

Head Teacher's Report

First day at Ridgepark



Welcome to the first newsletter of 2016-17. It has been a very busy start to the school year with all of the school community having to become familiar with new and different experiences. The staff worked hard during the in service days and exceptional closure to make the decant look as welcoming as possible and to ensure it had a "Tinto" feel about it. Mrs Stewart and Mrs Mennie were literally on their knees scrubbing stairs, skirting boards and windows; Mrs Semple, Mrs Hamilton (Support Services) and myself worked with the removal company to ensure boxes were moved from the hall into the appropriate rooms once the cleaning had finished.

Teaching and support staff then unpacked boxes, put up displays and organised the classrooms. The pupils have settled quickly into the routines at break and lunch time and are now able to organise themselves into the correct bus line at the end of the day. They are enjoying the lovely outdoor spaces and having four walls and a door in their classrooms!

New starts: There have been many new starts this year. Firstly we welcomed new teaching and support staff to the school – Ms Forrest is the P2/3 class teacher; Mrs Hardisty is the P4/5 class teacher and Mrs Andrews is the P5/6 class teacher. Mrs Hardisty is covering the vacancy, this has been advertised by SLC and leeting and interviews will take place shortly. Mrs Andrews has been appointed as a permanent member of staff at Tinto. We also welcomed Mrs Baillie to the Support Staff team.

The P1 pupils have had a wonderful start to their primary school career. They have been very well looked after by their P7 buddies and are enjoying their learning and their play. We had five new families joining Tinto over the summer break. Ace and Stene Pijper, Melissa and Samantha Brown, Alexander Watson, Benjamin and Toby Cook and Roccio and Ruaridh Ritchie. We hope they and their families enjoy being part of the Tinto Primary School community.

The Nursery Class also had new children starting. They are Kenzie Mcdougal (2-3 class); Lilly Gelsthorpe, Eva Lyon, Austin Steele and Angus Thomson. Again, we hope that they and their families enjoy their time at Tinto Nursery.

Nursery: The nursery class has remained on site in Symington. Again, the staff worked very hard to clean the rooms and organise the resources during the in service days. There was quite a bit of dust about as a result of the building work. The outside area is looking fantastic and the children are enjoying being back. Mrs White will be in the nursery until September 6th and Mrs Millar returns from maternity leave on September 7th. SLC has advertised for teachers and we are hoping that a teacher will be appointed for the nursery class as soon as is possible. The nursery has its own phone line and the number is 01899 309464.

Buses: Having six buses arriving and leaving Ridgepark has been a bit of a logistical challenge. However the method of naming the buses and organising the children into these groups in the hall appears to be working. Where the system fails is if a pupil informs us at the end of the day that they were told they were being picked up and have not to go on the bus. As you can imagine, this then causes distress to the child as we explain we didn't know this and additional work at the end of the day as we try and contact parents to find out what arrangements have been made. This has the knock on effect of delaying the bus as we try to find out exactly what has been arranged.

If you know your child is not to go on the bus please call the school in the morning so we can add this information onto the bus clipboard for staff to see. We can then ensure the pupils concerned are not in a bus line but in the pick up line. If it is to be a regular occurrence (swimming every Tuesday for example) then please put this in writing and staff will then organise the children accordingly. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Discipline on the bus: Two buses have had to stop on the way home so that the driver can deal with inappropriate behaviour. I have spoken to the pupils involved and their parents. It is parents' responsibility to ensure their child behaves appropriately on the transport and the bus companies are able to refuse to transport pupils if they are a distraction / behaving dangerously. I sincerely hope that we do not have to get to this point over the next 18 months.

Rugby: P4-7 pupils have been participating in Tag Rugby each Wednesday. This is a six week block and is run by Active Breaks and the Biggar Rugby Club.

Swimming: The P5 pupils have had their first swimming lesson and all went swimmingly! This will continue for a further 11 weeks.

Paperwork: As usual at the start of the school year, parents have had paperwork to complete regarding emergency contacts, internet usage etc. Please do return these as quickly as possible so we can update our records.

