

## GSEA

The Gender Sexuality and Equality group aims to increase visibility, raise awareness and create an inclusive environment in which all pupils can feel comfortable to be themselves.

## RRS

We have a pupil and staff Rights Respecting Schools Equalities group. Our aim is to increase awareness of children's rights and continue to develop a supportive ethos of inclusion and respect.

## ANTI-RACISM

Our staff group aims to raise awareness and celebrate diversity within Firrhill High School and its cluster primaries. It also aims to create a positive learning environment for all learners and their families.

## GIRFEC & ANTI BULLYING

We are committed to the wellbeing and protection of children and young people from bullying and prejudice. This will support children to be Safe, Healthy, Active, Nurtured, Achieving, Respected, Responsible and Included.

## UNCRC

**Article 2 of the UNCRC says children's rights apply to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, sex, religion, language, abilities or any other status.**

## HEALTH & WELLBEING

The HWB group promotes important discussion for all pupils around the topic of wellbeing. The Firrhill Mental Wellness Team aim to create visible and accessible strategies to support pupils' Mental Health and Wellbeing.

## PUPILS

Young people can express their views through Pupil Council, Senior Student Council, 1:1 Headteacher interviews, through school questionnaires and in conversations with teachers.

## STAFF

In 2021/22 staff have taken part in training workshops on dyslexia, how to support pupils with ADHD, building positive pupil relationships, managing pupil anxiety and decolonising the Curriculum.

## PARENTS & CARERS

We welcome parental involvement, working in partnership to support our commitment to Equalities, and the Rights of the Child.



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RIGHTS  
RESPECTING  
SCHOOLS

# EQUALITIES AT FIRRHILL HIGH SCHOOL

# W E L C O M E

Welcome to our summer term edition of the Firrhill High School Equalities newsletter. We hope you enjoy reading about some of the activities being carried out across the school to support our Rights Respecting Schools Award and focus on equalities. Following on from a parent & carer survey conducted last term, we would like to share a summary of some of the key language we use with pupils, staff, parents and carers in relation to our RRSA and equalities work.

## **What is the Rights Respecting Schools Award?**

The Unicef Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) recognises a school's achievement in putting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into practice - across the school through classroom ethos, curriculum and the wider school community. We have been involved for the past 6 years, successfully gaining the highest Gold Award level in 2019 and being reaccredited with this status in March 2022.

## **What is the UNCRC?**

The UNCRC is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It sets out the human rights of every person under the age of 18 and is the most widely ratified human right's treaty. It includes 54 'Articles' that cover all aspects of a child's life. Scotland is currently working towards the UNCRC Incorporation Bill which will mean the UNCRC will become part of Scots law and in practice work to protect the rights of young people.

## **What are Duty Bearers & Rights Holders?**

A Rights Respecting School is one where children are aware of their rights and understand that adults around them uphold their rights. Adults such as teachers, parents and carers are known as 'duty bearers'. The UNCRC applies to all children and they are designated as 'rights holders'.

## **Why is this important at Firrhill?**

*"So that people can see that students are respected and vice versa, and that other schools can make the same steps that we do" - Matthew, S2*

*"So everyone can learn in a safe environment" - Bethany, S2*

*"Being able to understand and have an awareness of the role rights play within the lives of children really makes Firrhill like a place where pupils can be confident - both in themselves and others"*  
- Chloe, S6

# INTERVIEW WITH

# MR ELSE

## **Rose Hagart, Ross Macarthur & Louise Scobie - S2**

Mr Else, Depute Headteacher of Pupil Support was recently interviewed by 3 members of the Firrhill Rights Respecting Schools Equalities pupil group. In practising, Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, they designed a series of tricky questions for Mr Else to answer!

### **What is your role at Firrhill and why do you think it is important?**

I am a Depute Headteacher working alongside Mr Isdale and Mrs Clegg as the Deputies of Mr Hamilton who is our Headteacher. It is a great job and quite challenging. It means I have an overview of what is going on around the school and specifically in my role, I work closely with Pupil Support. This includes Pupil Support Leaders and the Support for Learning team. My role is to ensure that young people get all the supports and interventions that they need, whether it is mental health support through counselling, or one to one meetings with key members of staff. Also looking at any support they might need when they leave school and working towards a positive destination like college, university, getting a job or an apprenticeship or undertaking further training. I also have responsibility for any supports young people need with their learning so if they have an additional support need such as dyslexia or autism – making sure they get all the help they need.

