotter, at the end of November. Mr Cotter joins us from McLaren High School in Calendar, where he was a Depute Head Teacher for a number of years and has responsibility for Abercorn House.

Mr Luke McAllister took up post as Support for Learning Leader in mid-November, joining us from Balerno Community High School, where he held the same post.

Staff News

Mr I Gray, C.D.T. announced the birth of a baby boy. Congratulations.

Prelims – S4 / S5 / S6

Our senior pupils are approaching their preliminary examination diet in January 2016 and we hope that it will be a successful period for them. It is important that they study hard over the next few weeks and that they keep up a steady focus from now until the national examinations in May. Please support us as parents / carers by ensuring that regular revision takes place, during and beyond the festive season.

P7 Open Evening

Prospective pupils and their parents / carers were welcomed to our P7 Open Evening in September. There was a tremendous turnout. The feedback we received from was very positive indeed and we look forward to new families joining our school community.

Adverse Weather Conditions

As we settle into winter, should we face adverse weather conditions, please listen to Radio Forth early in the morning for an update on the impact of the weather. Please also ensure that younger pupils approach staff if there are difficulties related to journeys or access to home, should the school close early due to a deterioration in weather conditions. Also, please ensure that we have up to date contact details so that we are able to contact parents / carers speedily, when needed.

New School – Latest Update

If you have passed by the site of our new building recently, you will be aware that work is progressing well. As the white cladding goes on to the exterior, it begins to look more and more like a school.

I have been lucky enough to tour the building twice since I took up post. A number of people have commented to me that it doesn't look that big from the outside. This is, I think, down to the clever design and the fact that the lower ground floor is not obvious from Milton Road. I am pleased to say that I have been impressed by the space and light inside. Many classrooms are now structurally complete, and there is a real sense of how the building will feel inside.

As we move into the New Year, we will be planning the commemoration of our existing building as well as the celebration of the new building. We are keen to involve as many past pupils of Portobello High School as possible in this process – watch this space!

P.E. Department – Participation Policy

Recently the P.E. Department has had to respond to an increasing number of phone calls from the school office, who in turn appear to be receiving an increasing number of calls from parents / carers requesting that their child be excused from participating in P.E. We would appreciate support from parents / carers regarding our policy which is outlined below:

The P.E. Department aim to have 100% participation by all pupils in every lesson. It is understood, however, that there are occasions when pupils will be unable to take a full active part in a lesson due to a medical condition or as they recover from illness or injury. When this happens, P.E. staff will endeavour to keep such pupils as involved as possible so that they can continue their learning alongside their classmates. To achieve this, pupils are required to bring their P.E. kit on every occasion that the subject appears on their timetable so that that they are equipped to participate to their maximum in each lesson. As well as taking part in limited parts of the activities pupils may also be asked to act as a referee, timekeeper, score-keeper, observer, etc. thereby gaining knowledge from the lesson.

Pupils Excused PE - Pupils should only be excused from participation in P.E. if they have a signed note from a parent or carer. Parents / Carers should refrain from phoning the school in order to request that their child be excused from participating in P.E.

R.M.E.

Over the last two months many of our 4th Year pupils have been taking part in a range of practical activities for the SQA unit 'Values in Action', as part of the Religion, Belief and Values Award which all our core RME students have a chance to work towards over S3&S4. This year, S4 pupils have been involved in choosing an activity either individually or as part of a group, to show how we can take our beliefs and opinions beyond the classroom and put them into practice.

There has been a most impressive range of activities taking place around and outside school by our S4 pupils taking the initiative to support various charities of their choice or to raise awareness about an issue they have felt strongly about.

Fund raising activities have ranged from cake bakes, sponsored silences, abseiling and cycle runs to counting sweets in a jar and henna hand designing to name just a few. One group inspired by our last year's Head Girl who is doing voluntary work for a charity supporting orphaned children in Africa this year, raised over £200 towards the charity, by organising a very successful cake bake.

Other pupils chose to raise awareness about issues that mattered to them from youth homelessness in Scotland to the treatment of animals. One group made a beautiful display in the library about the treatment of killer whales in marine parks like SeaWorld while others decided to make short presentations to S1 pupils about the issue after watching the documentary 'Black Fish'.

Many pupils in their write up of the activity have expressed how much they have enjoyed doing something to help others and has inspired them to do more. It's been quite heart-warming for us as a department to see pupils engage enthusiastically and generously in this way.

Overall, our S4 pupils have raised a considerable amount of money for a number of charities and shown how responsible they can be when committed to something they believe in. Thanks to all the parents, teachers, janitors and office staff who have helped our pupils carry out these activities and put up with any inconvenience caused.

John Muir Discovery Award

The S2 Enrichment unit on the John Muir Discovery Award went well this term, with lucky pupils completing their expedition from Aberlady to Gullane in clear skies and sunshine! On the way they saw marsh birds, sand dunes, brittle stars, WW2 submarines and a fossilised beach! This optional Enrichment unit runs twice a year and gives pupils the chance to explore and conserve their nearby wilderness.



