



# Firrhill News

Produced by the Parent Council

March 2019

## Cycle Friendly Secondary School Award

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On Tuesday 18 February Firrhill achieved the Cycle Friendly Secondary School award. This was conferred by Cycling Scotland. An initial assessment took place in December 2017, and since then we have worked hard: revised our school Travel Plan, repaired the cycle sheds, installed a dropped kerb, planned the installation of more cycle signage and gained "Development Funding" for lockers for cyclists! As part of a city-wide "twenty's plenty" scheme, the roads around Firrhill are a 20mph zone and we hope that more pupils will use the safer cycling routes to school which are available in the Travel Plan, and try cycling to school in the warmer weather. A school Bike Club has started and Mr Cameron, history teacher, will soon become a qualified Cycle Ride Leader and help pupils get out on their bikes!

Gaining the Cycle Friendly Secondary School award is a great achievement but, in many ways, it is only the beginning of Firrhill's cycling journey! Well done to pupils, staff and parents!



The school will receive a gate banner and a certificate, and the achievement will be presented at an assembly led by our Cycle Champions.



The Parent Council, at the request of the Environment Group, kindly provided funding for eight S3/S4 pupils to go on a RUTS Mountain Bike Award course (SQF level 4) for one day per week, during February and March. This course comprises three day's learning about bike mechanics and a further three day's cycling on local trails and tracks. RUTS staff come to the school with their mobile unit, and they have offered a further RUTS course free of charge!  
<https://www.inspiringScotland.org.uk/what-we-do/>



Cycle Friendly Secondary School

*Matthew Wilberton of Cycling Scotland said, "I am pleased to award Firrhill High School with the Cycle Friendly Secondary School Award!" However, he added, "this is more of a milestone than an endpoint."*

Further cycling events are planned: the showing of the film *Divided* to a school year group; the Learner Driver Bike Aware training will take place in the autumn for S6 pupils; a "Dr Bike" bike maintenance session has been funded by the Parent Council; and the school's sponsored walk has funded some tools to help pupils learn basic bike maintenance skills. Special summer term events will include bike breakfasts and fun cycle rides. Also, for interested pupils, Bikeability or a refresher cycle training course can be offered, as well as led rides in Colinton Dell. Parent helpers would be welcome to join in to help Firrhill along the journey to becoming truly bike friendly.



Cycling Scotland



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## Scripture Union and Alpha



Alpha is a group that meets in Room EN1 on Wednesday lunchtimes and is open to everyone. Bring your lunch along and view interesting film clips, engage in discussions on real life issues, ask questions about God and faith, and enjoy free snacks, quizzes and games!



SU, which stands for Scripture Union, is a group that meets on Thursdays in Room EN1. We eat lunch together, learn about different aspects of God and Christianity, look at the part that God and the Bible play in history, and question what it means for daily life. We also compete in fun games and challenges, which sometimes have prizes! Snacks are always free, and everyone is welcome!



Craiglockhart Parish Church runs a lively Youth Club for P6-S2 pupils on Thursdays 7.30-9.00 pm during term time. There are fun activities, a tuck shop and the opportunity to meet friends and chat. A number of our feeder primary school pupils and younger Firrhill pupils enjoy the club; please speak to Gordon first if you are interested in joining. Several Firrhill High School pupils are junior and senior leaders, which is a great way to have fun and can provide an opportunity for volunteering as part of the Duke of Edinburgh award, or working towards gaining Scouting or Girl Guiding badges.



Our meetings are in EN1:  
**Alpha:** Wednesdays 12:25 - 1:00 pm  
**Scripture Union Group:**  
Thursdays 12:25 - 1:00 pm  
All are welcome!

Thanks to Gordon McBirnie, Youth Worker at Craiglockhart Parish Church, and Hillary Skaff, Firrhill parent, who very kindly come into school to run these fun and educational lunchtime groups!



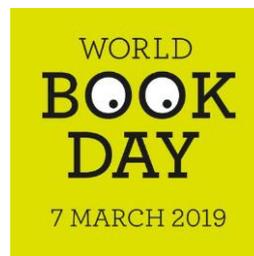
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## Book swap/give-away event

World Book Day is a worldwide celebration created by UNESCO to promote the enjoyment of books and reading. In Scotland World Book Day is on 7 March. Firrhill will be holding a book swap/give-away event from 4 to 7 March at lunchtimes in the school library, organised by the Environment Group and school librarian Mr Declan McCann. Parent volunteers encourage pupils and staff to take books to enjoy.



