

Practitioner Enquiry - Probationers

Primary Probationer Teachers are currently in the process of undertaking a new and exciting approach to their professional learning as part of their induction year in Falkirk schools.

Why are we doing this?

"The most successful education systems invest in developing their teachers as reflective, accomplished and enquiring professionals who are able, not simply to teach successfully in relation to current external expectations, but who have the capacity to engage fully with the complexities of education and to be key actors in shaping and leading educational change." (Teaching Scotland's Future, Scottish Government, 2011, p4)

Our aim is to help those teachers to become enquiring practitioners, to create a habit of mind that will support their commitment to career-long professional learning.

Their engagement with this process is also allowing them to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the GTCS Standards for Registration 3.2.2- Professional Enquiry and Communication. This work will provide a firm foundation for teachers' ongoing responsibility to engage in meaningful professional learning and to reflect on its impact during the Employee Review and Development (ERD) and professional Update (PU) processes.

This programme is facilitated by Stacey Collier-West (DHT, St. Margaret's P.S), Kim Davidson (Class Teacher, Bo'ness Public P.S.), Yvonne McBlain (Curriculum Support Teacher), Nicola Soroka and Ross McNairney (Probationer Supporters). The team's approach is to provide guidance and support that will encourage Probationers to further develop their enquiry skills, with the aim of using what they learn to impact positively on their classroom practice. Through ongoing reflection and evaluation, they are enhancing their capacity to identify and explore issues relevant to their practice, to gather data using a range of methodologies, to work collaboratively with others and to engage with professional reading and research.

What themes are emerging?

Positive behaviour management, support and challenge and outdoor learning, to name just a few. The important thing is, our Probationers are making informed choices about selecting an area for development that fits with their own context.

What are Probationers saying about this approach?

The idea and process of practitioner enquiry were explained simply and clearly. I now feel much more confident about carrying out practitioner enquiry in school.

Practitioner enquiry is an essential part of teaching and I will need these skills throughout my career.

This course lays out the thinking behind the practice of professional enquiry. It highlights the necessity to be constantly reflecting on, researching and improving your own teaching practice in order to provide the best learning experiences for the children.

What happens next?

At the end of their probationary year there will be an opportunity for our Probationers to present their research findings and share these with their peers and colleagues in school.

Group Discussion (right) to explore 'best fit' model for professional enquiry.



Gathering of ideas

Questioning
AfL

Reading

Co-Op Learning

Nurture

Differentiation

The opportunity to discuss policies and readings with colleagues was beneficial.



Falkirk Council Website - How are we performing?

Between November and April last session, you may have been asked for help to rewrite the web content for Education Services pages on the new Falkirk Council website.

So how is the new website performing and which pages – are people looking at?

Here are some web stats from July 2014 to December 2014

Top 10 downloaded documents

No.	Document	No of Downloads
1	Homespot Newsletter	19,075
2	Bin Calendar	3,248
3	Homespot Application Form	3,144
4	School Handbooks	2,868
5	School Catchment Maps	2,147
6	CLD Newsletter	872
7	Bus Timetables	870
8	Apply for a Nursery Place	789
9	Council Tax Guide	695
10	School Let Application Form	608

Top task (pageviews)

Find your school Holiday Dates

91,150 Views

Case study

Bad weather on the 29th January 2015

Due to icy weather, we had a significant spike in traffic to our website - particularly the 'school closures' page. These stats are for the whole site.

Average page views per day	Page views on 29th Jan 2015
15k	46k - 3x daily average
7-8am previous day (page views)	7-8am 29th Jan 2015 (page views)
205	12,106

The good news is that while the old website only gained one star from SOCITM (Society Of IT Managers) – the new website has now gained three stars and more people are accessing it than ever before using mobile devices.

What is Visible Thinking?

Thinking often happens in ways that are invisible. Effective thinkers are able to make their thinking visible to themselves and others - externalising ideas by talking, writing, drawings, movement, symbols etc.

Main Goals:

- ★ Deeper understanding of content
- ★ Greater motivation for learning
- ★ Development of learners' thinking and learning abilities.
- ★ Development of learners' attitudes toward thinking and learning and their alertness to opportunities for thinking and learning (the "dispositional" side of thinking).
- ★ A shift in classroom culture toward a community of enthusiastically engaged thinkers and learners.

To create opportunities for thinking, teachers:

- must recognise when thinking occurs
- recognise when learners are:
 - putting across a new point of view
 - proposing a new theory
 - providing an explanation, seeing a connection or making a pattern

Thinking Routines

Ideas and strategies for teachers to use to making thinking visible through questioning, listening, observing and documenting in ways which make thinking visible, teachers and learners can access and extend their thinking to enrich and deepen understanding.

Thinking routines are structures and tools which emerge from this ongoing practice of questioning, extending dialogues, listening and documenting. They become patterns of behaviour which help learners develop their own thinking. Thinking routines reflect the way teachers plan and promote new learning, supporting learners through the processes of:

- ✓ introducing and exploring ideas
- ✓ synthesising and organising new ideas
- ✓ digging deeper

A Culture of Thinking

"Classrooms need to be cultures of thinking for learners, schools must be cultures of thinking for staff"

The programme provides time and opportunity for reflection and action to develop such a culture in classrooms and in school.

St Andrew's Big Maths

Within St Andrew's Primary we are focusing on developing pupils' quick recall and mental agility and the children are really benefiting from the Big Maths framework. The interactive lessons and follow up activities, have motivated and engaged our young learners. Children are now able to confidently discuss their learning and progress. We created a 'Big Maths' Pupil Focus group which allowed the children to give feedback on the Big Maths lessons.

