

Sportscotland Gold Award

Forres Academy has been recognised with a prestigious national award for innovation and achievement in delivering physical education and extra-curricular sport. The sportscotland gold school sport award is a national initiative that is designed to encourage schools to continuously improve PE and sport. It also encourages sporting links between schools and their communities. Unlike the bronze and silver awards which are based on schools self-assessing their current practice, to gain gold status an extensive external assessment is also carried out by an independent panel of experts. To gain such an award there is always a team of people that make it happen including our PE teachers, teacher volunteers, parent volunteers, senior students and our Active school's co-ordinator. However, it also needs someone to push this forward and lead the team and Ann Rossiter has been that driving force. Without her ongoing commitment, determination and great networking such an award would not have been possible. The official presentation took place today where we all had the opportunity to thank Ann and the team for all their hard work and congratulate them on such an achievement.

sportMoray Awards

Ben Cameron (S2) and Anna MacFadyen (S6) were extremely successful at the sportMoray Awards which were held in Elgin Town Hall in November. Both pupils were recognised for their sporting success by receiving prestigious awards. Anna, who is Forres Academy's senior dux, received the Heather Stanning Award (Intermediate Sportswoman Award), presented by the Double Olympic Gold Medallist herself, for her performance in Athletics. Anna's success was mirrored by Ben Cameron. Ben, is making huge strides in the world of athletics, winning the Junior Sports Athlete Award. Forres Academy was recognised for their overall involvement in team sport throughout the Academic year winning the lions share of the Moray Secondary Schools Sports Trophies; they were joint winners of the Intermediate Team Award along with the Moray Cricket Association Girls Cricket Team.

North of Scotland Debating Champions

Another major success was achieved in November when John Bonsall and Matthew Angell represented Forres Academy in the final heat of the North of Scotland Schools Debating Competition. They put forward such a successful argument that not only did they walk away with the John Alan Cameron Quaich for winning the overall competition but Matthew was also awarded a trophy for being best speaker.

Children In Need

The Charity event group from the Pupil Forum organised some fun fundraisers for this year's Children in Need. On the actual day (November 18) students had a 'dress down day' and were asked to come to school sporting 'spots' and pay £1.00 towards the charity. The group organised a "Sponge the teacher" event as well to raise some extra money. 10 members of staff, including Depute Head, Mike Burchell volunteered to be 'victims' and stand in the stocks. The total amount raised so far for the charity is in excess of £700.

Parental Engagement

Parental Engagement and Information Evenings continue to be well attended especially as we move into the subject choice process for all our S2-S5 students. All documents such as subject choice booklets will be available on the school website. At our most recent S2- S3 Information Evening last week we also asked parents to contribute to our consultation on the review of our school's Vision and Values.

Preliminary Examinations

Senior students have just completed prelim exams. A comprehensive range of study support sessions were available and many of these will continue up until the final examinations in May. Again, information is available on our website.

Christmas Events

We enjoyed several events in the run up to the Christmas holidays. Our S6 show, junior and senior dances and Christmas Concert were all great opportunities to show the talents of our young people. This year we also had a Christmas market for the first time. S3 Business Studies students were given the challenge to create their own business from a sum of £10. Pupils worked in groups and had to carry out market research before manufacturing or creating a product to be sold at the school Christmas market. Their hard work paid off with majority of the groups making a healthy profit after paying back their £10 loan (with £1.00 interest).

Staff and pupils were treated to a real festive shopping experience and were able to purchase goods and presents ranging from cosmetics, sweets to hand made cards. Acting Principal Teacher of Business Studies Jan Mclean selected a "mystery shopper" to judge all the groups on their customer service and gave her feedback on who they thought was a worthy winner. Each class had a winner for best stall, best product and best customer service.

Young Enterprise

Venture Local the Young Enterprise group hit the streets of Inverness last month to sell their cookery book 'Secret recipes of Moray' at a Christmas Trade Fair. The book, which includes recipes from across Moray and also includes recipes from some pupils and staff, sold like hot cakes and by the end of the day they had completely sold out. The group made a very tidy profit of £100 and they have now ordered another print of the book which are now available with local businesses agreeing to sell these. They also attended a Farmers Market in Elgin in January as well as organizing an event at the Beechtree Restaurant in Moray College where people were able to sample some of the delicious recipes.