To continue this fantastic school event, new helpers are needed – could you organise future book swap/give-aways!

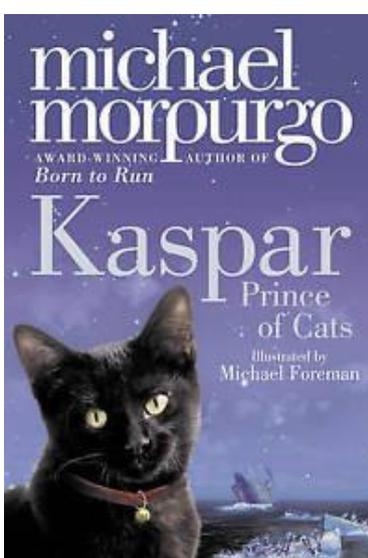
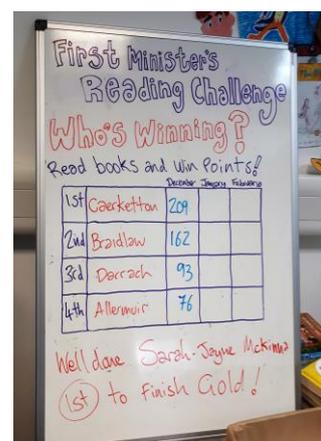
Please donate any books – for children or adults – to the school library or contact [carolyn.hargest@btconnect.com](mailto:carolyn.hargest@btconnect.com)

## School Reading Challenge Award

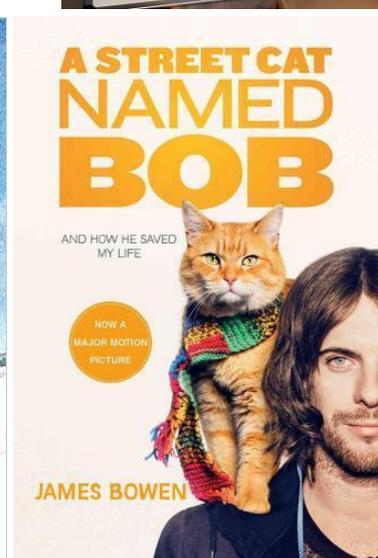
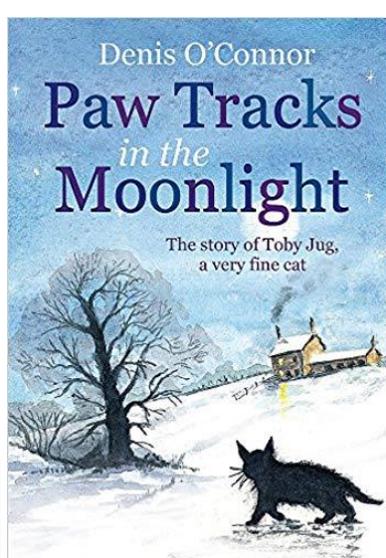
“Congratulations to Sarah-Jayne McKinna, who was the first pupil this year to achieve a Gold award in the School Reading Challenge. She received an award, a £10 book voucher and lots of points for her House Team”, said school librarian Declan McCann.

Some of Sarah-Jayne’s favourite books: Denis O’Connor’s *Paw Tracks in the Moonlight*, *Kaspar: Prince of Cats*, by Michael Morpurgo and *A Street Cat named Bob*, by James Bowen.

She likes a street Cat named Bob because it talks about what real life can be like. “I like the story about how meeting Bob the cat changes the man’s life” said Sarah-Jayne.



Well done to Sarah-Jayne McKinna for winning this award!



## News Items Required

*Firrhill News* needs more news items to feature – simply send a short paragraph, with a quote and photos to [carolyn.hargest@btconnect.com](mailto:carolyn.hargest@btconnect.com) Subjects could include sporting events, community activities/shows and achievements and coverage of school events. This will be especially important after May 2019 to help our new editor Isabel Wright [wrightisabel@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:wrightisabel@yahoo.co.uk) to produce *Firrhill News* after Carolyn Hargest leaves.

