

# MEARNS ACADEMY

Spring Newsletter 2022



## HEADTEACHER REPORT

Dear Parents/Carers,

It has again been an extremely busy term for staff and pupils across the school. As restrictions have eased, I am delighted that a number of activities and events have yet again been able to take place. Activities such as house competitions, class trips, outside speakers, Young Musician of the Year and assemblies have all been able to take place and have been enjoyed by both staff and pupils.

Moving into next term we are looking forward to: Sports Day, P7 Transition Visit, Activity Days and Prize Giving. Our Activity Days this year will take a different format to the pre-covid activity days and information will be shared next term.

This term we also launched our new school logo and values of **Respect, Wellbeing and Ambition**. We have started working with the young people on these values and we will continue to deepen the understanding across Mearns Academy to ensure a positive school environment and ethos for all. The young people have missed out on much over the last 2 years, and it is through our values and the activities and events mentioned above that we will ensure a sense of pride in Mearns Academy going forward.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish everybody a healthy and happy Easter break and to wish all of our pupils in S4-S6 good luck in their upcoming SQA examinations.

Gareth Campbell  
Head Teacher

## FOUNDATION APPRENTICESHIPS OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Congratulations to Findlay Thomson, S4, who recently won the Level 4/5 Aberdeenshire Foundation Apprentice of the Year award. The awards ceremony took place on Fri 11<sup>th</sup> March, during Scottish Apprenticeship Week and was hosted by Chief Executive Jim Savege.

Findlay is studying a Foundation Apprenticeship in Automotive at Mearns Academy. He was nominated by our external provider from Dundee & Angus College.

The feedback from the provider is that Findlay is “unbelievably talented and knowledgeable” when it comes to the subject matter of the Automotive course. Undertaking it has really helped him engage with his education and he has taken to his area of study, demonstrating real interest, and thriving in this sphere.

We'd also like to give a special mention to both Kerys Forbes, S5, who is studying the Children and Young People Foundation Apprenticeship and Ella Geddes, S6, who is studying the Business Skills Foundation Apprenticeship. Both were shortlisted as finalists in the Level 6 category. There are over 600 school pupils across Aberdeenshire taking place in work-based learning this session so for all three young people to make the final is a massive achievement.



# YOUNG MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

Wednesday night saw the return of our annual Young Musician of the Year competition. It was so lovely to be able to have some live performances again, and we were delighted to be the first event back in the school. Thanks to everyone involved for such a successful evening. The standard of the performances was as high as ever. Thanks also to those who put themselves forward for the auditions. Thanks to the judges – Matt Clark, Jenna Main and Alisdair Sneden – for giving up their evening to judge our competition. They said they had an amazing evening and they had some really hard decisions to make. Thanks to the pupils and staff who helped us out, and also to past pupils Ben Walker, Curtis Hurst and Carla Dewar for their expertise.

Here are the results:

Junior winner: Tommi McAndrew – snare drum

Junior runner-up: Cameron Suer - piano

Intermediate winner: Charlie Baird - piano

Intermediate runner-up: Eibhlin Nouwens - voice

Senior winner: Logan Forbes - voice

Senior runner-up: Charlotte Harris - piano

Overall Young Musician of the Year 2022: **Logan Forbes**





# BEE KEEPING 2021-22

Where to start with this year in bee keeping? This subject was originally just thrown in to fill space on my timetable. But I could not have been more glad I took it when we got started. I think bee keeping is such a valuable skill, especially with bee populations in decline due to climate change and the use of harmful pesticides.

I did not expect to be slinging on a bee suit in the first class. It came as a pleasant surprise to be reaching into a hive on the first day. It was warm and sunny, and the bees were active. I was mesmerized the way colony worked together. They had such a sophisticated society, something I had never even thought about before.

One of the first tasks we learned to do was to inspect a hive. This included checking the queen was laying and how full the stores were. As summer was already well under way, we were able to extract honey early on. Not all of it ended up in jars, fresh honey is on a whole other level and certain members of the group seemed to have quite an appetite for it!

As we went into autumn, we were starting to prepare the bees for winter. Reproduction was slowing down, and the drones (male bees) were dying out. This gave us an opportunity to practice wing clipping and marking, something we do to queens to make them more distinguishable. We practiced this on drones, as they cannot sting. In early winter we treated the hives for varroa, a small red mite that feeds on bees. This was to make sure the colony was as healthy as possible to increase their chances of surviving the colder months. We also fed them large volumes of sugar syrup to allow the bees to build up their stores. Over winter there is not much practical activity to do, we were able to get all our theory done.

Most recently we have been feeding the bees. As they have been out flying, due to unusual warmer temperatures, expending energy but finding no food, it was down to us to put blocks of fondant icing in the hives. This also allowed us to see how the bees were getting on, but of course made sure to open the hive for as short amount of time as possible.



Bee keeping has undoubtedly been my favorite subject this year. The class were really nice, and time spent looking after nature is always time well spent! I want all who read this to be assured of how important bees are in both our natural ecosystems and our food supply. Finally, I would like to thank both Mr Sim and Mrs Robson for taking the class this year. I have learned so much and had fun along the way. I am so grateful to have been given this unique opportunity to have learned the art of bee keeping at my school.