I am also a Depute link with specific subject areas. This includes Expressive Arts; I also link with the English faculty and the Modern Languages faculty and work with those teams to find out how qualifications and courses are going, how young people are getting on and any staff training developments.

However, the most important part of my role is to make sure the young people at Firrhill are doing the best they possibly can and are achieving their potential. That is always at the heart of every conversation we have with staff. How is this impacting on the young people we are looking after? The number one priority is the care and education of the young people at Firrhill and that is what I am most passionate about. We have a wonderful opportunity to shape lives and influence in positive ways. You are the future – as a famous singer once said!

# INTERVIEW WITH MR ELSE

**Rose Hagart, Ross Macarthur & Louise Scobie - S2**

## **What does supporting pupils mean to you?**

Supporting pupils to me, means listening to them, getting as much of an understanding of what young people care and love about themselves and about their peers and the community they live in. Because we are such a multicultural school – this also means thinking about the city we live in. I think supporting young people should help them access what they need and also what they are entitled to – what they want to do when they leave but also the here and now. It is important to listen to their concerns, what they think is good about the school but also if they have any problems - to help them overcome barriers and help them as they move through school life.

## **How do you support and contribute to being a RRS?**

Before I came to Firrhill I thought I knew about what a Rights Respecting School was but then I met Mrs Kerr our RRS lead, and she took my knowledge and understanding to the next level. I think I support and contribute as Mrs Kerr's wing man!

For me, I support and contribute as an ambassador for the Rights Respecting Schools Award. Every conversation I have with young people, I have young people's rights at the core of what I do. That has been at the heart of my practice before I came to Firrhill but it has definitely been heightened. In my job, unfortunately this means sometimes coming into conflict with parents and carers to ensure the rights of young people are being heard. I am fortunate to work with the Pupil Support team that put children's rights at the heart of what they do. I listen to young people, and this helps to shape any interventions we put forward. Sometimes ensuring that I am doing the best thing is not doing the most popular choice, but knowing it is for the rights of the young people and is the *right* thing to do, can be tricky.

## **What does it mean to you to treat pupils with dignity?**

Listening. As adults we sometimes get caught up in our own thoughts and feelings. With three kids myself this can be hard! It is about really listening and having the opportunity and space for a young person to talk. Treating pupils with dignity means treating them with respect and although you might not agree, they have a voice, and they can be heard. When I think about dignity, I really try to put myself into the shoes of the young person – taking a step back and trying to see it through their eyes.

**Thank you Mr Else!**

# RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS EQUALITIES GROUP

## Pupils from RRS Equalities group

This term the **Rights Respecting Schools Equalities group** at Firrhill has been carrying out an ambassador role to other secondary and primary schools as part of being a Gold Award school.

### **Pentland Primary visit - Chloe Shek**

During a visit to Pentland Primary, we were asked a very simple, but important question: "as a Rights Respecting School, what impact has it had on Firrhill?" Our answer was that it created a safer and more comfortable environment for pupils to learn in, which was evident even to those who may not have ever set foot in our school. In fact, this is one of the goals UNICEF hopes to achieve in schools across the UK through the RRS Award. As a Gold Rights Respecting School, our next steps are to continue to make an impact on Firrhill, but also to our wider community. And we're already off to a great start, as we have recently made connections with other schools such as James Gillespies and Balerno High and have also been in close touch with our cluster primaries to share ideas and plan future collaborations.

### **Colinton Primary visit - Ethan Davidson**

We visited Colinton Primary's 'Rights Respecters' and were able to bring together ideas from children in the Nursery setting all the way up to S6 students. They are aiming to achieve their Bronze RRS Award next year, so we were able to share ideas from what has been successful at Firrhill. They are going to try to spread awareness of children's rights around their school by rewriting them using language they are more familiar with. We are looking forward to visiting again in the future!