The responses from these children demonstrate the skills being developed at each stage and how 'Big Maths' vocabulary has become embedded into everyday language:

'I like doing 'beat that' tests because it makes you push yourself harder each week and beat your previous score'. P7

The 'Its Nothing New' section has allowed me to use knowledge that I already have, to attempt more difficult questions. P7

'Big Maths makes using decimal points easy!!!' P7

'I love the calculations section of 'Big Maths' and 'Smile' multiplication. It has also really helped with my Times Tables. P5

'I'm not afraid to make mistakes as 'Big Maths' gives you a chance to work on your mistakes'. P4

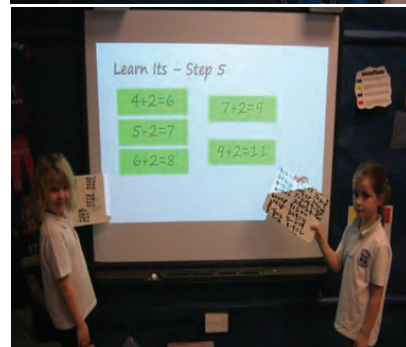
'I love working on 'learn its' by using the interactive whiteboard. My speed when answering 'learn it' questions has really improved!' P4

'All the characters in Big Maths have made it exciting and I look forward to maths lessons.' P3

'We all want to use 'fact families' because you can make 4 sums by switching the numbers around!' P3

'Big Maths is exciting!!' P1

We will be holding a 'Big Maths' Open Day later in May to allow parents to experience the learning associated with 'Big Maths' and understand how they can support their child's learning at home.



Eco Schools News from St Andrew's RC Primary School

In St Andrew's R.C. Primary we have a very enthusiastic and dedicated Eco Committee. Over the past two years they have focused mainly on litter, transport and waste. They continually engage pupils, staff and parents in activities and events that help to develop our understanding in these key areas. They also maintain and develop initiatives and strategies linked to many other eco themed areas.

Our school was visited recently by Eco Schools Scotland who assessed the efforts of our Eco Committee and school as a whole. All our hard work paid off and we were awarded our **third** Green Flag. The children in the Eco Committee spoke passionately about their eco related work and thoroughly enjoyed their experience. They also informed our assessors of the current work we are doing and how we plan to develop our Action Plans.

This was not the only success of the week for the Eco Committee. Abbie Cooper (Pupil Chairperson) and Anna Gallie (Pupil Vice Chairperson) represented our Committee and school at the Annual Litter Strategy Awards held in St Mungo's High School. We were nominated for three awards and won in the "Trusty Sidekicks" category. For many years our Eco Committee have worked very closely with the Falkirk Council Litter Strategy Team and this was their way of thanking us. We think they deserve our thanks for all the support they give to us.



Staff Development at St Andrew's RCPS

Moderation and SAOL

Over the last two years we have improved our use of learning intentions and success criteria. We have explored how our success criteria are linked to assessment to provide quality feedback and next steps for children. This tied in with our developing understanding of the NAR planning flowchart and how it can be used for coherent planning.

This year our focus has progressed to moderating learning and ensuring children have the opportunity to apply developing skills in new and unfamiliar contexts, ensuring depth of learning. One of the most significant factors in deciding how we would develop this was the publication of the significant aspects of learning. The RACI team tasked with developing this met with members of the Curriculum Support Team to ensure the path we took aligned with the expectations of Falkirk Council and Education Scotland. After this meeting we felt it was pertinent to have a literacy focus and incorporate the significant aspects of learning into our moderation process.

We implemented level planning meetings in which staff discuss and identify key areas of learning, experiences and outcomes to be explored and opportunities for application of skills within their level and at each stage. This has allowed quality professional dialogue and ensures breadth and depth of learning across the curriculum.

The same group of staff then met at the end of the term to moderate as a level, using pieces of 'taught' literacy work and examples which demonstrate application of these literacy skills. An essential part of this process was the significant aspects of learning for literacy. Using these as a moderation tool allowed us to identify areas of progress and gaps. Through the level planning meetings these gaps can be discussed and tackled.

We look forward to using this process, along with feedback from our staff, to develop our planning, teaching, assessment and moderation processes.

P1 Teachers CPD

We have recently completed the Early Years Pedagogue Post Graduate at Strathclyde University. The course was completed through E-learning on Strathclyde University's MyPlace online learning platform. There were two on-campus days, but the majority of the learning took place through academic reading, personal tasks, group tasks, discussions and guided tutor chats. This meant we were able to undertake these studies whilst working full time as class teachers.

The course explored the pedagogies, principals and processes to keep up with the growing demands on Early Years practitioners. The three modules were

as follows;

Taking Action: Child, Family and Community Efficacy, Listening to Children and Hearing their Voices and Creating Stimulating Learning Environment: Indoors and Out.

During the first module we focused on the role that the surroundings play on a child's life.

Through exploring the work of Bronfenbrenner we considered the different experiences a child has depending on the impact of their environment. We specifically looked at transition as this was most applicable to our current roles as P1 teachers. We reflected on current transition processes within our school, and considered the ways that it could be improved using research and academic reading.

The second module specifically focused on listening to children and ensuring their individual voices are heard. Again, we were able to reflect on our current practice and use what we had learned to improve this. We are now more aware of the need for children's voices to be heard across all aspects of their learning and development and feel more confident in employing a variety of strategies to ensure that this is the case.

Finally, during the third module, we critically examined our classroom environments and considered how effective the physical and social aspects of the environment were. We used sources such as Claxton and Carr to evaluate the effectiveness of each classroom and considered the ways in which this could be improved. Linking back to the second module, we allowed the children's voices to be truly heard when planning changes within the classroom. These changes were documented in reflective logs which highlighted areas for development and improvements. We then considered the effect these changes were having within the classroom and further adapted these plans where necessary.

The course has been extremely beneficial to us both. It has encouraged us to think deeper about the voice that children have within our classroom environment. We have both made changes to ensure that all children feel respected, and have their opinions valued. It has allowed us to reflect deeply on our practice and how our classrooms are laid out and the messages that they send. We are both pleased that we were given this opportunity to continue our professional development as teachers.