Eliza Barrie

## MODERN LANGUAGES FOR LIFE & WORK AWARD

An exciting opportunity has arisen for some S3 pupils in French. Malcolm McMillan, our DYW co-ordinator has picked a class to work with. He is bringing local employers and businesses into school to talk with the pupils about career opportunities and Employability skills and qualifications needed to give them a valuable insight into the world of work.

Some of the local businesses that are coming in to talk with the class are Blaze Manufacturing Solutions Ltd, Macphie Ltd, Sparrows Offshore Services and Matrix International Ltd.

The pupils have found it to be very insightful. It has opened up new ideas for them to think about, with one of the pupils saying that “it’s helped me to know what I want to do after school”.



## MINDFUL MEARNS

The Guidance team have been delighted to have Sarah Gear as a visiting specialist speak to our Seniors during their PSE and Health & Wellbeing Classes. Sarah teaches positive mental health strategies focusing on building resilience and being mindful. All S4 and S5 will have the opportunity during class time to have two sessions with Sarah who uses a number of Mindfulness techniques with young people to help them cope with the stresses of exams and daily life.

Sessions have also been offered to Staff and S6 on an optional basis and these have been very well received by those who attended them.



Seniors learning considering 'their weather'



Sarah Gear with the Pastoral Support Team



# LIBRARY

It's been great to see so many pupils in the library this term for one of our activities or for a welcoming and relaxing place to read, study, research or chat quietly with friends. Our community library hours also increased in February and at last our library has felt more like a place for pupils and people again.

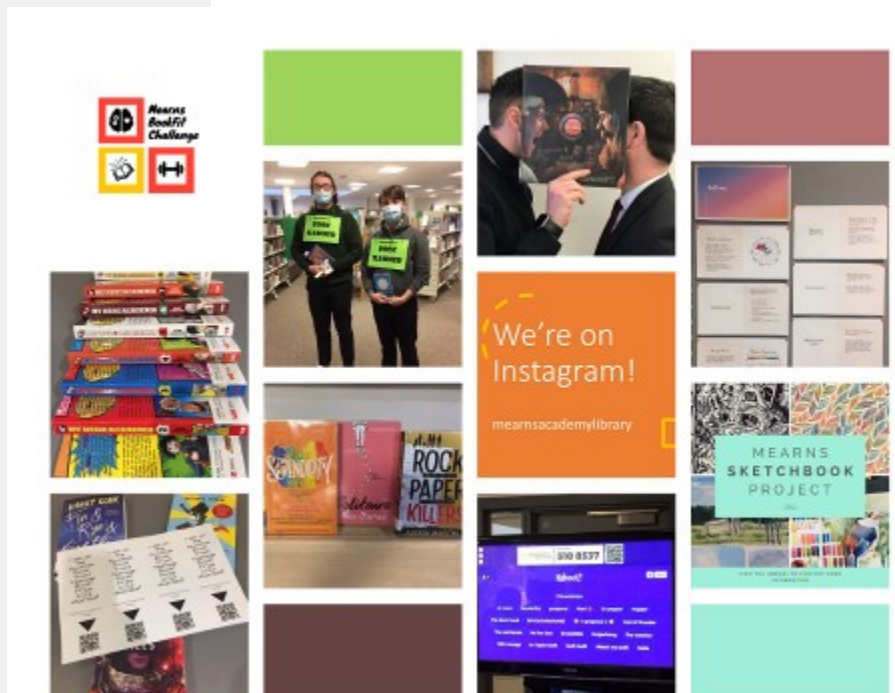
We tried a few new things to start 2022 for the Academy: our first Mearns BookFit Challenge, our first lunchtime Book Craft Club (origami using pages from withdrawn books), and I enjoyed our first small but perfectly formed Scottish Teenage Book Prize reading group. This World Book Day S1 pupils were surprised by our first ever Book Slams with a pair of S6 world-class book slammers and the whole school was invited to guess which staff were behind the BookFaces. We love pupil contribution in the library and happening right now is our first Mearns Sketchbook Project arranged alongside our friends in Art. We've recently had two great displays researched and created by pupils, "Autism" and "Transgender Rights". We had more pupil involvement in updating our incredibly popular Manga collection with dozens of recommended titles due to arrive any day and our busy Friday lunch-time activity, Let's Get Quiz-ical, has had three pupil quiz-masters so far with more expected next term. Very soon we'll be launching "Mindful Mearns", a collection of health and wellbeing books on topics chosen by pupil survey and a collection of sensory objects for using in the library like fidgets, tangles, and ooze tubes. This project was funded through We Decide Participatory Budgeting. Thank you to all pupils and to peer mentors for your help in directing this project.

I really enjoyed National Storytelling Week visits with S1 and S2 pupils in January – I hope pupils did, too. Ask an S1 pupil to tell you what really happened to Cinderella's step-sisters at her wedding following our Grimm fairy tales chats and S2 pupils might know a little about the 1973 Getty kidnapping after we explored podcasts as a way to tell stories. It's also been super to have more English class visits for book swap and an influx of new fiction has refreshed our young adult collection especially stories with murder & mind games, books to read after David Walliams or Harry Potter, books featuring LGBTQ+ characters and stories featuring characters with neurodiversity. The "Books to Make You Ugly Cry" display was also popular. New computers for pupils that arrived earlier this month have made a huge difference to pupil productivity in the library when typing up work or researching online.