### **Secondary School RRS Ambassadors**

Some members of the RRS pupil group and GSEA also took part in a Edinburgh City Council equalities event this term to share how we promote equality and diversity at our school. The Firrhill pupils led a virtual presentation and answered questions about the work they had been involved in. Well done to everyone that took part!

Mrs Kerr has been sharing good practice from Firrhill with other secondary schools this term including North Berwick High School who wanted to learn more about promoting children's rights across the school curriculum, and Dumfries High School who are at the very start of their own Rights Respecting Schools journey.

Next term we are looking forward to welcoming Balerno High School and Glenrothes High School on good practice visits to Firrhill and carrying out some virtual meetings with Bridge of Don Academy, as well as continuing to meet with our local primary schools.

# RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS EQUALITIES GROUP

**Mrs Kerr, Mr Murray, Mr Brodie & RRS pupils**

We have also carried out a number of events and activities over the spring and summer terms as a result of listening to pupils views on what they wanted to raise awareness of locally and globally.

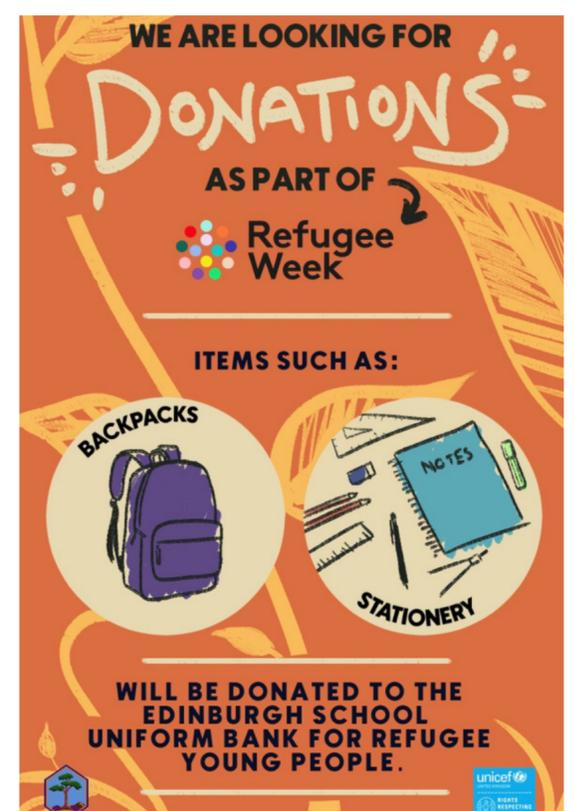


Each House received an assembly input in April about Autism Awareness which was designed and led by a number of students who have Additional Support Needs, including some with Autism Spectrum Disorder. This was very well received by our whole school community and gave a chance to explore what autism means, how to support friends at school with autism, and where to go for support both at school and in the local community.

Our RRS Podcast students have continued to produce some outstanding content promoting children's rights in Firrhill to the wider world! The podcasts have been listened to thousands of times from countries across the world which shows the power of online content. This year's series has covered a wide range of interviewees including former pupils and current staff including Mr Hamilton himself. Highlights include interviews with Government officials who are enacting and administrating Children and Young People's rights. In particular listen out for the questions on music - a touch of 'Desert Island Discs' – that take each episode down some wonderful memory lanes... Have a listen on various podcast platforms by searching 'Firrhill'.

We have also continued to look at ways to support refugee young people and their families and raise awareness of **Article 22** of the UNCRC - which states that children who move from their home country to another country as refugees should get help and protection. This term we have been collecting donations of backpacks and stationery items for Edinburgh School Uniform Bank to support refugee students in Edinburgh.

**Thank you to staff, parent and carer donations which have raised over £790!**



# GENDER, SEXUALITY & EQUALITY ALLIANCE

## Miss Wallace, Miss Summers & GSEA members

The **Gender, Sexuality & Equalities Alliance** has been running at Firrhill High School for several years, focusing on **Article 2** of the UNCRC: non-discrimination and **Article 15**: the right to join or set up groups and meet with others.

This term, the group has been very busy as a safe space for young people and working on ways to support awareness of LGBT rights. This has included creating a library display, providing staff with rainbow lanyards and creating an inclusive language workshop for staff.