St Andrew's RC Primary News

Outdoor Learning Loose Materials Group

Our Outdoor Learning group have been busy this term collecting loose material suitable for use in the playground. Local companies, parents and staff have all contributed and we now have a wide and varied collection. One of our parents kindly provided us with a shed to store all the exciting material.

The group delivered assemblies to the pupils to introduce the concept and benefits of 'Loose Materials' detailing how they can be used and safely accessed. The pupils then discussed the risks regarding the loose materials and established clear rules, roles and responsibilities.

We are now looking forward to fun, interesting and creative playtimes!



"Look PIM has lots of eyes"

"The dog has 3 legs he's an alien"

"I like the vampire, he looks like a bat"

We have also been talking about 'What's In the Box'. The children were very inquisitive looking inside the box and discussing with each other what they had found. We then asked the children what things were in the box and if they could describe the objects at the end of the session. The children were very good at remembering the objects and used good descriptive language.



We have also been busy playing Pimball to help with our recognition of numbers and learning



different ways we can use numbers. The children particularly enjoyed catching the balls when they were thrown in the air. We are looking forward

to having more fun with our new friends.

Nursery Class



The children of St Andrew's Nursery have made new friends with some characters from the Planet CLIC. They were recently introduced to PIM, POM, Squiggleworth, Mully and Count Fourways.

"They look like Aliens"

Nursery/P1 Transition

St Andrew's Nursery class has been working together with the Primary One teachers to create an Easter themed transition morning for nursery and P1 pupils. The morning will be based around the book, '10 Easter Egg Hunters' by Janet Schulman. The children will take part in a wide variety of activities throughout the morning with the main focus being on Literacy and Numeracy.

This will allow the nursery children to work together with the children from P1 and the school staff. It is also an opportunity for the morning and afternoon children from the nursery to get to know each other.

St Bernadette's RC Primary News

IDL, Thinking Reader & Big Writing

This term, P1 went on a Teddy Bear's Picnic. We had to bring our favourite teddy bear and we took them on an adventure. We played games like Hide and Seek and Tig with our teddy bears then had a picnic with some juice and crisps. We listened to the Teddy Bear's Picnic song and danced to the music. Finally we worked together in mixed groups to discuss what we would write in our story the following day.



'Thinking Reader' booklet to learn about the different strategies, look at tricky words, use a dictionary to find out the definitions and learning how to summarise the story. Reading these books has inspired a lot of different lessons from writing character descriptions to making our own magic spells. The children have also produced life size characters and made their own comic strip to retell the story. We have all thoroughly enjoyed the lessons that have come from reading these books.

P3/4 Roman Topic - Workshop at Callendar House

The children have been learning about The Romans as part of their IDL this term. They have using Roman language during a variety of activities e.g. soldier, emperor, Coliseum, gladiators,

Romulus and Remus, chariot, armour, helmet, toga, aqueduct, shield and mosaics. The children have enjoyed



making clay Roman coins and painting them, they have made their own shield and learned the 'tortoise' to defend when being attacked, they have made up and played Roman games including "Julius Caesar Says...(shout a number out and they had to run to the Roman Numeral sign)" using Roman numerals to learn the numbers, they have made wax tablets using a handmade stylus and wrote their name using the Roman alphabet, also they have learned about the history between Britain and the Romans and much, much more!

The children then went on a visit to Callendar House and this re-inforced what they had been learning about in class. They loved trying on the armour and marching through Callendar House with helmets and shields. Many of the activities were completed in Cooperative Learning groups and using active learning.

The pupils loved their topic!



Primary 2 Science Topic



P2 have really enjoyed their Interdisciplinary Learning topic surrounding The Weather. Pupils have been highly motivated in their quest to learn about different types of weather and have participated in a number of experiments and practical investigations. Pupils have made links with the wider curriculum as they use their knowledge of weather to create poetry,

measure rainfall and compose rain dances. Learning has been supported by wonderful resources from the Learning Resource Centre, based at Camelon Education Centre.

Primary 2/3 – The Thinking Reader

We have been working on a series of books about Winnie the Witch and her cat Wilbur. The children are enjoying reading these books, thinking about the text in more detail and discussing the characters. They have been using the



Interdisciplinary Learning at St Bernadette's RCPS

Primary 4/5 are Under the Sea

P4/5 enjoyed learning about Under the Sea, through their interdisciplinary learning topic. Pupils have been engaged and motivated in learning about different animals that live under the sea and have been looking at the food chains of these



animals. Pupils have also been learning about the habitats of sea creatures and have made links to the wider curriculum as they have been using their knowledge to create posters, leaflets and stories. Pupils have been actively planning to build a rock pool in the school playground with their knowledge of habitats. They have

visited the orphan land to investigate what sorts of rocks would be good for their rock pool. Primary 4/5 also had

two different visitors who have been in to tell us about their jobs working at sea as divers. P4/5 really

enjoyed hearing our visitor's stories and what encounters they faced under the sea.



Primary 5/6 are In the Rainforest

P5/6 have really enjoyed their IDL Topic - The Rainforest. They have learned about the different layers of the rainforest, animals including endangered species, what plants can be found in the rainforest and their uses, the impact of deforestation and global warming. They have made



connections between our IDL topic and science by investigating food chains, the process of photosynthesis, the water cycle and carbon cycle. The

children were very enthusiastic about a trip to Amazonia to see some of the rainforest animals up close, handling snakes, tarantulas and cockroaches and learning more about each animal and endangered species from the ranger Kerry. The children have taken part in role plays about the impact of deforestation, they have written persuasive letters to discourage companies from contributing to deforestation and they have used ICT to enhance their knowledge of different plants, animals etc. They took part in an exotic fruit tasting session and had a lot of fun creating rainforest inspired tribal masks.