Parents also received communication regarding a **maths workshop with Tom Renwick**. There is a choice of three venues (Abington, Biggar and Carnwath). The Biggar Learning Community was successful in applying for a grant from the Scottish Government to raise attainment in maths. Part of the bid focuses on “Family Learning” and supporting parents to be able to help with maths homework and learning, looking at how children learn, what activities we use in school and what fun activities could be done at home to support their child. Please do go along if you possibly can. Tom Renwick is a well known expert in maths, he has worked with all teaching, support and nursery staff in the Learning Community and he will be coming into every class to work with the pupils in September. Please return your reply slip to me if you are hoping to attend so that the host schools have an idea of numbers. Thank you.

The final piece of communication concerned the **Open Day on the 7th September**. Details regarding times have been issued. Again, please return the reply slip if you are hoping to come along so we have an idea regarding numbers.

Assessments: As part of the maths bid mentioned above, all pupils in the Learning Community will complete an online assessment for Maths. This will allow individual schools to identify areas of strength and development; allow staff to plan for pupils needing focussed additional support and provide information if additional resources need to be bought. It will also provide information to allow the primary schools to moderate across the Learning Community and to support each other. For example, if one school has a strength in Information Handling and this is a development need in another school, then staff can work together, visit each other’s classes and share teaching strategies and resources. Information will be shared with Biggar High so that staff from the high school are aware of the strengths and development needs across the community and we can plan for P7-S1 transition. Information will also be shared with the nursery classes to support N-P1 transition. Pupils will also be completing a Health and Well Being assessment and a questionnaire about their thoughts regarding future careers and their knowledge and understanding of jobs. Again, we will be working with the Learning Community schools to develop programmes to support the pupils as they move through nursery, primary and into high school.

Overall results will be shared with parents in future newsletters. It must be remembered however that the results are a snapshot of the children’s knowledge and understanding on the day of the assessment. The results do not always reflect a pupil’s ability and do not replace teacher ongoing assessment work.

Parent Council: The AGM will be taking place on the 29.9.16. The end of year reports from the After School Club, Tinto Fund Raisers and the Parent Council will be presented, including the accounts. Lisa Shanks will be stepping down as Chair of the Council after a sterling session leading the Council. It is of vital importance that a new Chair is elected during the AGM. If there is not a Chair, the P.C cannot function. This would be a great loss to the school community, especially at this time of the new build. Please do consider if you are able to give up six evenings a year to chair the group and some time to manage correspondence. It is not an onerous or time consuming role – but it is an extremely important one.

School Fund: The School Fund accounts need to be audited by the October break. Mr and Mrs Brown have very kindly done this task for the past two years. If you can offer to do this for the school, or know someone who could, please do contact me. It is a legal requirement and if there are no volunteers then I will need to use some of the school fund to pay for an auditor to do it for us. Thank you

Zoo Lab: Each class will be participating in a 45 minute workshop with Zoolab on the 8th September. Each class will have their own theme ranging from Eco to minibeasts. This is literally a hands on experience and one the children thoroughly enjoy. No one has to hold or touch the insects / animals if they do not want to and hygiene is a priority if they do! Please could each child bring a contribution of £2.00 / £3.00 per family towards the cost. Thank you.

P1 Curriculum meeting: This will take place on Tuesday 27th September at 1.30 p.m in Ridgepark. Mrs Rodger will explain how she will be teaching literacy and numeracy and how you can support your child's learning at home and I will have a short input about the Curriculum for Excellence. Invites will be issued on the Open Day.

Improvement Plan: The evaluation for 2015/16 and the Development Priorities for 2016/17 are now on the website.

Keeping in touch: It is more of a challenge to keep in touch now we are in Lanark and cannot have a chat at the start and end of the day. Please do email or call should you have a query or concern. I am aiming to be at the Post Office in Symington most Mondays at 3.15 before going to the nursery and then at the football club most Thursday mornings and then in the nursery for an hour. You can see me at either of these venues or pop into the nursery to see me during these times. There will be times that, due to other meetings for example, that I will not be available so if it is important it would be best to phone school to check that I will be in Symington.

The website is updated regularly and we are looking to start a Tinto only Facebook page. Hopefully these, along with newsletters and emails, will ensure good communication. Please remember that the home:school diaries can also be used to send messages to class teachers.

The nursery and primary staff are looking forward to another successful year of school:parent partnership during 2016-17. Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely,