Pupils promote good mental health

A group from The Glasgow School of Art visited Forres Academy and set up focus groups to review websites about mental health awareness. 34 Pupils from across the school took part in this project and were invited to give feedback on the websites to create a useful poster on mental health. Andrea Taylor from The School of Design at GSA said: "The group discussions were very mature and informative. One of the issues raised by the pupils is that more information is needed in schools about mental health."

The project was funded by Mental Health Innovation and the poster will now be on display within the school. It will also be made available to other secondary schools in the Authority.

An email I received recently praising these pupils

Hi Carol

Hope all is well with you.

I was going to mention this to you at the LMG meeting last week but didn't get chance. I just wanted to say that the young people who reviewed the mental health apps and websites really did a cracking job. They were rewarded with an Amazon voucher and a thank you certificate but I just wanted to let you know that we were really impressed with the effort they put into the reviews.

I have given Anne Pendery copies of the reviews as part of the progress report on the work we are doing with The Glasgow School of Art and she has taken them to the Mental Health Leadership group.

On Friday, 2 of your senior pupils (Tegen and Heather) were also great ambassadors for the school when they attended the Moray Food Network development event and spoke about their cookbook. Their input was very well received.

Best wishes, Susan

Susan Leslie Area Public Health Coordinator

The Arras Blog

S3 pupils, Anna Pritchard and Victoria Bell have been chosen to represent Moray schools at the 100th Anniversary of the Battle of Arras and will be visiting the Arras memorial to pay their respect. The girls have been doing some research about the battle and finding out names of fallen soldiers from Forres and Alves – they have found 60 names so far from soldiers as young as 15 years of age. If anyone in the local area had a family member who fought in this battle and have a story to tell please get in contact.

The girls can be contacted through the school – 01309 672271 – please ask to speak to Mr Glen Logan who will arrange for them to speak to you.

School Courtyard

Pupils in the S3 Skillforce have undertaken a major clear up operation on the school courtyard area. The area has been neglected for some years with overgrown plants, broken slabs were broken and generally requiring a lot of attention. The class has taken on the challenge and have been working on the garden for a number of weeks with pupils getting to grips with spades and rakes. Pupils are hoping to create an area which both staff and pupils can use. The pupils will also be contacting local companies to ask for materials to help them complete their tasks and we are very grateful to Keith Builders for their kind donations and support.

Forres 2020 vision

“Planning For Real” came to Forres Academy to give students an opportunity to express their views about the Forres area and what is happening within it. Moray Council is involved with “Planning For Real”, a non-confrontational organisation which aims to improve the local community with ideas and suggestions from local people. The organisation visited the school to see and hear what our young people think about the local community and what they would like to see happen in the future.

The group set up a 3-D scale model of Forres and surrounding area and students were invited to place ‘suggestion’ flags in any area they would like to see improved or changed.

Mandarin classes

The school has welcomed Miss Wang Sufang from China who will be in the school on a Wednesday to help out with the Wider Achievement Mandarin class. She arrived in the area recently and will be working with pupils across the local authority helping them to understand China’s culture and language.

She is also playing a key role in a cross curricular project being run by Modern Languages, RME and English departments where they are looking to combine Chinese and Scottish culture through the Chinese New Year and Robert Burns celebrations. Miss Wang is here as part of the Confucius Institute who send Chinese students and teachers to different parts of the world to experience their culture.

Staffing Shortage

A letter has been sent to all families from Laurence Findlay, Director Education and Social Care. The letter informs parents that the Local Authority is trying a range of things to attract teachers to Moray. It also asks for people to get in touch if they want to know about teaching opportunities or gain experience if interested in applying for teaching as a career.

Staffing Update

We said farewell to Julie Michael who retired last month after four years working in the Support for Learning department. We were sorry to see Julie leave and know that her support has been much appreciated over the years by both students and parents. Carolyn Carrot has been appointed to this post. We will also be saying farewell to Sandy Burgess who has been working at Forres Academy for almost 30 years. Sandy leaves on 13th February and Duncan Simpson has been appointed to this post.