St Bernadette's: P7 Pupils Residential week in Cumbrae

P7 took Mr Cloherty and Mrs Galloway for a residential week in Cumbrae. The children reported that they were both very well behaved and had a great time! Here are some pictures of their exciting week.



Pupils Explore the Curriculum at St Bernadette's RCPS

Yvonne McBlain, Curriculum Support Officer with Falkirk Council, enjoyed hearing how Cathy Quinn and staff colleagues at St Bernadette's RC PS are developing pupil awareness of their learning across the curriculum. Over the last two school sessions, Yvonne has worked with staff to explore whether pupils understand what the curriculum actually is. Read more about the initial enquiry project in our blog here <http://glo.li/1lv3ID9>.

Staff have created learning experiences which develop pupil understanding of the subjects within the curriculum, and piloted these during "Focus Weeks" so that children can:

- ✓ consider how the knowledge and skill in one curricular area links with knowledge and skills in other curricular areas
- ✓ make connections in their learning
- ✓ identify their strengths and development needs and know what they should do to improve
- ✓ connect their learning in school to the skills they will need for learning, life and work

All school staff are therefore beginning to build a toolkit and simple processes which should help pupils and staff to track progression of learning across the four capacities and the four contexts for learning. Yvonne and Cathy know that other schools will be working towards this also, and would be glad to hear from anyone wishing to collaborate and explore further – contact either yvonne.mcblain@falkirk.gov.uk or catherine.quinn@falkirk.gov.uk.



The photo on the left shows characters created by P6/7 pupils and their teacher John Cloherty. They are: Robbie the responsible citizen, Elizabeth the effective contributor, Sam the successful learner, and Carly the confident individual. John and his class felt that using a storyline approach and having characters would help even the youngest children in their school understand what the 4 capacities actually mean.

Teachers in St Bernadette's PS are following up on Yvonne's initial work to build pupil understanding of the curriculum by designing new learning experiences suitable for their pupils in every stage. The photo on the left shows John's simple but effective method. His pupils have made a simple curriculum subject display on their class room window. They have subdivided each curriculum area into its subjects and its organisers. At relevant points during their learning, they can then look at the display to help them discuss and understand how their learning is connected.

St Mary's RC Primary School - Boys and Girls come out to play!

Boys' Night

We held a very successful Boys' Night in November. Over 130 boys, dads, granddads and brothers came along to join in the fun. The highlight of the night was the Street Dance class where all the boys could show off! Some of the mums helped in the background with activities and food. Overall, the night was very enjoyable and we intend to make it an annual event.

Girls' Night

Following on from the Boys' Night in November the girls held their own event in March. The attendance was amazing with nearly 200 girls, mums, grans, great grans and sisters. The activities included a Beauty Parlour, Karaoke, dance, hall activities, cake decorating and refreshments. Some mums helped with the activities and the dads and Mr McPeake provided a wonderful refreshment service!

Health Matters at St Bernadette's RCPS

Our recent Health Week was resounding success. Pupils experienced a range of experiences linked to Food Health, Emotional and Social Health, as well as Physical Health and Substance Misuse.

Parent, pupil and community feedback confirmed that we are successfully Getting it Right for Every Child.

We seek to ensure the Wellbeing Indicators are embedded in the curriculum and ethos of the school but we also ensured these indicators were explicit during Health Week. The pupils learned how to keep themselves **safe** with inputs from a Community Nurse, an A & E Nurse and an A&E doctor. We also had a



fabulous input from a Biology Teacher around Substance Misuse. We even had a visiting podiatrist teaching foot health and making cast of the pupils' feet!



Pupils learned how to keep themselves **active** by experiencing a range of relaxation techniques, table tennis, Taekwondo, footballing skills by Raith Rovers alongside our core Health and Wellbeing structures such as Trekking Thursday, visits to our adopted Orphan Land, two hours of



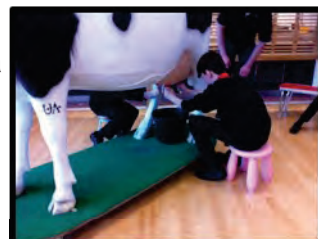
core quality P.E, natural play activities and outdoor learning activities!

Healthy food was promoted through visits from ASDA



community and Chefs at School.

All pupils from nursery to P7 were included in food preparation activities such as preparing healthy pea dip and salmon mouse on a bed of lettuce. Pupils also had the chance to learn about dairy farming thanks to the Royal Highland Education Trust.



Social and emotional health were promoted throughout the week: ensuring needs were



identified and met. Class lessons as well as an input from Fischy Music ensured pupils were included in discussing their emotional and social needs and ensured they had the requisite skills set to seek help as required and deal with difficult and changing emotions. Overall,

Health Week confirmed that **HEALTH MATTERS** at St. Bernadette's Primary School!

Chinese New Year Celebrations at St Joseph's Nursery

The children in the nursery have been learning about Chinese customs and traditions. We made paper lanterns, dressed up in Chinese costumes, danced with ribbons to Chinese music, learned the Chinese dragon dance, designed our own Chinese hats and even did some Chinese writing!

We then celebrated Chinese New Year with a special tea ceremony. We all sat together around a special table, were served tea from tea pots and ate noodles and prawn crackers. For a special treat we had a sweetie wrapped in gold or red shiny paper. **Kung Hei Fat Choi!**



"We are drinking tea out of a tea pot" Missi



"We are dragon dancing" Isabella



"We are having a tea party" Lauryn

St Joseph's RC Primary School News

Primary 1 Thinking Readers

The children in P1 are learning to become 'Thinking Readers'. They enjoy completing tasks before reading, during reading and after reading. They read 'The Gruffalo' and showed great understanding. They then summarised the story using pictures and brought the characters to life by retelling the summarised story. Next they performed this to the whole school on World Book Day. They had so much fun and the other children enjoyed the performance.