Specific areas could include sports: photos and information about school matches, pictures of teams and results. Arts: news about any shows and concerts, at the school or in the community, featuring our talented Firrhill pupils. Individual achievements – sports, enterprise or otherwise – everyone loves to hear about pupils who are doing well!

## The Environment Group

The Environment Group is one of the Parent Council’s working groups, and its current aims are:

- to help the school with its Eco School’s Green Flag award (to be renewed in two years’ time);
- to help the school to promote safe cycling among pupils and the Cycle Friendly Secondary School Award (to be renewed in three years’ time);
- to initiate interdisciplinary learning projects within the school relating to the environment.

We need more parents to help with eco work in the school. To help the school achieve our next Green Flag Award, look after the school gardens, collect glasses for Vision Aid Overseas and donate books for the book give-away! Please contact [carolyn.hargest@btconnect.com](mailto:carolyn.hargest@btconnect.com)



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## Modern Apprenticeship Evening

On Tuesday 30 January the Parent Council's Business and Enterprise working group ran a modern apprenticeship information evening. This is the second event of its kind and again proved very popular, with around 140 parents, carers and pupils attending. Jon Buglass from Edinburgh Collage explained the apprenticeship family from foundation apprenticeships to modern apprenticeships and graduate apprenticeships. He highlighted the many different paths that can lead to the same end qualification or career.



Ross Isdale Depute Head Teacher, then expanded the foundation apprenticeships that will be available to S5 and S6 pupils in partnership with Edinburgh Collage and/or cluster schools and how they fit into the qualification structure. He emphasised that they have the same value as a traditional higher qualification.



Thanks to Catriona Luff and the Business and Enterprise Group for arranging this very informative event – and to our speakers!

Richard Imlach from Sky gave an overview of the different opportunities for apprenticeships within Sky and showed a video featuring several different apprentices and what they did within Sky, and what their experience has been.

The evening was concluded with a word of thanks from Mr Isdale DHT and Catriona Luff, Business and Enterprise Group leader, as well as lots of questions and informal discussions.





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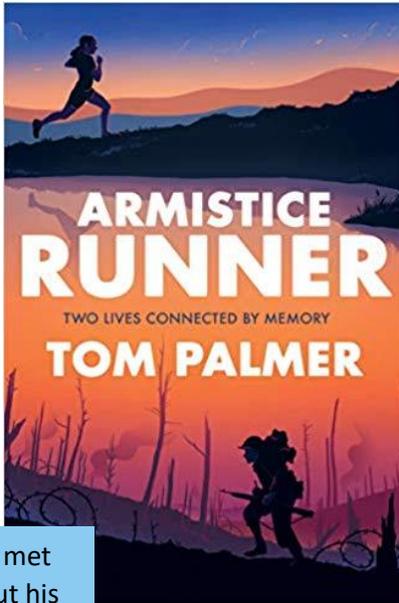
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## Armistice Runner

*Kirsty Haswell, Alex Brookes, Caitlin Kelly and Katie McWilliams meet Tom Palmer, Author.*

The idea of a book linking running and WWI came about because Tom Palmer is a keen fell runner who enjoys running with his daughter Iris. This book is about the trench runners who had to run across the battlefield as quickly as they could to deliver messages. The story is also about Lily (a character inspired by Tom's daughter, Iris), who goes to stay with her grandparents, so that she can take part in a fell race and discovers the diaries of her great-great grandfather Ernest, who was a trench runner in WWI. Through the diaries, Lily is able to reconnect with her gran, who has Alzheimer's disease.... but will she be inspired to win the race?