The GSEA has also encouraged awareness of LGBT History Month in February, International Day of Transgender Visibility in March and Pride Month in June. This has included poster campaigns of transgender icons, quizzes for pupils, a rainbow bake off competition and a Pride stall selling hand crafted items including tie dye bags, make up bags and scrunchies.

We are looking forward to beginning our journey to becoming a LGBT Youth Scotland Charter school next term and are working towards creating an Equality Action Group of pupils who are interested in helping with the charter and having staff 'Charter Champions' across each faculty.



# ANTI-RACISM WORKING GROUP

## Ms Kupisz & anti-racism pupil group

The **Anti-Racism Working group** aims to create a positive learning environment for all learners and their families, linking with the following Rights of the Child:

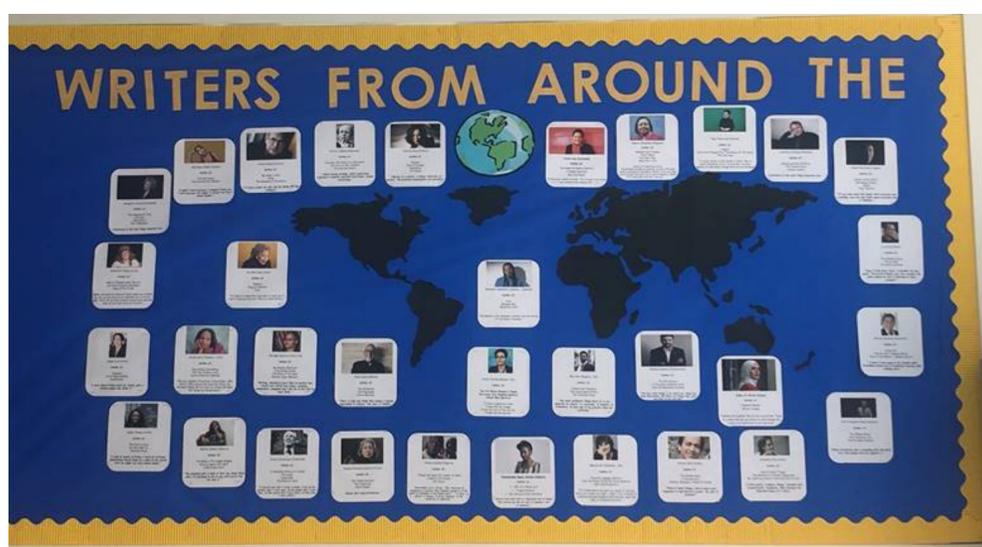
**Article 2 (non-discrimination)** - The Convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities.

**Article 29 (goals of education)** - Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

**Article 30 (children from minority or indigenous groups)** - Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family, whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live.

Over the past term, the group has been working diligently to improve the school experiences for pupils who identify as being from a Minority Ethnic background. Teachers have been supporting pupils from the Multicultural Club to create an online tour for learners and their families, from different countries with English as an Additional Language, by scripting and recording tours in a series of languages. This will allow these families to tour the school and gain information regarding learning in languages in which they are fluent, whilst they are still on their journey to developing their English Language skills.

Teachers have also been working across to the school to improve the diverse representation of people that are displayed within our departments. By doing this, we are hoping that all pupils can see themselves in every area of the curriculum. (Please see below for a fantastic example from Miss Stewart in English)



# ANTI-RACISM WORKING GROUP

## Ms Kupisz & anti-racism pupil group

In March, a pupil focus group of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic pupils met to discuss their experiences within school and the community. They discussed ways in which they would like to work with the Anti-Racism working group to improve cultural awareness within the school, improve the educational experience for all by decolonising the curriculum, and create safe spaces for all pupils to be able to talk about their culture and religion, whilst educating their teachers and peers in ways that they can be supportive allies. Some of the pupils have also met with the RRS Equalities pupil group and are working together to plan events around Black History Month.

From the information they shared, staff are working to create greater opportunities to improve awareness and celebrate the diverse culture within the school and beyond. We are working towards securing opportunities to link with partner agencies, to support the school with their Anti-Racism work, and creating opportunities for staff to support the mental health and wellbeing of learners who may be struggling with racial stress.

