

## **Community Services**

### **Spokesperson's Report – Education and Lifelong Learning**

#### **1. Toward Primary School Win Solar Panels**

I am proud to announce that Toward Primary School has become one of the first schools in Scotland to be rewarded with state-of-the-art solar panels by Scottish Gas for its exemplary green behaviour as part of the nationwide schools programme, Generation Green.

Generation Green provides schools with specially designed learning materials and rewards them for taking simple energy saving steps. Schools are given a 'Leaf Goal' and earn 'Green Leaves' for undertaking specific environmental related tasks.

Of the almost 9000 schools now taking part in Generation Green, solar panels are reserved for the very keenest and greenest schools, such as Toward Primary. Solar panels are awarded to the first 10 primary and the first 10 secondary schools that reach their Leaf Goal.

Toward Primary pupils had done tremendously well to win solar panel for their school and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the children for their hard work and also the Head Teacher, Cathleen Russell, and the community for enabling a small school like Toward to compete on a national basis. Congratulations to all involved.

#### **2. Visit to Tiree High School**

On 1<sup>st</sup> December I travelled to Tiree with Robert Grant, Head of Secondary Education, and Malcolm MacFadyen, Head of Community Regeneration, to view the improvement works that are taking place at the school through the Capital Programme. A number of upgrades will be taking place at the school, particularly within the Science department.

I enjoyed the opportunity to visit Tiree High and was impressed with the schools ability to deliver a range of subjects at certificate level.

#### **3. Dunoon Grammar School (DGS) TV**

On Friday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2009 Dunoon Grammar pupils launched their own groundbreaking TV station. DGS TV was set up by the pupils in a purpose built studio within the school, using virtual studio technology.

The flagship show for the station will be a weekly magazine-style show featuring news, views, music acts and competitions, which will be broadcast within the school using plasma televisions and multimedia projectors.

At the launch pupils showed their support to Homecoming 2009 by recording their own version of the current television advert, using Dougie MacLean's 'Caledonia' song and images of Dunoon.

I was very impressed by the organisation of the event by the pupils and also the showcase of talents that were on display at the launch. It was a wonderful day for the pupils at DGS and is an initiative which will benefit children for years to come.

#### **4. Oban High School – Cashless Catering**

Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2009 saw the official launch of Cashless Catering at Oban High School. I, along with all the Oban, Lorn and the Isles Councillors were invited to attend this event.

Many other schools across Argyll and Bute already have this system in operation and now Oban High School can experience the benefits of Cashless Catering. Instead of handing over cash each pupil will have a personal card which identifies his/her Cashless Catering account. Pupils who carry Young Scot Cards will be able to use these and those pupils who opt out of Young Scot will be issued with a Cashless Catering only card.

The cards can be credited with money in a number of ways, for example, by using the "top up" machines which are conveniently located within the school or by parents issuing the school with a cheque.

Schools which operate a Cashless Catering System benefit greatly over those using the traditional cash payment. Benefits include;

- Reduces the need for children to carry cash on a regular basis, which results in a reduction of theft and bullying
- Pupils entitled to free school meals use the card in the same manner as everyone else which eradicates the stigma that some pupils experience
- Service will speed up in the canteen, giving pupils more time to enjoy their lunch
- Restrictions can be placed on card to prevent your child from buying particular food types

#### **5. Argyll and Bute Schools Concert Band**

The Argyll and Bute Schools Concert Band played in Rothesay Joint Campus on 16<sup>th</sup> February and in Dunoon Grammar School on 17<sup>th</sup> February. I was invited to deliver the vote of thanks at the event in Rothesay and was very impressed by the array of performances that were on display throughout the evening. I took the opportunity to thank all the pupils from across the different secondary schools and also Kathryn

Wilkie, Education QIO, who contributed greatly to the organisation of this event, which is logistically challenging.

## **6. Examination Results 2008**

The examinations results for Argyll and Bute have been published for a while now but I have not had the opportunity to personally congratulate the schools in their continued level of high performance in national qualifications. The authority is above or equal to the national and “family” (Angus, Dumfries and Galloway, Highland, Scottish Borders and South Ayrshire) averages in all but the Advance Higher category, where there was a decrease over the record figure of 2007.

Argyll and Bute schools continue to demonstrate strong performances across most of the national qualification measures and I commend all education staff for their hard work and dedication in securing continuous improvement within the authority.

**Councillor Isobel Strong**  
**Education and Lifelong Learning Spokesperson**  
**March 2009**