Porty Does Strictly

Friday, 11th December 2015 saw Portobello High School transformed into a glitter ball of delight as 7 pupil and 7 staff couples danced the night away to demonstrate new skills developed through our inter-disciplinary learning project entitled 'Porty Does Strictly'. Over the last few weeks, pupils across all year groups have been participating in various learning experiences including research and design, IT web development and programming, Physics experiments, dance, stage production, interviewing, programme writing and fashion design and manufacture, all relating to the theme of the project. The high standard of previous years was maintained and it was another night of fun with great talent on display. The competition was hard fought but the overall winners were announced as one of our 6th year couples Lois Forbes and Cameron Johnstone. Congratulations to them both on an entertaining and skilful performance.

Charities

The charity committee once again sold candy canes to raise money for Mary's Meals. This was been inspired by the film 'Mean Girls' and raised an impressive total of £248.97, meaning 42 children will be fed for a year. Candy canes were sold at break in the foyer for 50p or 3 for £1 and were delivered to pupils on Wednesday, 16th December during key adult time.

The committee have also raised £233.08 for Poppy Scotland. Thank you to all who donated.

There have been various other events taking part around the school and we will keep you informed via our Website.

S1 Christmas Disco

The S3 Business Management classes have been busy organising the S1 Christmas Disco. This event will take place on Tuesday, 22 December 2015 between 10 a.m. and 12.p.m.

S1 Pantomime

Our annual outing to the Pantomime took place on Thursday, 3rd December. The pupils really enjoyed the event. **Oh yes, they did!**

Junior Vocal Group

Our Junior Vocal group performed at the Queen's Hall last night, as the opening act for a Charity Night, and were absolutely fabulous, accompanied by senior instrumentalists Daniel Torbett-Schofield, Sophie Bleau and Cameron Bradley.

Also, Lucy Thomas in S4 has just been successful in gaining a place at The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's Junior Conservatoire in Glasgow. Highly prestigious, she attends every Saturday. A great achievement, well done Lucy!

Eco Committee

The Eco Committee has made a great start to completing work for Portobello HS' 7th Green Flag Award this session. Since becoming a FairAware school before summer, our pupils and staff promoted the monthly Fair Trade stall held in the school foyer at assemblies last month, when Simran Piya, Grace Brown and Gonda Metzger presented information on the benefits that the Fairtrade Foundation brings to communities in less developed countries. Our next aim is to add more Fair Trade products to those on sale in the school cafeteria.

The Eco Team, which meets on a weekly basis, has also been building their skills as sustainable entrepreneurs, by growing herbs and flowers in our 8th floor greenhouse (look out for plants on sale at school concerts!) and making paper to turn our scrap into covers for notebooks.

For more information why not follow the Eco Committee's blog at:

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/ce/PortobelloEcoBlog>.

Christmas Concert

It was great to have a full house at our Christmas Concert. Thank you so much for your support. It is a delight that the musical talent in the school is flourishing. What was so impressive was to have the whole age range within the school performing.

Geography Fieldwork

It has been a busy term for Geography fieldtrips, with all S2 pupils going to Dynamic Earth for a tour and a workshop on supervolcanoes. For their Added Value Assignments, S4 pupils visited sites along the Braid Burn and measured a number of variables and Higher pupils spent a morning investigating first-hand the effects of tourism on Arthur's Seat, both taking advantage of the excellent local resources we have here in Edinburgh. The Advanced Higher pupils spent a weekend in the picturesque setting of Kindrogan Field Centre to practice their fieldwork techniques. A trip for S3 classes to Pitlochry is now in the planning stage.

Book Week Scotland

The Library celebrated Book Week Scotland in a variety of ways. English classes visited for themed lessons, the S6 Library Prefects held a (very competitive!) lunch time Book Quiz, and the Portobello Book Doctors were on duty, handing out reading prescriptions to anyone in need.

Music Department

Some of our pupils visited Findlay House which is an Elderly Care Facility operated by NHS Lothian and located in the east of Edinburgh.

The pupils were welcomed and treated to juice and cakes by the centre staff! Pupils and staff played Christmas tunes to the residents, who all had a great time.



Gallipoli 2015

Three Portobello students visited Gallipoli in the October half term accompanied by School Librarian Miss Thow. The trip was run in conjunction with Leith Academy and the Gallipoli Centenary Education Project and funding came from the Gallipoli Association and Heritage Lottery Fund. During the five day period students visited World War One battlefields, cemeteries, memorials, museums and spent an afternoon with students at a local High School. Students shared their experiences at our Remembrance Evening on November 11th.



Remembering Srebrenica

In November the school hosted the launch of a new Education Scotland teaching resource: "Remembering Srebrenica". The resource is designed to enable young people to understand why genocide happens and how it can be prevented. The event was reported on BBC Scotland news which showed interviews with a number of our pupils who had participated in the launch. The resource has formed the basis of a series of 'Citizenship' inter-disciplinary learning lessons delivered to all S3 pupils in Social Studies.