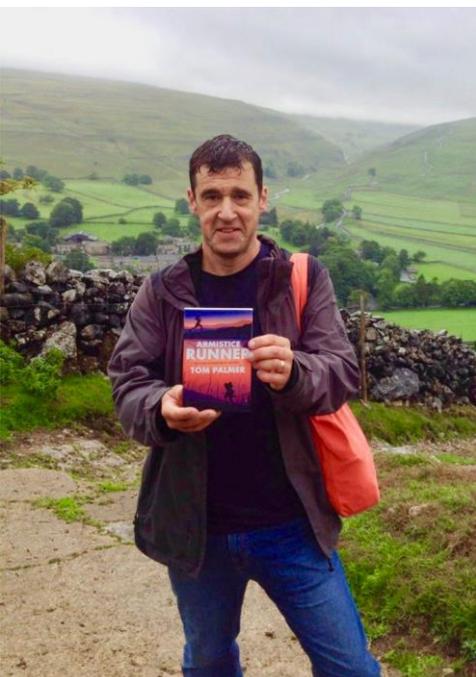
*"Armistice Runner is a great book filled with lots of drama, love and running. If there is one book you are going to read about war then it should be this one. Tom Palmer did an amazing job at recreating life in World War I, and you can see how much research he put into creating the novel."* Katie McWilliams.



Tom Palmer is the author of 45 books featuring spies, history, the RAF, ghosts, detectives, war, football and rugby.

*"Armistice Runner is a great read if you are looking for a quick and easy, yet incredibly touching book. It merges two different stories together from the past and present. It is an amazing combination of war and running. Each character was easy to relate to in their own way, and this made the book more personal. It made us want to go running."* Kirsty Haswell, Alex Brookes, Caitlin Kelly.

Well done to these pupils who met and talked to Tom Palmer about his novel *Armistice Runner*.





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## Bird Nest Boxes

On Tuesday 19 February, Keith and Carolyn Hargest, parents, cleaned out the school nest boxes. Although this is not essential, it is good to remove old nesting material and wash the boxes with hot water and allow to dry as tiny parasites can multiply in old nests and may harm chicks. Last year, three of the school's boxes had been successful, with evidence of nests. There were droppings in two more boxes, showing that birds have used them to shelter or roost in. Unfortunately, some nest boxes needed repair as the glue, wood and fixings had not lasted, and some had disappeared. The boxes bought from the RSPB Local Group and our school's enterprise group are well built, sturdy and easy to clean out!



Five nest boxes had been used: two for roosting, and three had nests inside.



Why not put up some nest boxes in your own garden? It is a great way to see more wildlife!



Nests of moss and twigs were found in three of the nest boxes. Also, two hibernating 2-spot ladybirds were seen.



One new box was added, making a total of 15 boxes.



## The Big School's Bird Watch

The RSPB's annual *Big Garden Bird Watch* (BGBW) encourages people to record sightings of birds (and the number of a species seen together at any one time). It can be done in your garden or local park. The results are submitted and provide a useful record of sightings. The BGBW took place during the weekend of 26-28 January 2019. The Big School's Bird Watch is a linked event which encourages schools to take part, enjoy watching birds and learn about nature <https://www.rspb.org.uk/fun-and-learning/>

On an overcast day in early February, teacher Mr Murray and some pupils took part in the Big School's Bird Watch. They walked around the school grounds for an hour and recorded the birds they saw:

- 6 gulls
- 1 blackbird
- 5 wood pigeons
- 2 magpies

These sightings were sent to the RSPB and form part of a useful databank.



Thanks to teacher Mr Rory Murray and the pupils who took part in the Big School's Bird Watch!



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## Parent Council – a time of change and opportunity

The Parent Council (PC) is a group of parents who meet five times per year, usually on a Monday evening 7-9 pm in the school library. All meetings include a head teacher's report and generally include parent-raised topics or a visitor presenting an issue of interest. If the school needs to consult parents, the PC is the official body it immediately turns to. A major role of the PC is the opportunity (after an evenings' training session) for parents to be involved in the interview process for promoted teacher posts. The PC is a unique way to hear about the school: staff changes, changes to the school day or other new ideas. As the meetings are "open" you need not be a member to attend, although if there is a vote only members are able to vote (with the Chair having the casting vote). The head teacher is not a member but is invited to PC meetings, as is the staff representative.



The PC oversees a number of working groups, which meet to discuss ways to help the school. In general, they meet on the same night, and after their small group sessions they summarise their discussions so everyone can find out what each group is doing. Again, it's a great way to hear what is going on at school! The groups are: Business & Enterprise, which organises the job fair and "Meaningful May" when they arrange practice job interviews for pupils; the Environment Group, which helps the school with eco-related topics; Health & Wellbeing, which runs events that support pupils and parents; and the Communications Group which posts the parent-related news on the website and helps to keep the website relevant to parents.