Live meet-the-author workshops have returned. A number of senior phase pupils spent a day working on their poetry with Jon Plunkett in a Scottish Book Trust funded event arranged by English Faculty. Cat Hepburn is due to visit to workshop narrative poetry with all S1 and S2 pupils in May and this Easter break Tom Foster, graphic artist with Judge Dredd and 2000AD, is visiting for a Tuesday afternoon session with young people.

The community library will be open throughout the holidays with our normal service hours: Monday 2pm-6pm, Wednesday 10am-3pm, Thursday 2pm-6pm and Saturday 10am-12pm. Click and Collect can also still be booked online. Mearns Academy pupils are automatically enrolled in the library and new community members are always welcome. The library can be a great place for pupils to study without distraction over the break. Watch out for information about the Summer Reading Challenge to come soon, too.

We love making the library a busy and interesting place to be for everyone and welcome ideas from pupils and from the community. Follow our Instagram account [mearnsacademylibrary](#) to keep up-to-date with what's new for the Academy community.



# RME AWARD QUALIFICATION

As part of their SQA RME Award Qualification, S3 have produced posters in teams that highlight important areas for Equality and Human Rights. These were displayed in the theatre and the rest of the school voted on their favourite one.

The Rosette Winners were as follows:

- Best Artwork - Jamie Duncan on Disabilities
- Best Explanation of Human Rights - Kayliegh Lindsay on the UNCRC
- Best Information - Georgia Griffiths, Alisha Simpson on Disabilities
- In a Class of its Own - Anna Monachello on Shinto
- Best Teamwork - Brooke Brady, Parisa Hossainpour on North Korea
- Pupil Vote - Callum Barnet, Tom Cooper, Dawson Horsfall on Generous Footballers
- Bronze - Ellie, Middleton, Violet Craig, Iona Sanderson on Buddhism
- Silver - Hannah Batty, Kacey Alexander on Indigenous Peoples
- Gold - Emma Stephen, Heather Gill on LGBTQ+ Dancers

Ms Dakars, our Librarian also had a variety of books on show all about Equalities and a quiz for pupils to try. The winner of the Book Token was Lewis Greens in S5.

Well done everyone for an interesting day





# EXPRESSIVE ARTS

## String Group

The String Group meets on Monday lunchtimes to play music in four-part harmony. We have Violins divided into 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> parts, Violas adding to the harmony, and one Cello to provide our bass line. We have pupils from S1 to S6 and are lucky to have several members of staff who enjoy coming along to play with us.



## Ukuele Group

The Ukulele Group continue to meet on a Friday lunchtime. It is open to staff and pupils and all levels of ability are welcome. This term we have been enjoying playing some songs from the charts, but recently have been learning 'We Don't Talk About Bruno' from Disney's Encanto. You can hear a recording on our Music Department facebook page!

## 'The Band'

There is a new band on the scene, and they meet every Wednesday lunchtime with the help of senior pupils Harry Coleman, Ryan Keith and Charlie Baird. Currently made up of S1 – S3 pupils they are currently working hard on the Oasis classic 'Stand By Me'. This is coming together nicely, and we hope to be ready to perform this at the bridge next term.

*"Good music comes out of people playing together, knowing what they want to do and going for it."*  
Keith Richards



# EXPRESSIVE ARTS

## Drumming Group

We meet every Tuesday lunchtime and have been enjoying learning about different drumming styles and techniques including Drum kit, Pipe band drumming and Samba. We are hoping to perform on the Samba Drums as part of the Laurencekirk Community Jubilee Celebrations on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June.



# PEER MENTORS

We have had a successful first year of Peer Mentoring at Mearns Academy. Our mentor team consists of S5 & S6 pupils who have been successfully supporting the wellbeing of our younger pupils throughout the year. The mentor team offer both face-to-face and online sessions within the school.