The Firrhill Heritage project will also commence when the pupils have greater access to iPads, allowing for all families at Firrhill High School to share stories about their heritage and the ways that this influences our community.

The Anti-Racism group is looking forward to the new school session, and being able to link with schools, parents and partner agencies in order to continue to improve our supportive learning environment within Firrhill High School.



# FIRRHILL MENTAL WELLNESS TEAM

## Miss Neilson & S4 pupils

This past year in PE, we offered a new SQA Award for pupils in S4 focusing on Mental Health and Wellbeing, linking to the Rights of the Child - **Article 24**: every child has the right to the best possible health, including education on health and wellbeing, and **Article 12**: every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in matters that affect them.

Over this term, **The Firrhill Mental Wellness Team** have been hard at work preparing for Mental Health Awareness Week. The theme of this national week was 'loneliness' and the team designed daily activities for pupils to participate in during registration. These activities were designed to promote thinking and conversation around the theme of loneliness and mental health. We were super impressed with the engagement and work produced from pupils and the feedback from them was very positive. We also ran a staff 'Wellbeing Wednesday' which involved cake, conversation, and exercise!

As we look ahead to the new academic year, we have lots of ideas that we can't wait to get started on. We will be establishing an S6 committee to help lead on Mental Health and Wellbeing projects across the school and we will also open up The Firrhill Mental Wellness Team to all staff and pupils so that anyone at Firrhill can be involved.

We hope to run monthly Wellbeing Challenges as of August 2022 and look forward to continuing our weekly lunchtime club, The Bubble, which is led by senior pupils.



## Mental Health & Loneliness



EVERYONE can feel lonely at times. We can even feel lonely when we're surrounded by others.

To combat loneliness, we can try to increase the amount of meaningful human interactions that we have with others.

Positive human connection is extremely powerful and can lead to people feeling valued, cared about and happy. This has a positive impact on our Mental Health and Wellbeing.





# FIRRHILL ECO GROUP

## Mr Welford, Eco group leader

**The Firrhill High School eco group** recently did a litter pick for Keep Scotland Beautiful 'Big Spring Clean'. We collected 8 bags of litter from the local community. We are also in the process of applying for the schools Green Flag Award. Hopefully all of our work we have done this year has been worth it!

Our fruit trees are showing signs of life having planted them in the new year and are coming into blossom. The Rights Respecting pupil group also helped to plant a wildflower patch within the school grounds in partnership with the eco group.

This term we have also undertaken a school uniform recycling campaign. So far we have collected over 150 items of school clothing as part of our uniform collection. We have collected; ties, blazers, shirts, polo tops, jumpers, skirts, jackets and PE kit. We have extended the collection period to run until the end of the term due to the demand we have experienced. If you have any uniform at home that could be passed on please donate it into the box at the main door or hand it in to us at the start of next term.

A special thanks goes to Susan Milner, HE technician, for washing and drying all the items received so far.

We hope that not only the collection will help reduce the amount of school uniform that we buy but also help with the current cost of living increase faced by all.



# FIRRHILL FEMINIST SOCIETY

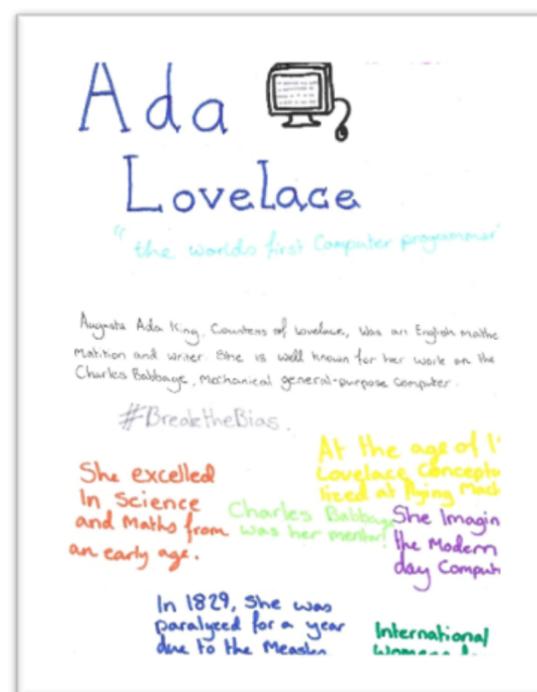
## Miss Thomas, Modern Studies department

Whether you're a pupil, parent or teacher reading this, most people have an idea of what feminism means. Hopefully, the image that comes to your mind is a positive one but the chances are, if you believe in equality then you're probably already a feminist!



