

John Swinney names skiff built by pupils at Castlebrae Community High School

The pupil-built skiff was recently completed at Castlebrae Community High School, after six years or so of hard work. Today the boat was named officially by the Deputy First Minister who opened a bottle of Prosecco on the beach as an offering to Neptune – and named the skiff Castlebrae.

It has been a labour of love, and those responsible for building her believe she is a thing of beauty. The names of some of those responsible are carved along the inside of the craft to ensure that whatever happens their craftsmanship will be recognised.



Mr Swinney saying that this was a better use of Prosecco than had been the case in Downing Street during lockdown



The naming of the Castlebrae



Deputy First Minister John Swinney after the naming ceremony
Mr Swinney was invited to the formal launch at Portobello Beach following a visit to the school when he first became aware of the project.

Mr Swinney said he visited the school in his capacity as Education Secretary quite a few years ago, and first saw the boat. He also witnessed “some of the fabulous work that was going on to ensure that every young person is able to fulfil their potential”. He helped with some sanding of the boat during his visit. He said: “The project is an illustration of the fabulous day I had on my visit to Castlebrae, showing that the school goes to extraordinary lengths to make sure that the talent and capability and potential of ever single one person at the school is maximised. It is great to be here for this joyful occasion.”

Norma Prentice, headteacher at Castlebrae admitted this has been a long project. She said to the well-wishers gathered in the Espy on Portobello Prom: “It was about six years ago that Vince the depute head visited a garage in Niddrie which the

school were about to be charged for, and told me he would “just bring the boat in”. I envisaged something that looked more like a boat – but it was more like an Airfix model in flimsy parts. He then reminded me of Stuart who over four years helped to form the boat. The skiff has made a lasting impression on everyone who has visited the school. It is a great example of what we do well at Castlebrae, working in collaboration with our parents and pupils and our partners. It really has been a mammoth project.”

Edinburgh East MP Tommy Sheppard said that he was delighted to see the skiff at this stage. He said: It shows what can happen when you get creativity and imagination coming together and focussing on a project – a project which is not even on the curriculum.

“This is part of the renaissance of Castlebrae. Let us remember that when I was first elected as MP in 2015 to be honest there was still a question mark over whether that school would even exist at all. The roll had been falling and there was talk of it closing for good. Because of the efforts of people in the school and others in local authority and The Scottish Government it has gone from strength to strength. In a few weeks time we will unveil the new Castlebrae school which will be an example of what education can make to the wider community.”



Donna Mason with Deputy First Minister John Swinney
Donna Mason Chair of the parents association said she wanted everyone to remember the time when the school was under threat. "Castlebrae takes in children with big problems. They don't sail through but Castlebrae got those kids where they are today. It annoys me that people often bad mouth Castlebrae."

Now the school plans to sell the skiff and use the funds to buy a van which the pupils will convert into a camper van.







Connor



Steven



Riley



Loudon

What a terrific project [@CastlebraeCHS](#) have run for the last six years. This morning the Deputy First Minister [@JohnSwinney](#) did the honours naming the skiff built by pupils including the four young men in our video who are so proud of the boat – but not very keen to try her out pic.twitter.com/xPL7qfpv7e

– Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [February 10, 2022](#)