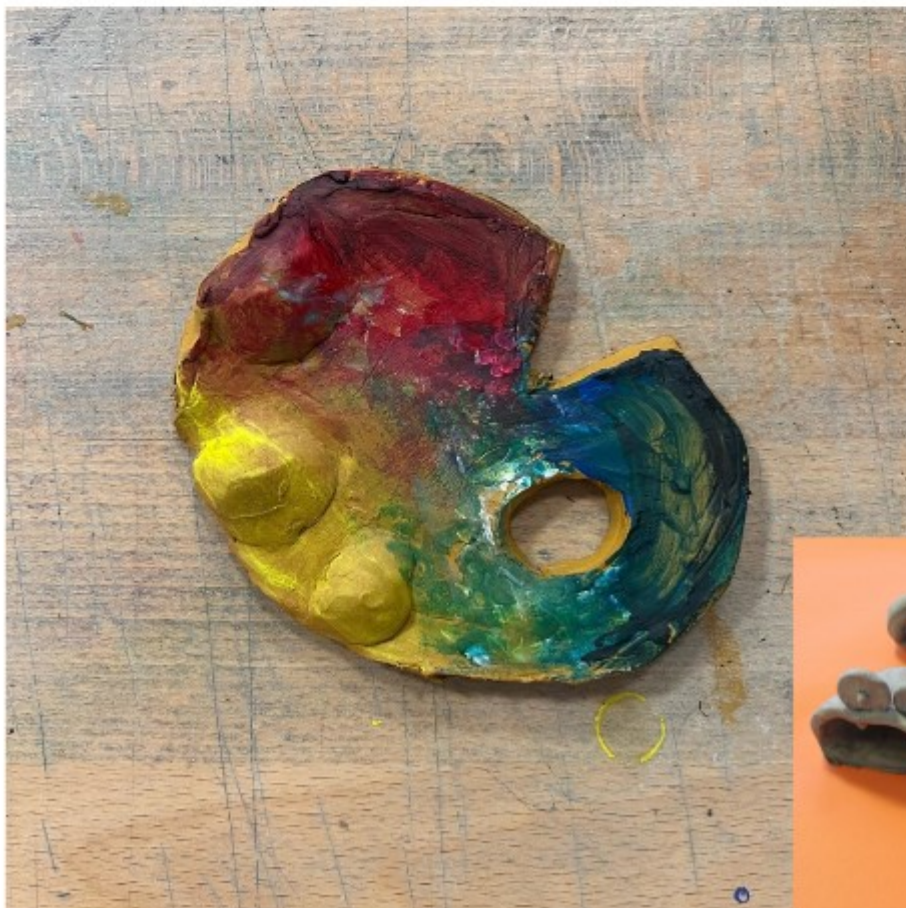
Peer mentoring creates positive outcomes and helps to build social capital amongst young people. Our mentors are good role models and excellent listeners offering support, counsel, friendship, constructive feedback, and reinforcement to our younger pupils.





# ***S1 ART AND DESIGN***

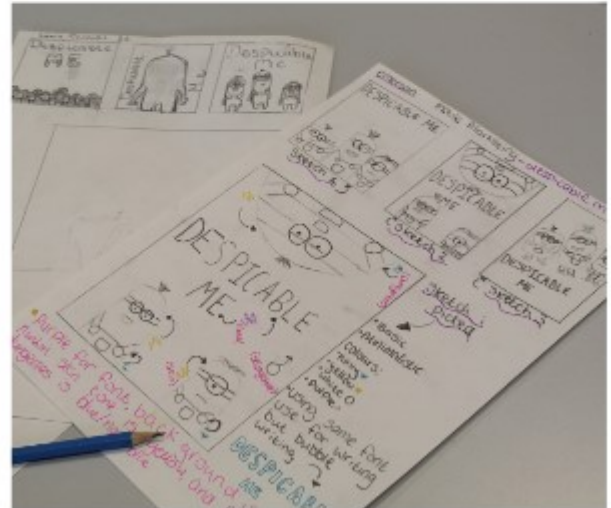
Pupils have been learning about Van Gogh and Turner! Pupils have also creating their own clay paint palette and monster pots.





# S2 ART AND DESIGN

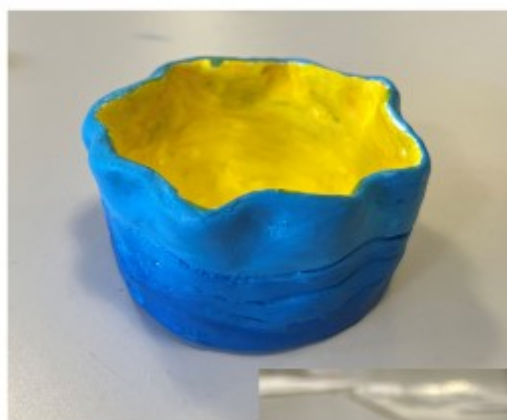
Pupils have been working on their landscape units. Pupils have also been creating Art Inspired Design and experimenting with repeat pattern.





# ***S3 ART AND DESIGN***

Pupils have been busy with creating and designing clay pinch pots! Pupils have also learned how to polyprint and have been exploring movie marketing.



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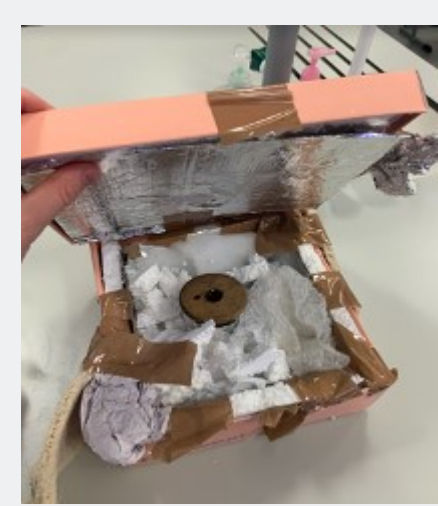
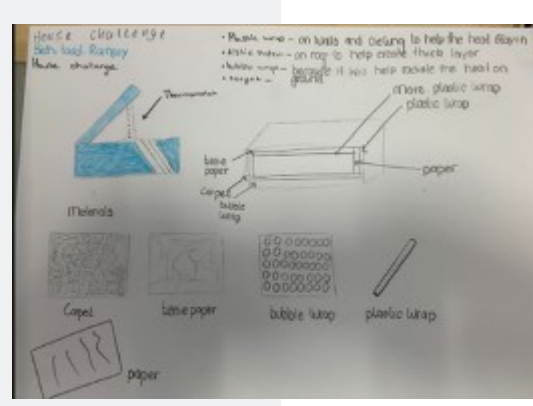
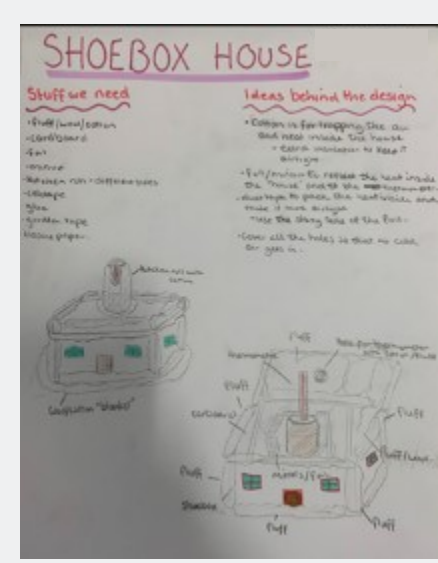
## Science Skills Learn About Heat-Proofing

