

Primary School Bridge in Dumfries and Galloway

It was in the autumn of 2015, when I became vice president of the Scottish Bridge Union (SBU) Southern District that I became aware of an initiative in Highland region to teach Mini Bridge to primary school pupils. Quite simply, mini bridge allows children and other newcomers to the game to get started and to play and enjoy bridge without having to be taught the intricacies and nuances of the bridge bidding systems.

Following discussions and planning with the SBU and Loreburn Bridge Club, I approached Mr Mark Valentine, Head Teacher at St Andrews Primary School in Dumfries, with my idea to start teaching mini bridge to P7 and P6 pupils in the autumn term of 2016. With the whole hearted support of Mr Valentine and the P7 and P6 teachers, we embarked on Mini Bridge lessons with 16 P7 pupils in September 2016. The enthusiasm of the majority of the pupils was greatly helped by a team of 19 experienced bridge tutors who coached and stimulated our budding bridge players. In November 2016, we started 32 pupils in P6 whilst continuing with the P7 children. The logistics of teaching almost 50 pupils would not have worked had it not been for the enthusiastic support of the class teachers Mrs Nichola McIntyre and Mrs Annette Barnett and one of the parents, Mrs Suzanne Grant, who has

helped from the outset. Also, I could not have done this without the invaluable support of the bridge tutors.

Children do not look for problems and they took to mini bridge as a duck takes to water.

Significant progress was being made with a lunch time club of 20 pupils and an after school club of 24 pupils, many of whom overlapped both clubs. I therefore decided to enter 3 teams (12 children) into the SBU national mini bridge competition. There were 3 centres Glasgow, Dundee and Elgin. 53 teams from around Scotland were entered and we went to Glasgow heat where there were 18 teams competing. The 3 centres all played identical hands. Some of the children in Glasgow attended very prestigious private schools in Ayr, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

The St Andrews children did exceptionally well for their first bridge competition. Our top team was 7th and the other two teams 11th equal. Given that the majority of the players in our 3 teams were from P6 and had only started playing in November, I could not have asked for more. Their manners and bridge etiquette were commented upon by the organisers in Glasgow and reflected upon the school and their parents.

I will be continuing at St Andrews next session, but would really like to start mini bridge in other local schools.

Unfortunately the logistics of this make it nigh on impossible. If other bridge players in the region are interested and would

like to become involved, or have a training in teaching mini bridge please contact me at

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