

# Hillside School Bulletin

## Number 7

December 2020

We are approaching the end of a year that has seen all of our lives greatly disrupted. Many have sadly suffered directly from the impact of Covid-19. I wish to thank all of our young people, their families, and all our staff and other professionals for helping each other to stay safe, and for trying to make the most of 'lockdown' and the months when there were many restrictions on our lives. I hope we all enjoy a much better 2021.

We continue to make great use of our walled garden, with two outdoor education projects working alongside Douglas and Francesca. This has included ghost tales, den-building, drumming and marshmallow-toasting!



Story-telling project in the walled garden

Our new school day structure has a focus on academic learning each morning. Our young people choose from a range of afternoon activities, including: cookery, racquet sports, cycling, movie-making, animal care, music, and added value qualifications in subjects such as: Biology, Maths, History and English.

Well done to the following young people on their Hillside Group

Award success, recognising SQA (and other) attainment and achievement: EJ and Niall (bronze awards); Lucius, Mikey and Brandon (silver awards); Kenzie and Jamie M (gold awards); and Richard (platinum award).



ASDAN FoodWise and SQA Cookery qualifications

We were all devastated by the passing of our dear friend and colleague, Brian Drysdale. Brian was a lovely person and an experienced care worker in Forthview. A tree is being planted outside, close to Forthview, to help us to remember him.

Anne and Carrie from Skills Development Scotland are the careers advisors for our young people. We are delighted that they continue to be available online every Wednesday afternoon to meet with our young people and help them to plan for a positive future.



SQA Volunteering in the local community

Some of our young people are working with one of our teachers, Michael, to volunteer in the Aberdour community. Michael reports: "We have helped to clear an overgrown area at the train station greenhouse, and cut back lots of overhanging plants and ivy

from a pathway. Presently, we are working in the sensory garden, helping to repair some outdoor furniture and repaint fencing."

As we are all still experiencing the Covid-19 pandemic, our focus is on learning, and also very much on everyone's health and wellbeing. We are providing our young people with as much live teaching as possible, and meaningful, helpful relationships with key adults to support them during these difficult times for everyone.



We like this mindfulness reminder!

All of our young people have a key teacher. Recently, key teachers have been developing their coaching and mentoring skills to help them to support their key young people with, for example, plans, challenging conversations and transitions.



Gardening is a popular course during 2020

We have introduced some new qualifications this year, including: SQA National 4 Biology, National 5 Physical Education, and National 2 Employment Skills: Animals and Cookery. We have also introduced ASDAN qualifications in Beliefs and Values, and Pottery and Ceramics.



SQA Art and Design success

Recently, Nesta (an education organisation), published the competencies that young people should be developing to help them to succeed as an adult. These include: building and managing relationships, resilience, negotiating skills, initiative, teamwork and flexibility.

We have an ambitious plan to continue to improve the quality of care and education at Hillside School. This term, we are focusing on more opportunities for families to speak with their child's key teacher or subject teacher, via phone or online technologies. It is important that families and teachers work together to support our young people to succeed at school and have a bright future. We are working hard to make sure that our new policy on 'Supporting young people during the school day' is embedded across the school. This policy is about care and education staff working together, and with each young person, to help them to 'do their best'.



Our boat planter project is a great success

It is important that management at Hillside School receive feedback from everyone involved in the school. We are

issuing our twice-yearly questionnaire to our young people, and parents and carers. Recently, we asked social workers and educational psychologists for their thoughts about the school. Overall, their rating was high. There was praise for our communication, therapeutic and nurture work, and the quality of relationships. Suggestions for developments included: providing more regular updates to social workers and educational psychologists; greater reference to the Wellbeing Indicators; and communicating our 'practice model' more clearly.



Sarah, our English teacher

Recently, we asked our staff to take part in self-evaluation on the question: How good is our care and support during the pandemic? Our overall grade was Very Good, with all responses being positive. Two areas for development were ensuring that all our young people have access to a bicycle, and making a long-term commitment to offering a variety of outdoor learning activities.

Our young people are able earn a little extra 'pocket money' each week by making a good commitment to their individual education targets. Young people's key teams work with them to support the achievement and review of these targets.

We have excellent facilities at Hillside for helping us all to lead healthy, active lives. Recently,

our gym has been improved and it is proving popular with many young people and staff.



New lifting weights added to the gym

Michael, our Developing the Young Workforce co-ordinator, regularly speaks with businesses and colleges, so that when the pandemic ends there will be many work placement and course opportunities.

The school has received its Bronze Rights Respecting Schools Award and we have an action plan for achieving the Silver Award. We now have a pop-up banner on young people's Rights in the reception area. We have updated some of the language used across the school and given our young people more choice of learning activities.

Our School and Rights Council meets every month. Recently, they have been discussing with managers: the best way to ensure that bedrooms are well-ventilated; ideas for afternoon activities for next term; and leisure time outside of the school day. Well done to the young people who maturely and respectfully contribute to these meetings.

I hope you have enjoyed reading about some of our great work.

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