During Science Skills this year our classes have been working on improving their investigation skills – forming aims, planning experiments, manipulating data and forming conclusions.

This term one of our activities was to plan and build a model house which provided the optimal insulation to retain heat within the building.

Pupils worked together to consider what materials would be the best at trapping insulating air and reflecting heat. The outcome was to create a poster summarising and justifying their design before moving onto the build stage.

Below are some examples of the excellent work the





# HOME ECONOMICS

It has been another busy term in the Home Economics Department:

S1 pupils have been learning the difference between boiling and simmering (pasta salad), the rubbing-in method (scones) and how to make an all-in-one sponge (queen cakes). They have also started to learn about the Eatwell Guide and how we can use this to make healthy food choices.

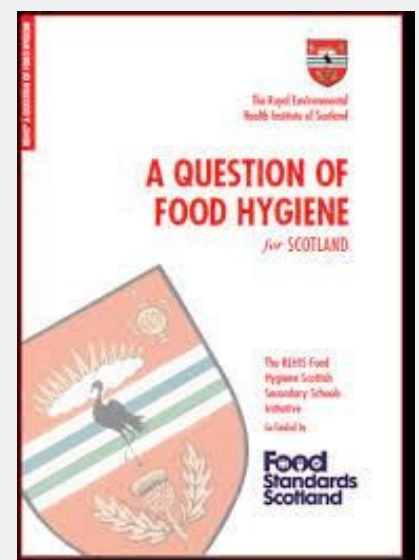


S2 have been learning about a variety of dietary diseases and how we can prevent them by following a healthy diet and lifestyle. They have also learned how to make biscuits using the creaming method (oat cookies), how to make a quick soup (lentil) and how to make their own burgers (spiced lamb), the meat for which was donated through a scheme being run by Quality Meat Scotland.



S3 classes learned how to make pasta from scratch and went on to develop a new pasta product and they also learned how to make a risotto using the absorption method as well as making leek and potato soup, Valentine's jam tarts, chocolate gateaux and chicken stir-fry. S3 pupils have just started working towards their Elementary Food Hygiene external qualification.

N4/5 Practical cookery classes have been busy preparing for and taking part in practical assessments. Hopefully the variety of dishes they have made has been enjoyed at home.



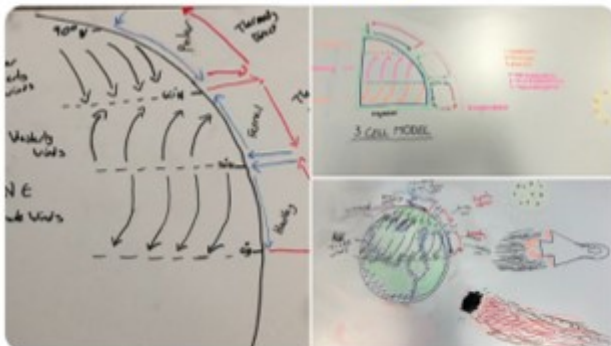
# SOCIAL SUBJECTS - GEOGRAPHY

Biggest Geography News was that the Higher and Advanced Higher pupils got out of school for some Rivers Fieldwork-first time in 2 years-and between all the storms! It was great to be learning outdoors again- all smiles and warm drinks!

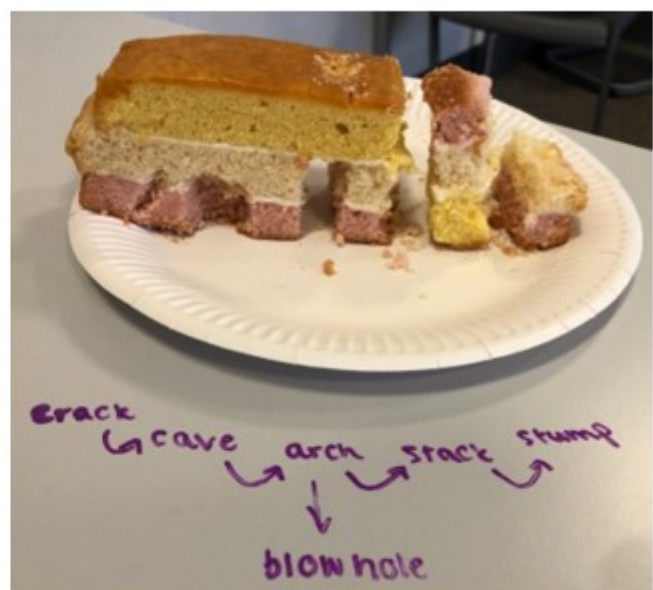


Mearns Geography  
@GeogMearns

Higher Revision- Atmosphere 🌤️ 📌 on desks!!!