Primary 2/1 Visit to Royal Observatory, Edinburgh



Through IDL work with a science focus on Light and Dark, we read the novel, 'The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark' using the Thinking

Reader approach. By summarizing, we retold the story to the school on World Book Day. There are lots of similes and metaphors in this book and we shared the ones the author had used and some of the ones we made up ourselves. 'Plod stood straight like a post.' 'The squirrel jumped like a silver spring.' We made a visit to the Royal Observatory, in Edinburgh and looked through a huge telescope and saw the whole of Edinburgh. We made sun clocks and used the torch as the sun to tell the time.



Primary 3/2 Writing

P3/2 enjoy writing for a range of purposes and audiences. On World Book Day, the children shared their diary entries with the school.

In IDL work they are learning about the weather and wrote a set of instructions telling how to make a rain gauge.

Now they are looking at recipes created by famous chefs – Heston Blumenthal, Mary Berry etc. and are writing a recipe for friendship using the ingredients of love, helpfulness, kindness, laughter, smiles, hugs etc.

We look forward to making the child of friendship!



Primary 4 Literacy Work

P4 thought that it would be a good idea, on World Book Day, to create new stories for the younger children in our school. We created stories that we thought would interest the P1 children. We also had to think carefully about the length of the story

and how many illustrations we would need to sustain the younger children's interest.



We then read our stories to P1. We asked them three questions about the book; one before we started reading, one during reading and one after reading— just like we all do with our Thinking Reader work.

We thoroughly enjoyed being authors for the day!



St Joseph's RC Primary School News cont'd

Primary 5 Use Lego as a focus for Literacy and Numeracy



We have been learning all about Lego; how it's made and how the company started. We also read an article about Lego washing up in Cornwall after a container ship lost its cargo in 1997.

We learned how to write reports about the history of Lego and adverts to persuade people to buy Lego.

We also had a 'Bring your Lego to School' day and a 'Lego in Numbers' day. We collected all numerical facts and figures from the information we had learned about Lego and collated the information on a poster.

Primary 6 Fairtrade

P6 took responsibility for organizing and running a Fairtrade stall and coffee morning during Fairtrade Fortnight. They chose to support this worthwhile cause as part of their Pope Francis Faith Award. Fairtrade can save the futures of millions of farmers whose lives are in danger because of a lack of sufficient



pay, horrifying working and living conditions and harmful chemicals being used as fertilisers. Throughout their learning, they discussed the role we can play in helping others, constructed an advertising campaign and utilised their enterprise skills. Over two weeks, Primary Six raised a total profit of £554.32 which will be donated to the Fairtrade Foundation.

Primary 7 Developing Countries IDL

P7 have created their own country with rights and beliefs. They have also chosen investments for their country. Each week an 'event' happens which means that the country either gains or loses an investment. For example if the event is a deadly disease but the country has invested in medical research then they gain another project from the list given. The group at the end of the topic with the most investments wins a prize.

This has impacted on the children's understanding of how countries can become developed needing support and help from the other countries. Most recently the children have had to solve a conflict within their country, where one group want to build a factory near a river and the other want the land to build houses. The children have used Thinking Hats to do this.

The children have also been learning about developing countries through co-operative lessons from 'Send a Cow' and Oxfam resources. This has given the children a great insight into children's basic rights.

We have been reading the novel the 'Breadwinner' in class too. This novel really gives the children a clear picture of how difficult people's lives can become when a country is living in conflict.

I enjoyed reading the real life story of Berna and how 'Send a Cow' helped improve her family life. **Mark B**

This topic has shown me the changes I would like to see in the world. **Isabella S**

This topic has helped me broaden my horizons to see how others live as some are less fortunate than others. **Chiara P**

St Mary's RC Primary School News

Joint Nursery and P1 Transition Project

The Nursery and P1 children have been working together on their science project, Living Eggs, this term. They have been planning joint activities and P1 children have been teaching the nursery children lots about eggs and chicks. We have been very lucky to have our 10 eggs hatch out and all the chicks are now safely in the brooder box. Our last chick to hatch needed a little help and Mrs MacKay, our music teacher, was on-hand to help with the delivery!



Primary 2 Zoolab Visit

P2 participated in a session with Zoolab. The focus of their work with the class was nocturnal animals. The pupils had the opportunity to look at, touch and even hold some of



the creatures. These included a snail, cockroach, millipede, tarantula and a snake.

The pupils learned facts about each of the animals and

participated in discussions on matters such as origins, habitats and food. This was an extremely enjoyable and worthwhile experience for the class.



Primary 3M - Science in Focus

St Mary's has been having a big Science focus and we are holding an open night soon. Our topic is the

human body. We found out the three main functions of a skeleton are movement, support and protection – the skull protects the brain and the rib cage protects the heart and lungs. We worked with P5/6 to investigate skull protection by creating helmets for eggs. We had great fun, especially when we took the eggs outside to test them!



We have been finding out about our organs and where they are in our bodies. We enjoyed conducting an experiment to measure our lung capacity using a spirometer made from household items. Our results showed that the taller children mostly had a bigger lung capacity. This matched the predictions we had made beforehand.

We watched a fun animation all about the heart, the most important muscle in our bodies. It explained that blood that leaves the heart is carried through arteries and blood going towards the heart is carried through veins.

It has been fun being scientists!

P4 Outdoor Learning

We have had a busy but enjoyable year in P4 at St. Mary's. Outdoor Learning has once again been a

focus for the whole school this year and it has been great to see it becoming embedded in the curriculum. There are so many

different curricular areas which it applies to and in P4 we have enjoyed getting outside for lessons based on Maths, Active Phonics, Writing, RE, ILE and Expressive Arts. These lessons included using our senses to describe God's creations, drawing chalk clocks using Roman Numerals and finding "Magic Objects" in the school grounds to base a Writing activity around.