We started meeting as **The Feminist Society** at the start of 2022 and have big plans for the next school year. We welcome all pupils from S3 to S6 who believe in gender equality. So far this year, we have been involved in the school's International Women's Day celebrations, including making posters and decorating biscuits for inspiring women in school, debated key issues in feminism and designed a survey to find out more about pupils' and teachers' experiences of inequality in society. We want to challenge gender stereotypes whenever we see them, as well as celebrating progress when it's achieved.

Next year, we will be meeting weekly which will give us more opportunity to share feminist news, promote our goals and inspire each other. We'd love for you to join us!



# NURTURE GROUPS

**Mr Murray, Support for Learning teacher**  
**Mrs Brown and Ms Martin, Pupil Support Officers**

Here at Firrhill we run a broad range of **Nurture classes** for pupils which meet during the school day, on a weekly basis, with the aims of the group based on Edinburgh City Council's 8 principles of Nurture initiative.

As a school we believe students will gain through a whole range of benefits which include a safe space and time allocated for a clearer focus on their individual learning needs and relationship building. The flexible nature of the programme means that there is an emphasis on providing teaching life skills, promoting pupil wellbeing and support their learning. Each pupil will gain experience and benefit from cross curricular project work and activities that they should enjoy. These benefits aim to move our students forward significantly and help them develop into a better place for learning and accessing the curriculum all round.

This summer term we have some exciting new developments in our programme. First up in June our new Parent Council funded and Firrhill liveried Mountain bikes were delivered. Our S2 Life skills class have already been route planning and visiting local landmarks using the bikes - taking advantage of some good weather to improve their bike handling and safe cycling skills! Additionally we have been developing and promoting confidence building through new workshops and via social situations such as with our partnership visits. One example of this would be from the motor skills developed in our stress ball making workshops with Mrs Brown. The same class also held a celebratory sit down lunch out and walk at the Merchants Golf Club at the end of May.

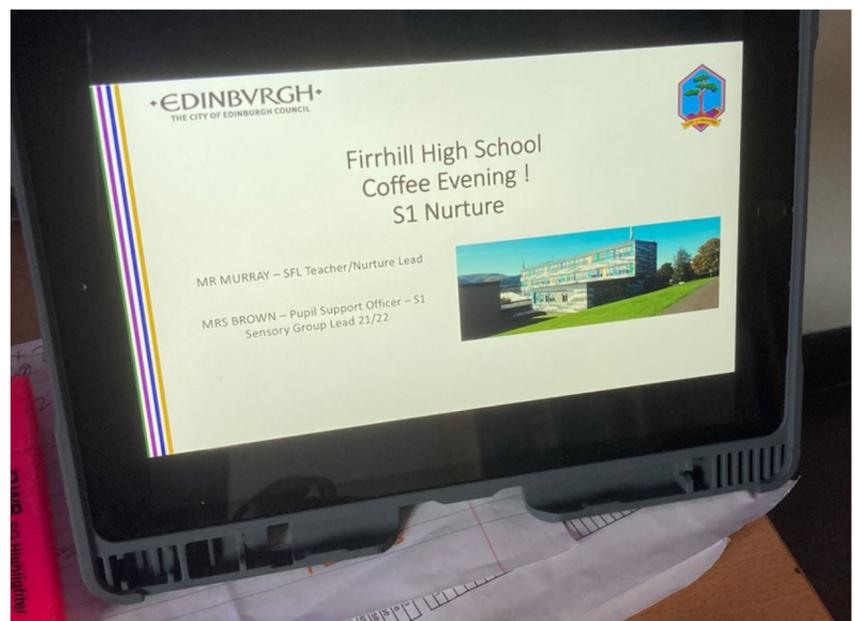


# NURTURE GROUPS

Learning skills to be able to support oneself is an important part of all our classes and we have picked topics that the pupils find interesting to help deliver this. Pupils in S3 for example, have been using computer gaming to be able to learn decision making as can be seen in the photo from our visit to Realm VR. Food is always a favoured topic but even the humble crisp can be a difficult decision – when we made our own crisps this term – deciding on the best flavour topping proved a real challenge only settled by teacher taste tests!