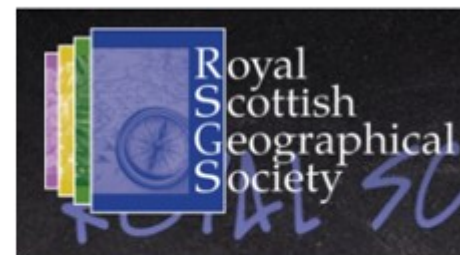
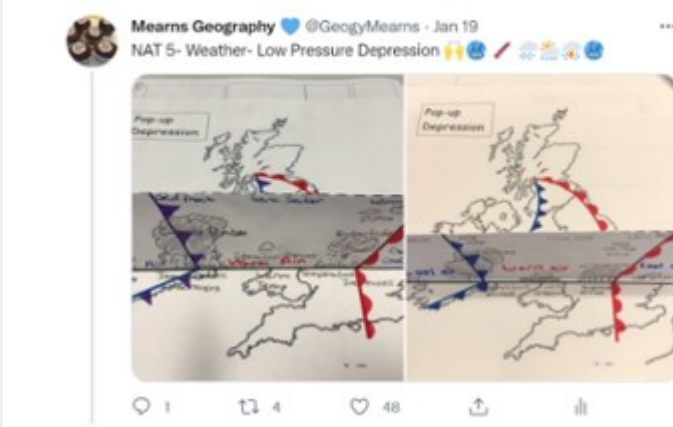
Mearns Geography @GeogMearns · Mar 11  
S3 End of topic fun- Stop Disasters game. #gamebasedlearning  
@MearnsAcademy



Higher class working on coastal Geography with cake



# SOCIAL SUBJECTS

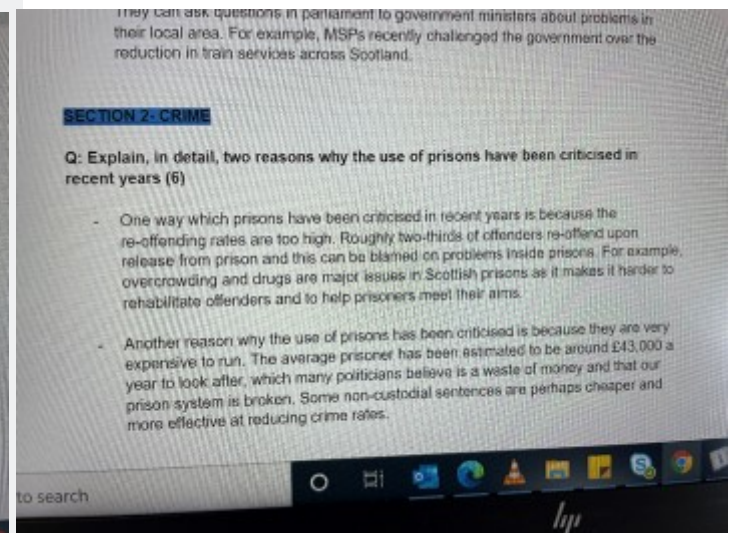
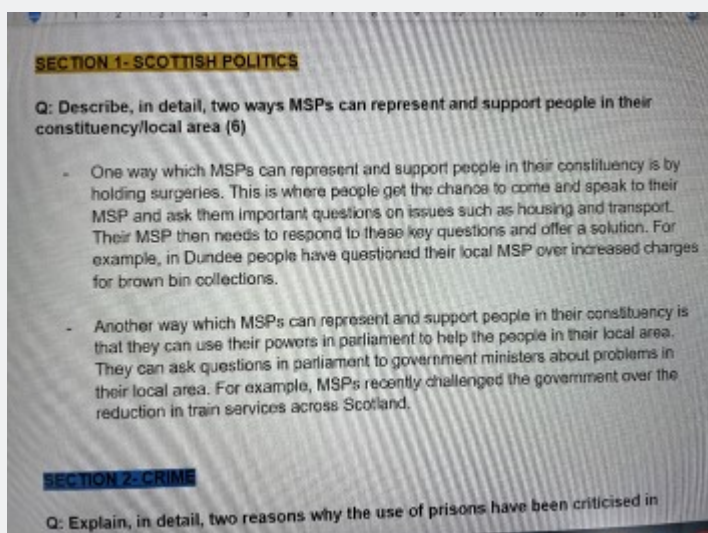


## CHALKTALKS

Revision resources - National 5 and Higher Videos for Geography with Scottish Education focus. Search for Chalk talks Geography and find the relevant N5/Higher revision resources. Geographers rock!!