St Mary's RC Primary School News cont'd

Primary 5/6 Max in The Middle

P5/6 have been looking at body systems in science and this has tied in well with Max in the Middle: a week long health and wellbeing project. The pupils were asked what they would like to learn about in science and this became the basis for the topic. They looked at the skeletal and muscular system and worked with P3M to explore skull protection by creating helmets for eggs – which both classes enjoyed! They then looked at the structure and function of the circulatory system and created realistic model hearts. After this they looked at the digestive system and loved the practical demonstration given by Miss Jaye to show the journey of food. They also enjoyed a 'cracker challenge', in which they tried to eat three crackers in under one minute! They thought this would be an easy task but they soon realised that the mouth does not produce enough saliva to digest the dry food.

Throughout this topic the pupils have been working on their report writing skills through practical investigations: 'Does height relate to foot size?', 'Which activity increases heart rate the most?' They have been creating their own questions, making predictions, carrying out the investigations considering variables and testing, summarising their findings and making recommendations for similar future investigations. The pupils will go on to learn about the respiratory and nervous systems and look at the senses.

Their 'Max' week focussed on physical and mental wellbeing. They began by learning that 'Max' is a person their age who is stuck in the middle of a difficult situation. They came up with a variety of situations for Max to be in the middle of and used drama to explore these and help him/her reach a decision and solve the problem. They also discussed



the importance of physical health, learned two dances and created and tried new healthy foods. This project culminates in a performance for parents on Friday the 20th March which was a fantastic show!

Primary 7 News

P7 at St Mary's Primary have had an extremely busy year so far and have engaged in a lot of valuable learning within the class and also throughout the wider school. In February, they worked as a class to



raise awareness of the British Heart Foundation. It is a charity very close to their hearts and so they organised a fundraising day for 'Wear It Red'. The P7 children worked to build enthusiasm and motivate the pupils throughout the school about the day. They

spoke to the classes, made posters for the cause and also created their own raps, chants and games. The school then had a 'Wear It Red Day' where all of the children came to school dressed in red. The P.7s and their families worked hard to make cakes for a school bake sale which was held on the day to raise funds too.

In March, the children arranged a 'Movie Day' to celebrate World Book Day. All of the children came into school dressed up as their favourite book or movie character and everyone came together to watch movies, eat popcorn and have lots of fun! All of the children had a fantastic



day and the money that was raised from the day is going towards the P7 residential trips and also SCIAF.

This term, P7 have been developing their knowledge of science. They have been studying non-renewable and renewable energy. Throughout their learning so far, they have been developing the skills required to carry out an experiment, and this has made them realise the qualities required to work in the field of science. The pupils have since gone on to look at the different types of energy sources and the impact that they have on the world around them. The school janitor, who was previously a miner, and a parent from the school community who is an inspector of wind turbines and solar panels, came into the class to talk to the children. It was extremely beneficial and gave the children a really valuable insight into the world of work in the science industry. The pupils and Miss Rooney are looking forward to learning much more in this area; to ultimately develop an understanding of how they can use energy responsibly and efficiently to care for the Earth.

St Mary's RC Primary Musical Highlights

La Cenerentola

In October P7 attended an Opera unwrapped performance of Rossini's 'La Cenerentola' (Cinderella) at the Theatre Royal Glasgow arranged by Mrs Mackay. This was a free hour-long taster session which gave the class the opportunity to see what Opera is all about. We were introduced to the main characters, heard highlights of the music and had a sneak preview of some of the theatrical secrets behind the production. The highlights were of course hearing the singers live and peering down into the orchestra pit watching the instrumentalists playing.

Primary 4

P4 have been working with Mrs Mackay on an IDL Topic, 'The Science behind Sound. They have

experienced a variety of lessons and activities. They made a drinking straw flute and drinking straw pan pipes to demonstrate pitch; plunged a tuning fork into a bucket of water to view vibration; used a slinky to demonstrate sound waves; designed and made their own instrument from household and craft materials and created a glass bottle xylophone where they carefully measured water into a selection of bottles at varying levels to create a pitched instrument similar to a xylophone.

Nursery

The nursery have been working on their musical skills as well. The children in both the morning and afternoon sessions have a dedicated Music time where they experience a variety of musical activities in the Music Room. They are learning and performing seasonal and counting songs, action songs as well as having the opportunity to play percussion instruments specially chosen for small hands. The nursery children are currently working on some new songs in conjunction with Primary 1 as a transition topic involving The Living Egg project.

The Boy and the Bunnet

Primary 3 had a major focus on Scotland this term

which proved to be an ideal opportunity for Mrs



Mackay to introduce the children to her favourite book "The Boy and the Bunnet". As well as being a fantastic wee story about Neil, his Granny and the animals they come across in and around their 'wee hoose' and for teaching Scots language. It is also the perfect medium for learning about musical instruments we associate with

Scotland and Scottish dance styles. The children wanted to learn about the instruments they had heard playing the musical theme for each character and set about learning how they were made and played. Each child also had the opportunity to hold and play the violin and were very keen to see the inner workings of the piano in the music room. (Which was safely put back together and is in full working order!) There were a few songs connected to the characters which they also learned and recorded for self-evaluation and are wrapping up their learning by creating a new dance in jig-time for St. Mary's school to learn.

We love Ukulele!

"I love ukulele!" is the cry often to be heard in St. Mary's. The school purchased 30 ukuleles which the children from P4-7 are learning to play. The ukulele is just the perfect size for young hands to hold and play, having only 4 strings, playing chords is much more manageable than other similar instruments. The children are learning to tune their instrument; play chords; learn different strumming patterns and the more experienced players are now playing some recognisable tunes. Many have purchased their own ukulele (even some younger brothers and sisters) to play at home and can often be seen teaching friends something new they have learned to play.