Finally, this year saw the introduction of our 'Pop up' Sensory Provision which adds more options for us to make our programme suitable, effective and engaging for our pupils. This would not happen without the support from the PTA, community partners and fundraising streams as well as our school colleagues – **thank you all for supporting our programme this year.**



# SPOTLIGHT ON...

## Supporting learners with English as an Additional Language

Several members of staff across the school have been supporting learners with English as an Additional Language. This includes young people from refugee backgrounds and from many different countries. Thank you also to Aileen Burden our EAL teacher for Firrhill and the work she has done assessing and supporting new pupils into the school.

### Miss Leonard - English department

In order to support the development of English skills, I have been working one to one with some young people using the support of a bi-lingual pupil in S3. He has been helping to translate from English to Arabic in order to explain instructions. We have focused mostly on simple self-expression to start with, so that they are able to introduce themselves and state simple emotions they are feeling such as happy, angry, sad, and sick.

### Miss Wallace, Modern Studies and Dr Gorka, English department

We have been working with a young person from Turkey and start every meeting by asking whether there are any questions regarding everyday school life at Firrhill. There are always interesting questions to chat about, for example regarding timetable queries, sports day or other school events and where to collect uniform. We have been working on a beginner's course in English, how to spell names in English and how to give some basic information about yourself (phone number/address) which we hope will be helpful when filling out forms or contacting different institutions. We have also been teaching some vocabulary, relating to school life and health. We have also prepared a welcome booklet with basic phrases in English along with their Turkish translations.

### Responsibility for All - S1 World Expos

Pupils have also been learning more about promoting different cultures, languages and countries through S1 'World Expo' events.

Supported by the 'Multi-national Mutt', the expos had pupils highlighting and promoting over 30 different countries from across the world. Countries who have signed up to the UNHCR were given a special badge to display by pupils from the RRS group.



# PUPIL VOICE OPPORTUNITIES

## **Finlay Ross, S6 Head Boy & Mackenzie Di Nella, S6 Head Girl**

I'm Finlay Ross and I'm Head boy here at Firrhill. I was first interested in becoming a member of the Senior Student Council in order to help give back to the school and provide a voice for my peers. It is also a great opportunity to take on a role of responsibility and leadership. Although I've only been in the role for a few weeks I've enjoyed being involved in the set up of the school events and I'm looking forward to welcoming the new S'1s after summer.

Hi there, my name is Mackenzie Di Nella. I moved from Italy to Edinburgh 6 years ago, to start S1 here at Firrhill. Over my time at the school I've had so many great experiences and opportunities, I felt it was only right in S6 to apply to the Senior Student Council and give something back. Becoming Head Girl is one of my proudest achievements and I am thoroughly enjoying helping out at school events. Playing a part in the Colours Awards, P7 parent information evenings, music concerts, art exhibitions and sports day has really highlighted to me what a talented and friendly school Firrhill really is. It's only the start but I'm really looking forward to everything that's to come!



# CALENDAR OF UPCOMING DIVERSITY, EQUALITY & REMEMBRANCE EVENTS

## **June - LGBT Pride Month**

Article 2: Non-discrimination, Article 13 – freedom of expression

## **20th-26th June - Refugee Week**

Article 22: Support for refugee children

## **30th July - International Day of Friendship**

Article 31: Rest, relax and play

## **12th August - International Youth Day**

Article 4: Making rights real

## **19th August - UN World Humanitarian Day**

Article 24: Health and health services

Courtesy of Unicef's Rights Respecting Schools website  
highlighting the real-world relevance of the UNCRC.

For more information, visit [www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/](http://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/)



**Thank you to Firrhill staff and pupils who have contributed to our Equalities newsletter this term. Follow our Rights Respecting and Equalities updates on our Twitter feed - @firrhillrrsa**