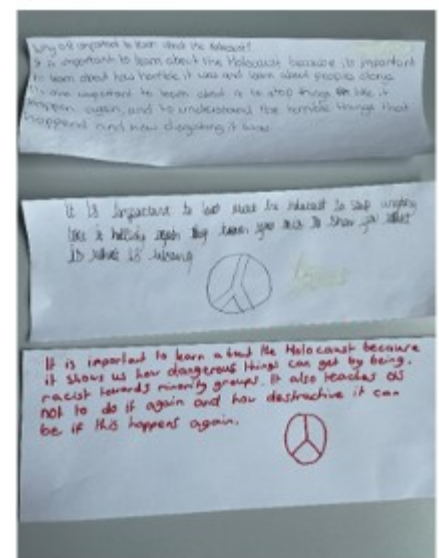
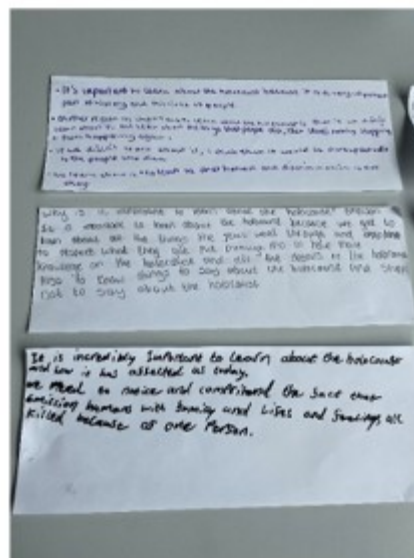
## MODERN STUDIES

National 5 and Higher Modern Studies pupils have been revising key sections of the course. Below are some examples of revision work produced.

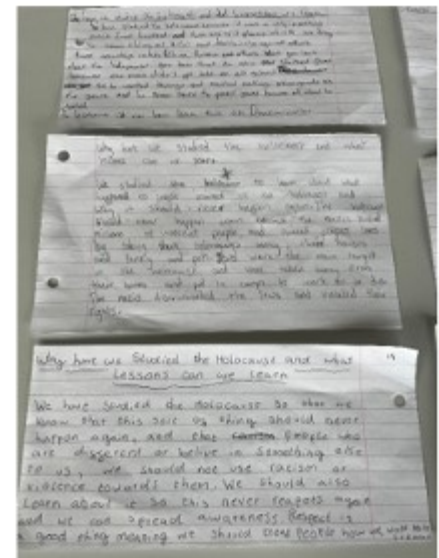
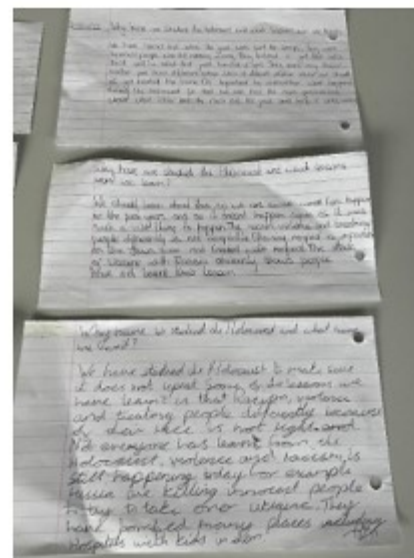


# HISTORY

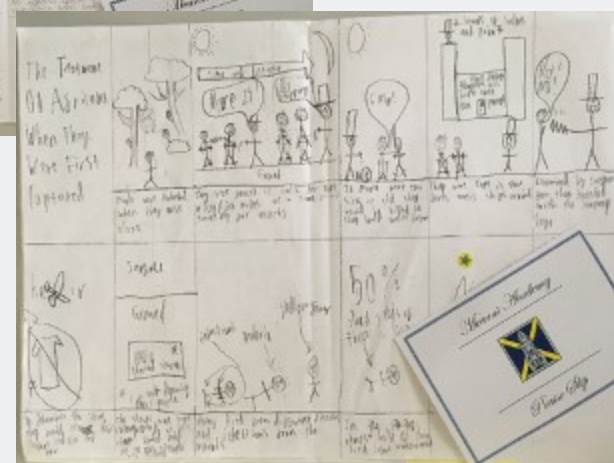
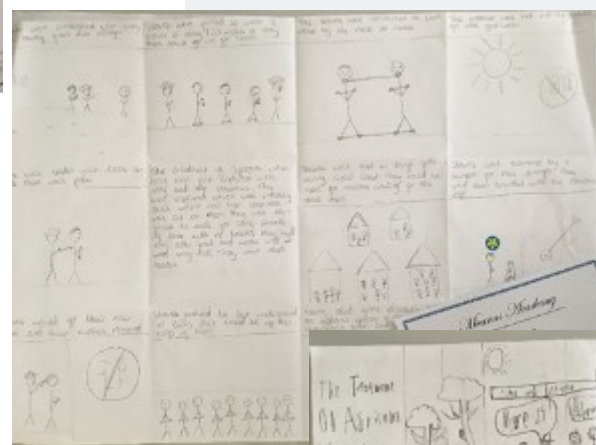
S2 History pupils have been learning about the Holocaust. They were asked to write a paragraph describing why it is important to remember the Holocaust. These are some examples of the work produced by learners:



S3 History pupils have been learning about the slave trade. They produced posters about the treatment of Africans when they were first captured.



They produced posters about the treatment of Africans when they were first captured.