Jim Rooney, a tribute

With the passing of Jim Rooney in February 2014, the CLD sector nationally and within the Falkirk Council area lost an invaluable colleague, friend and confidante. Jim was known to many within Falkirk Council Education Services in his role as an HMle as he had undertaken a number of inspections of CLD and Education Services.

On a personal basis, I have known Jim for over 25 years. My first memory of Jim was in 1987 when I was a placement student of community education and he was the Project Coordinator of Kersiebank Community Project. I found his wisdom, candour, passion, good humour an inspiration. Jim understood something about human nature that meant many are motivated to make a difference in the lives of young people, adult and communities.



Jim will be remembered within the CLD sector as "Mr Outcomes" and his committed to

establishing the impact and social value of CLD led him to fundamentally change the way CLD was both viewed by the Education establishment and how it and learning communities were inspected.

Jim had a passion in supporting CLD practice within the Falkirk Council area, in particular the Grangemouth area where he lived for many years. In his will, Jim bequeathed a substantial sum of money to Kersiebank Community Project Management Committee to support their work.

Mark Meechan, Community Learning and Development Manager

St Mary's P5 Science Topic - Living Things

Our science topic this term is Living Things and we have been finding out about different groups of vertebrates and invertebrates. We have also practised some orienteering skills using a map of the playground to find and identify some the invertebrates that we have been learning about.



We had a fun time celebrating World Book Day by coming to school dressed as a character from a book. It was also Movie Day and it was great to sit on our cushions in the hall, eating popcorn and watching a film on the big screen.

We are enjoying learning Spanish and finding out about the Spanish culture. We designed and created our own posters to show some of the things we have learned about Spain so far.



**INTO
FILM
FESTIVAL**
4TH-20TH
NOVEMBER 2015

We're delighted to announce that the Into Film Festival 2015 will be taking place from **4 – 20 November**.

The Into Film Festival last year welcomed over 372,000 young people and their teachers through its doors. Students attended 2,700 events including Q&As, previews and premieres all across the UK.

We'll be letting you know as soon as bookings go live!

For more info - go to www.intofilm.org

Larbert High Science Faculty News

S3 Biology Challenge

This nationwide competition tests the pupils' biology knowledge and reasoning skills. An amazing 30 pupils entered from Larbert High and we achieved one Silver and six Bronze awards.

Royal Society of Chemistry Olympiad

Our Advanced Higher Chemistry pupils took part in this national competition, which provided them with an opportunity to stretch and challenge their knowledge and skills in Chemistry.

S5 Higher Physics Glasgow University Engineering Workshops

During the Glasgow Festival hosted by the University of Glasgow, S5 Higher Physics pupils took part in a talk and



various workshops, learning about how engineering has shaped the modern world and how engineers are addressing the challenges we face today.

Scottish Space School Residential

Three of our S5 pupils were successful in securing a place in the Scottish Space School residential. Laura Rutland, Jack Greene and Kirstin Alexander were highly inspired by the eclectic mix of lectures, labs and workshops all on a space theme, delivered by leading academics and researchers, and supported by NASA astronauts and engineers. Good luck to the pupils applying this year!

Nuffield Research Placements

Four of our S5 pupils- Dylan Forrest, Laura Rutland, Michael Hills and Michael Forret successfully applied for the prestigious Nuffield Research Placement. This programme involves Science

students working in a university or science-based organisation, carrying out university-level research

work with lecturers, post-grad and undergraduate students. This culminates in a display and



presentation of their work at the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh. Michael Forret was successful in achieving a Gold CREST Award for his Nuffield project.

S2 Science Centre Trip

Skills Development Scotland have been working closely with Glasgow Science Centre to promote science careers through a new exhibition, [MyWoW!](#) Larbert High had been selected by them to bring S2 pupils to visit their new exhibition. Pupils took part in two science careers activities and enjoyed free time in the science mall.

S1 IET Faraday Challenge Day

Sara Dyson, Matthew Simpson, Emily Ramsay, Daniel Scrymgeour, Rhys Owen and Sara Hendry won the IET Faraday Challenge where they were competing with 5 other Falkirk schools. Teams were given the opportunity to research, design and make a prototype solution to a tough engineering problem using the latest technology of 3D printers. Our S1 Larbert High Team won a prize for themselves and a trophy for their school.

S5 Higher Physics Bright Green Hydrogen Trip

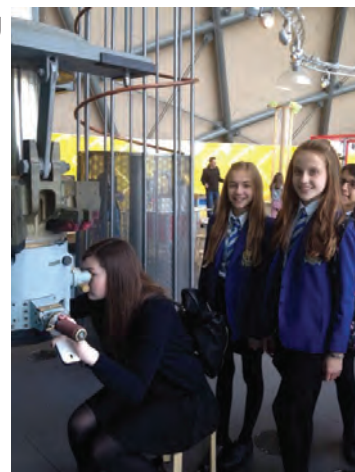
S5 Higher Physics pupils were given the opportunity to find out about the different types of renewable energy, through hands-on interactive experiments. This was an invaluable experience for them as their course Assignment is linked to the topic of renewable energy.

Royal Society of Chemistry Top of the Bench Competition

Congratulations to our fabulous team of Chemists, Amy Simmons (S2), Lisa Harvey (S3), Andrew Fleming (S3) and Calum Binnie (S4), who were representing Larbert High on Thursday the 13th of November and won the Royal Society of Chemistry Top of the Bench Regional Competition! They won a trophy, £250 and are now going to compete in the National Final at Loughborough University in April.

S1 Fujifilm Outreach Visits

Fujifilm Imaging Colorants imaging colorant laboratory scientists have been visiting all our S1 classes giving them an insight into their role and linking in directly with their study of Light.





CLD & YOU..... a great partnership!