The PC has a number of parents who will be leaving in May, as their children are in S6. This provides a great opportunity for new members to come onboard! The task is not onerous as there are only a few meetings each year, and it is an excellent way to find out more about the school and be involved in positive changes to help your child's education.

*Why not come along to the next Parent Council meeting on 23.4.19 and find out more about how we operate? All FHS parents and carers welcome!*

Firrhill has a wonderful PTA and their fundraising has benefited so many groups and clubs over the years. We are very grateful to them and appreciate all their hard work. However, the PTA is also very short of members and needs more helpers to provide a friendly welcome and refreshments at events and to do essential fundraising!

The PC would love to have more members or helpers for events – please contact Fred Bell [firrhillpc@gmail.com](mailto:firrhillpc@gmail.com) if you would like to help.

The PTA would love to have more members or helpers for occasions please contact Jon Buglass [ptafirrhill@gmail.com](mailto:ptafirrhill@gmail.com) if you would like to help.

## Parent Council funds new picnic tables

All of the Parent Council (PC) working groups can request funding to enable them to achieve their aims. The Parent Council is grateful to Margaret Hampton, treasurer, who manages the PC accounts and provides a report at the Annual General Meeting.

The Environment Group bought a fifth picnic table with Parent Council funds and delivered on 10 September.



The Environment Group makes regular requests to the PC to gain funding for its eco work at the school. Since 2015, the group has added six recycled plastic picnic tables to the area at the front entrance of the school. In total, three picnic tables have been funded by the PC and three by the PTA – these benches are used during breaks and lunchtimes. With the addition of a sixth picnic table (which arrived on 18 February) and finally a portable white board – bought with Eco funds raised through the Rag Bag unit – the area can become a useful outdoor classroom!

*A parent volunteer needs to apply to the PC on behalf of the Environment Group for PC funding and then organise the purchase of items to enhance pupils' lives – this job could be done by any parent who attends some Environment Group meetings each year. If you could do this, please email: [carolyn.hargest@btconnect.com](mailto:carolyn.hargest@btconnect.com)*

The school Eco Committee chose "School Grounds" as one of their three topics. The addition of the new picnic table will help towards gaining our next Green Flag.



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## Firrhill Hockey Club

The Firrhill Hockey Club is a successful parent-run club that enables pupils to learn hockey skills to a high standard, taught by professional coaches, and provides the opportunity to participate in matches and tournaments. The school sports tour features hockey as one of its sports. It is sociable, team-based and a sport that pupils can continue into university and beyond. *Shin pads and a gumshield will be required.*

Thanks to the parents in the hockey committee, and also those on the rota, for all their hard work.



### Interview with Hockey Club member, Stella Small S2

*How long have you been playing with the Firrhill Hockey Club?*

One year.

*What do you enjoy about playing hockey? How is it different from other sports you play?*

It's very sociable. I like when you're playing that you have to think strategically to win.

*Would you recommend joining to new Firrhill pupils?*

Yes, it's a good way to make friends. Everyone in the team is really nice.



The S2 hockey team, (pictured here) played at the Mary Erskine School, where the girls play in a Sunday League. They have had success in the league so far and are currently sitting at the top of their particular group. Very well done to all the players!

If you would like to know more about the hockey club, please contact: [Firrhillhockey1718@gmail.com](mailto:Firrhillhockey1718@gmail.com) your enquiry will be forwarded to the correct team for your year group. Subs are £40 this session (August-June) as this is a parent-run group and not one of the school sports clubs.

### PARENTS AND CARERS TRAINING/COURSE

## Raising Teens with Confidence

Promoting Emotional Health & Well-being



EDINBURGH  
PARENT COUNCIL - YOUR PARTNER

## Health & Wellbeing Group

"The Parent Council's Health & Wellbeing working group run a couple of evening events each year aimed at parents and carers on a variety of themes such as:

- supporting your child in the run up to exams
- internet safety
- coping with change
- consent
- understanding the teenage brain.

The group also supports the school's delivery of the parenting programme *Raising Teens with Confidence*. New members always welcome!" said Valerie Bell