# SOCIAL SUBJECTS IN THE NEWS

During tutor time pupils were made aware of the situation in Ukraine and were given top tips on how to deal with up-setting news in the media... (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/13865002>). Pupils were also encouraged to participate in the 'piece for piece' fundraising.



Those interested in finding out more were able to collect handouts on the build up to the Ukraine/Russia conflict, these are available from the Social Subjects department. It was great to see the whole school pull together on this current world issue and show how a community can help one another.

### THE RUSSIAN UKRAINIAN CONFLICT – AT A GLANCE

Russia has begun a large-scale military attack on Ukraine, its southern neighbour, on the orders of Russian President Vladimir Putin. There are reports of attacks on Ukrainian military infrastructure across the country, and Russian convoys entering from all directions. This sheet will give a brief overview as to the origins of the conflict and how invasion began.

#### THE THREE KEY STRANDS

##### CONFLICT CHRONOLOGY

- MARCH 2021** – Russian troops begin amassing across the Ukrainian border.
- DECEMBER 2021** – An estimated 100,000 troops are concentrated across the Ukrainian border.
- JANUARY 2022**
  - Russia, NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) and the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) hold talks.
  - The US and Russia meet in Geneva to de-escalate tensions – differences remain unresolved.
  - NATO puts troops on standby.
- FEBRUARY 2022**
  - Ukraine and Russia conduct military drills.
  - Putin order Russian forces to Ukraine rebel regions.
  - Western powers call for more sanctions on Russia.
  - Russia launches full scale invasion of the Ukraine.

##### WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

**BOOK: Prisoners of Geography – Tim Marshall:** Chapter 1 of the book focuses on Russia and its geopolitical situation. It explores where the North European Plain opens a path from western European armies directly into Russia. This has contributed to Russians' desire to control a buffer zone of countries between it and the rest of the world.

**PODCAST: RUSSIA:** The Geography: Tim Marshall looks at how the world's geography dictated politics, history and the future of its countries. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02tym1d>

##### GEOGRAPHY

- Ukraine has borders with Russia to the east and northeast.
- The capital city of Ukraine is Kyiv (pronounced KEEV) by Ukrainians'. The Russians call it Kiev (pronounced Key-ev).
- In 2014 Russia annexed the Crimea. The region was of particular interest to Russia since it depends on the Black Sea for access to the Mediterranean. The Port of Sevastopol, is one of the few ice-free deepwater ports available to Russia.
- The Ukraine is an important route for Russian gas. The continent gets nearly 40% of its natural gas and 25% of its oil from Russia.

##### HISTORY

- A huge amount of this current crisis is rooted in the legacy of the Cold War (1945-1991) which was a period of mistrust and competition between the USA (the West) and the Soviet Union (the East).
- Ukraine, which was part of the Soviet Union won independence as the USSR broke up in 1991.
- Russia has always considered Ukraine to be within its 'sphere of influence' and is extremely hostile to allow the Ukraine to have closer ties with the EU/NATO.

##### MODERN STUDIES

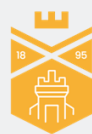
- From a Russian perspective the politics of this situation is about what the country DOES NOT want. Essentially Russia does not want the Ukraine to join the US led NATO.
- At the current moment relations between President Biden and Putin have deteriorated.
- Whilst Russia has decided to engage in invasion countries such as the USA, UK, Britain and France have decided to enforce tough economic sanctions and provide weaponry.

## HOUSE POINTS



Thornton House

1428



Johnston House

1005



Drumtochty House

1079



Conveth House

1015

## MEARNS FITNESS PARTNERSHIP

This term Mearns Academy and Mearns Fitness have strengthened their partnership. The team at Mearns Fitness have welcomed three groups of our pupils to take part in a 6 week block experiencing different styles of fitness from CrossFit to Taekwondo and even self-defence sessions. The pupils have had an excellent time taking part in these sessions and have really embraced the variety of sessions and tasks that Mark, Ngaire and Jodie have challenged them with. On top of getting to experience the physical sessions, our pupils have learned about the discipline and control that these sports require and have shown personal growth.

Well done to all the pupils who took part so fantastically in this block and thank you to the team at Mearns Fitness. We look forward to continuing to grow our partnership and see more of our pupils learning from you through school sessions and through the Mearns Academy pupil membership that you offer.

## PRINCESS TRUST

In February this term, Sarah Young 2D2 donated her hair to the Princess Trust and at the same time, she fundraised for the Archie Foundation at the Children's hospital in Aberdeen. Thanks to her hair donation to the Princess Trust and the generosity of friends, family and the pupils and staff of Mearns Academy, Sarah and her family have achieved their goal and beyond.

Last week they visited Cassie at the ARCHIE Foundation at the Childrens Hospital in Aberdeen, and were able to donate a PS5 Console with an additional Controller and 6 games. Sarah and her brothers and sister agreed to also donate 2 games from their collection to ensure the children could get started straight away with the new console.



The other 4 games were very kindly donated by Argos in Portlethen, 2 from their Charity Budget in store, and 2 from the staff themselves!

The family have been blown away by the generosity of everyone and Sarah will always remember how much of an impact she can make with a small sacrifice and enthusiasm.

Well done Sarah, we are all very proud of you!