Lessons from Auschwitz

Holocaust survivor Zigi Shipper is due to visit the school on Friday 29th January. He will be giving a talk to S3. There are lots of photos of Zigi on google images.

12 Days of Library Christmas

The Library got into the Christmas spirit with The 12 Days of Library Christmas, organised by the S6 Library Prefects. 12 different activities were offered over break and lunchtimes in December and included Christmas Book Craft, a Christmas Book Quiz, and a mystery guest (!).



S2 – S6 Pupils – Glasgow Royal Concert Hall

Absent Friends is an annual festival of storytelling and remembrance about loved ones who have passed away or are no longer in touch, but whose stories still live on.

In our S2 Enrichment time, we worked as part of a class to contribute to the festival. We started by working with writer Diana Hendry. After thinking about the theme of the project, we went to Spring Gardens Care Home. There we interviewed some of the elderly people about their absent friends. We then created pieces of writing, stories and poems, about loved ones who we miss.

Inspired by these stories, we worked with musicians from the RSNO, and some senior S6 pupils, to compose an original piece of music. The workshop process was documented by the senior pupils from the Media course, who filmed us performing, practising or talking about the project.

On the Thursday the 29th of October 2015, we travelled to Glasgow to perform our piece of music with musicians from the RSNO at the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall. Four other groups also performed as part of the event: Craigie High School from Dundee, the RSNO Junior Chorus from Glasgow, Walker Road Primary School from Aberdeen and Balfron High School from Stirlingshire. It was a really successful trip and everyone enjoyed it. Then on the 6th of November we performed our piece of music at the Usher Hall. Performing with professional musicians was a fantastic experience that we loved.

Towards the end of the project, we recorded the music one last time, and created animations and pictures to go with it. This booklet provides a record of our experience, and of our memories of absent friends.

Orla Troup



Photos by David P Scott Photography

Parking

Please could parents / carers refrain from parking illegally outside the school (in the bus bay and zig-zag areas). We have had problems recently with buses returning our pupils from the Jack Kane Centre being unable to park close to the school. There have also been a number of complaints from parents / carers who are worried about pupil safety due to cars blocking the view and stopping youngsters from crossing the road safely.

The police and parking wardens have been alerted to the difficulties by parents / carers and are keeping a close eye on the situation.

Parental Contact with the School

If there are issues of a pastoral nature the first point of contact should be your son or daughter's Pupil Support Leader. Should the issue be complex, the Depute Head Teacher may become involved.

If there are difficulties of an academic nature it is also useful to contact the PSL who will either collect information to answer queries or will link with the appropriate Curriculum Leader who will respond.

We have developed the Key Adult System to allow for the development of a system where each child is known well as they continue through school. It is hoped that good relationships build up over the years. Although this is an important key persons, formal contact for parents / carers is the Pupil Support Leader.

Holiday Permission

Parents are advised to book holidays outwith term time as absence has a clear impact on progress in school work. A recent directive from the Scottish Government states that permission for family holidays in term time can only be granted in exceptional circumstances. These are as follows:

- Where the family holiday is important to the wellbeing and cohesion of the family, following serious or terminal illness, bereavement or other traumatic events.
- Where evidence is provided by an employer that leave cannot be accommodated during school holidays without significant consequences. A letter should be obtained from employers to confirm this.

If a request does not comply with these circumstances, it is not possible to approve the leave. However, should you decide to go ahead with the holiday, the period of absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised absence'.

Reporting Absences

Absence Alert Number - **657 9057**

Parents / carers who contact the school absence line by **8:15 a.m.** on the first day of their child's absence will not be contacted through the SEEMIS system.

Parental Support

We rely heavily on parents / carers for support of the school uniform to maintain a high standard of dress and we rely on your support to promote punctuality and good attendance.

Could I ask a final favour? Despite the recent mild weather, it remains important at this time of year that we work together to alert youngsters to the dangers of frozen ice on ponds. It is always worrying for us to hear reports of young people acting in a dangerous manner when the Figgate Pond freezes over. Please reinforce this message at home.

Receive School News by Email

As you may know, the school has a website which can be accessed at www.portobello.edin.sch.uk. It contains lots of useful information about the school, including regular news to keep you up to date with what is happening.

The website also has a useful feature to allow you to receive updates as they are posted. Please use the "subscribe" options on the right hand side of the PHS website.

We have built up a bank of parental e-mail addresses to pass on messages. **Please ensure your correct e-mail address is given to us to allow for this.** This is especially important for the parents / carers of our new S1.

Parent Forum / Parent Council

All parents / carers are welcome to Parent Council Meetings which are held on a Monday, at 7 p.m. in the School Library. This session's date are:

Parent Council Meetings		
11 Jan 16	Meeting	7 - 9 pm
7 Mar 16	Meeting	7 - 9 pm
16 May 16	Meeting	7 - 9 pm

Christmas holidays

Wednesday 23 December 2015 - Wednesday 6 January 2016

Finally, I would like to wish all our pupils and their families a very Happy Christmas and every good wish for **2016**. Thank you for your continuing support.

Yours faithfully

Ruth McKay
Head Teacher