Duke of Edinburgh Youth Festival
On Tuesday 7th and Wednesday the 8th April
70 young people (including the organising
youth committee of 10) will take part in a
Youth Festival at Barr wood camp near
Denny.

The festival will introduce potential Duke of
Edinburgh participants from CLD supported
youth clubs to the possibilities of the DofE award,
and to the experience of outdoor living as well as
activities like archery & tunnelling for the first time.

Workshops on the first day will explore the Skills & Volunteering sections
while the 2nd day will cover the physical and expedition sections.



The Community Learning & Development Service works both with individuals and
groups at all stages of their lives. This can vary from supporting Parent and Toddler
groups to helping to develop Older People's Services, or from holding a one to one Guidance Session to
helping to deliver Play Schemes for over a hundred children.

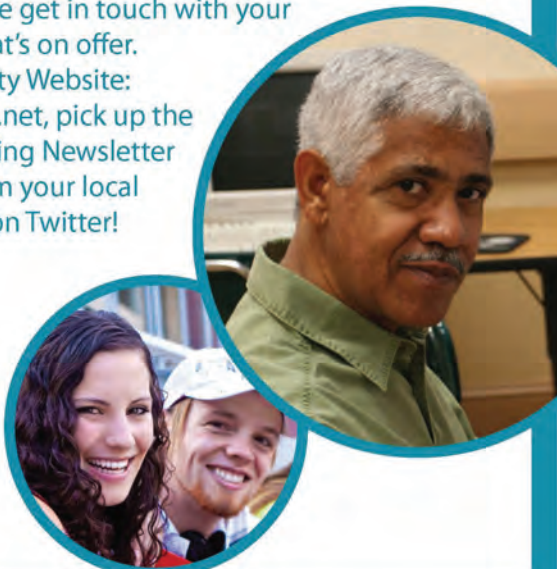
If you'd like to find out more about what the Community Learning and Development Service can offer
people living and working in your community, check out the 'what's on where' at www.falkirk.gov.uk

Some of the social and learning opportunities that you can get involved in through CLD include
employability support, computing classes, ICT support, literacy classes, youth clubs, parents & toddler
groups, personal development and much, much more....please get in touch with your
local centre to find out what's on offer.

Check out the Community Website:
www.localcommunityaction.net, pick up the
new edition of the CLearning Newsletter
"What's on Where" from your local
centre or follow us on Twitter!



Falkirk Council
Education Services



GEOCACHING

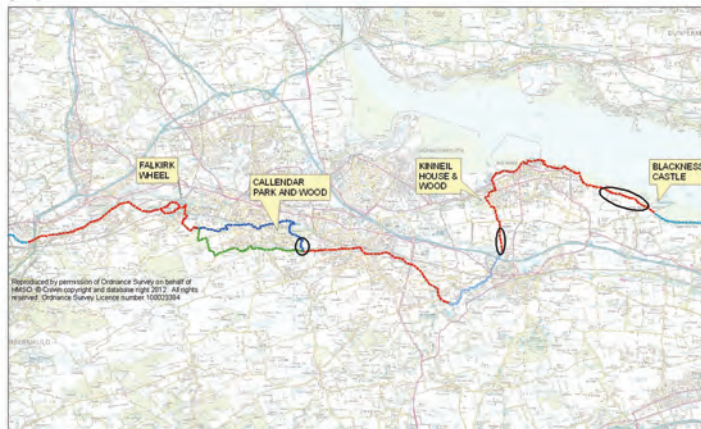


Would you like to take part in a worldwide treasure hunt?

We would like to invite you to start your adventure along the John Muir Way by hiding a 'geocache'. Select a site along the Falkirk stretch of the John Muir way - there are lots of interesting points from Blackness Castle to Callendar Park to Kinneil House, trek over the fields to Bonnybridge or follow the Canal path to the Falkirk Wheel just make sure no one sees you hiding your cache!

What is Geocaching?

Geocaching is a cooperative outdoor treasure hunt with thousands of people across the planet coming together on a single website to coordinate hide-and-seek containers called Caches. Caches are found by a GPS device or smart phone, typically they are small waterproof containers with a logbook which the geocacher signs and leaves a message. Some larger containers may contain small items for trading therefore once you find a cache sign the logbook, take an item and replace it with an item you have brought to leave in the cache. Regardless of what's in the box it is more about the hunt than the treasure.



How does it link to the Curriculum?

Geocaching links in many ways to inter-disciplinary learning. Geocaching combines outdoor learning with team-building, problem-solving, physical education, geography and other valuable educational outcomes.

How do I get involved?

It's easy, firstly register for free on www.geocaching.com

- Decide what item(s) you wish to place in the geocache container. Ensure that one of the items is your logbook to allow the geocacher to sign.
- Select a Geocache container suitable for your content (makes sure the cache container is water and weather tight).
- Think about how easy or hard to find you want your geocache to be
- Mark your geocache container with the words 'official geocache'
- Now it's time to fill your geocache – don't forget the all-important logbook and a pen/pencil
- Select a location along the John Muir Way and log the geocache's location by entering the cache's co-ordinates on www.geocaching.com

**The John Muir Trust are happy for caches to be placed on their land. However, you must inform them of the cache location. There are specific guidelines to follow. Details of these and contact information is in the GAGB landowner database please follow link:*

<https://wiki.groundspeak.com/display/GEO/United+Kingdom+Landowner+Agreements>

For more information watch the 2 minutes video on hiding your first geocache -

<http://www.geocaching.com/videos/default.aspx#cat=PL939C3CBDC2F2F385&vid=1YTqitVK-Ts>

If your school or class are planning to participate in geocaching along the John Muir Way please let me know. I would love to find out the Geocaches you are hiding and set other schools the challenge to find them. Please contact Gillian Mooney on

gillian.mooney@falkirkcommunitytrust.org, 01324 503744. Do not hesitate to contact me should you require extra support and advice.

Let your adventure begin!

