



Produced by the Parent Council

Firrhill News

May 2019

The Environment Group

The Environment Group is one of the Parent Council's working groups. Its current aims are:

- to help the school with its Eco School's Green Flag award;
- to help the school to promote safe cycling among pupils and to achieve the Cycle Friendly Secondary School Award;
- to initiate interdisciplinary learning projects within the school relating to the environment.

Each year the Environment Group achieves a lot! It produces the *Firrhill News* each month (originally called the *Environment Group News*), which aims to record the eco work done by the school. In November we helped Firrhill achieve its second Eco School's Green Flag award. In February we helped the school become a Cycle Friendly Secondary School. It helped the school to work towards the Gold: Rights Respecting Award.

Activities include: gardening – weeding and planting and general care of the three gardens created by the group:

- Pond Garden – located by the green house.
- Anne Frank Garden – in autumn we planted a crab-apple tree in memory of Otto Frank (including a plaque) and repaired the Anne Frank tree's plaque.
- The Celebration Garden was created when Firrhill celebrated its 50th anniversary – a protective stainless-steel topper was added to the "50 trees" sculpture.
- Taking part in the Urban Pollinator project by creating an **annual meadow** (at the rear of the school) – now needing some attention and would ideally be made into a perennial meadow in a new location – any volunteers?
- Planting four **wooden planters** by the school main entrance and three **metal planters** in the community by Colinton Mains shops – funded by the Pentlands Neighbourhood Group Community Grant Fund, with a contribution by the Parent Council paying for the large planter by the school and some compost and mulch.

In the school grounds we **feed the birds** and provide **nest boxes** (which ideally, should be cleaned and emptied each year). We sell plants and **hyacinth bulbs** (planted in pots by pupils) at the Xmas concert and Xmas Market, to raise funds for eco work. We have obtained six **picnic tables**, all situated by the main entrance, funded by the PTA and Parent Council. We helped organise litter posters to be drawn by PSE classes for an **anti-litter campaign**, and these posters along with some **anti-smoking** posters were printed and laminated then displayed in every classroom in the school and on the plasma TV screen.

We helped the school take part in, and work towards gaining the **Cycle Friendly Secondary School Award**, which was achieved in February 2019. The initial assessment took place in December 2017. Part of this work was helping to update the school's **Travel Plan**, meeting pupils and the Road Safety and Active Travel Liaison Officer, followed by the school taking part in pupil and staff travel surveys. The analysed results form the basis of the updated plan, with action points, that when implemented, will lead to increased **active travel**, local road improvements and reduced litter and graffiti in the local area.

We organised a free outing to the film *Divided* and the school took part in the Adventure Syndicate's "**Match the Miles**" challenge. It came 5th out of 10 participating schools gaining, the reward of a free showing of the film *Divided*. A free "**Learner Driver Bike Aware**" course was organised for S6 pupils, and our Pupil Cycle Champions were accompanied on a **training day** in Glasgow. Cycle Trainer and Cycle Ride Leader qualifications were obtained by two group members who helped with Bonaly Primary School's transition cycle ride. Three types of **cycling careers** were represented at the Job Fair. A new "**park smart**" sign is displayed at the vehicular entrance to gym. The school **bike sheds were repaired** and integral keypad locks fitted. Funding has been granted from Cycling Scotland's Development fund for **lockers for cyclists**. The Parent Council has funded a **RUTS mountain bike course**, some additional lockers for cyclists and a "Dr Bike" session. Some of the school's sponsored walk money will provide tools and bike-related fun events for the new **bike club**. The school takes part in the annual national "**hands up**" travel survey.

Other eco work in the school includes: buying a quach to be a new **Environment Award** which will be presented at the Celebration of Achievement; reintroducing the "**Eco book of the month**"; **litter picks** (now embedded in the curriculum); **waste minimisation** – recycling of plastic, reduced energy use, the new **Rag Bag textile and shoe recycling unit** at the rear of the school; our six-monthly **book swap / give-away events**; and **Vision Aid Overseas glasses/sunglasses collections** (plus reuse of glasses cases). We have also helped with the PTA pop-up thrift shop.

This work has all been possible due to **parent volunteers!** Several Parent Council members will be leaving in 2019, as their children leave school. To continue/develop this fantastic eco work, **new helpers are needed**. If you could help the Environment Group with even a single task from this list, or for more information please contact carolyn.hargest@btconnect.com

