

**Neilston and Madras Learning Campus**

Neilston Primary School & Madras Family Centre

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Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> April 2020

Dear Parent / Carer,

**Welcome Back!**

Firstly, I would like to welcome you all back to the Summer term of this school year. I hope that everyone of you managed to take some time over the holidays to take a step back, relax and recharge your batteries.

I know we are all experiencing challenging and unprecedented times, be that at home or in our own work places. Not to mention, suddenly many of you in the last few weeks, have been supporting your child's learning at home and doing a great job with it, may I add.

This is going to be a lengthy letter, I do apologise but I wanted to take some time to write personally to you and make sure that everyone is safe, well and supported as best they can be.

**Google Classroom**

The Leadership team all have access to the Google classrooms so can see activities class teachers are posting and the responses that pupils are sending in – it is great to see that some of our young people are taking the opportunity to lead their learning and be responsible for it.

I know that some children have not yet logged into their Google Classroom. I appreciate that this may be due to illness or other circumstance. If it is because of lack of digital device, then please let me know as we can arrange something for you.

The Google Classroom allows for children to still be connected with their peers and their teacher, for this reason it is vital that children are encouraged to engage with it.

I am sure many of you with children in P4 – P7 will have seen that I posted in each classroom this week, a post reminding them about how to maintain our school values and being respectful with the comments they are making in their posts within the Google Classroom. That said, I am also mindful that the children are missing their friends and want to be able to connect with them. I know that for some, this will be done through their own personal devices but for others this is not possible. We are in the process of setting up a digital playground (another google classroom). In here, children will be able to chat to their class mates informally, staff will be assigned to this in order to ensure it remains a safe and secure on-line



space for them to be able to speak to their friends. These will be live as of Monday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2020 from 12 – 3 each school day a 'Digital playground' idea. More details on this will be shared in your child's Google Classroom. In the meantime, Can I ask that you please remind your child that comments made in Google Classroom about each other or their work or indeed staff should be kind and respectful.

Out with the Google Classroom – the Senior Leadership Team have been posting links on our twitter feed of different things you can do with your child, we know that keeping them busy and entertained during this time will be a challenge. We are also mindful that a lot of their screen time is being used for school work so we have tweeted different types of things to do and links to different sites for you to utilise that won't require them to be stuck in front of a screen all day – use these at your discretion. If you are not already following us on twitter you can do so @neilston\_madras.

It would be lovely for the staff to see and hear from children about what they have been doing. This can be posted in the Google classroom if it is class related or on twitter (with parental consent) for us to see.

### **Primary 1 Induction for August 2020**

I know that many of our families with children about to start school will be anxious about what induction is going to look like. Those who have gone through the induction process in the last few years will know that we pride ourselves on the fantastic induction programme for our new P1 children and their families. This year, as I am sure you will appreciate, induction is going to look very different. Shortly I will begin work putting together a virtual tour of the campus and hopefully be able to introduce our P1 families to some useful faces. Hopefully, as we reach the end of the school session this can be sent out and children will be able to 'meet' their new teacher's albeit, virtually. I will also (once all places have been confirmed and allocated) either, record the session I would normally do in the assembly hall or arrange a video conference call with our P1 parents (We shall see how brave I am feeling with technology nearer the time). I will of course write to our P1 parents with details either way.

### **Primary 7 - class of 2020**

As we get ready to welcome our new P1 children, we also must get ready to wave farewell to our wonderful P7's. Normally, they would have many things in this summer term to look forward to; Lockerbie, Transition visits to Eastwood, awards ceremony and their leavers dance at this point in time it is looking unlikely that this will take place at the normal time. I do hope however, that we will be able to organise something, when schools are back up and running, that we can invite you all to that will be just as special and let all of your teachers give you the send off that you deserve. I will keep you posted with the details as we get more information from the Scottish Government about re opening and what this celebration may look like. Mrs Goudie and Mrs McCabe are busy working on some ideas for this. It is important for children and families to know that we have conducted conference calls with Eastwood staff and shared information about academic progress and friendship groupings etc. we will continue to share information with them in the usual way in preparation for the transition. We will be in touch with our P7 children and their families as we begin to formalise plans for this.

### **Class Structures – August 2020**

As we approach the end of this school year, many of you and indeed the children, will be wondering about what class and which teacher will be with each stage for the new school year in August. I have almost finalised this but there are a couple of outstanding vacancies that require to be filled along with the allocation of probationer teachers that is still outstanding. When these are confirmed I will let you know. It is probable that this will not be before the end of May.

As has been the norm, over the last few years, we would normally tweak and adjust class groupings to allow children to have as wide and rich experience of working with peers as possible. As a result of the

current situation we will not be able to undertake the normal exercises that we do with teachers, when making these decisions. As a result class structures will not change this year (as far as possible). What does this mean? It means that if your child is in P1a this year they will move into P2a next session and so on (as far as possible). There may be a small number of changes required e.g. there will be two P7 classes next year and currently they are split across a P5/6 and a P6 – there will be obvious changes needed in this instance to construct the two classes. Once I have undertaken this exercise I will write to you to confirm exactly which class your child will be in next session.

## **Supporting Our School**

I honestly can't thank you enough for the cards, e-mails, tweets and treats etc of support, understanding and encouragement that you have sent in to school over the past few weeks. The staff and I really appreciate them. These are really difficult and challenging times for us all and its great to know that we all have the support of each other. Such a wonderful school community!

I was blown away by the school community's (and beyond) response to the donations to be able to support the manufacturing of PPE using the school 3D printer. The first batch of visors was delivered on Monday afternoon to the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital (Southern General). They were hugely grateful!

I know that the situation that we all find ourselves in is far from ideal for any of us; pupil, parent and teacher alike. I also know that if we stick together, keep smiling and remain positive and supportive of each other we will all get through this and be an even stronger school community as a result.

## **Hub School**

The Hub school is quite possibly the strangest school I have ever worked in! A mix of children and staff that are (in our case) in a familiar place but there isn't much familiar about it in terms of routine. That said the children in attendance have ALL been fantastic and I have had the pleasure of meeting some wonderful young people from Uplawmoor and St Thomas' primaries along the way. I would like to thank all three schools children, families and staff in supporting me as I coordinate the Neilston / Uplawmoor Hub school.

The Hub school operates for the children of those families where both parents / carers are categorised as a Key worker (as per government guidelines). This is carefully managed to ensure that the staffing reflects the number of children we are supporting. For key workers who work a shift pattern it is important to notify the hub school the days you will require childcare each week. This will allow us to staff the Hub school appropriately. It is expected that when not on shift, that children should be at home with their families and exercising the social distancing and lockdown guidance as directed by Scottish Government.

You can notify me of Childcare patterns weekly by contacting me directly at:

[headteacher1@neilston.e-renfrew.sch.uk](mailto:headteacher1@neilston.e-renfrew.sch.uk)

## **Staffing Update**

We have been recruiting during this time for vacancies (the wonders of video conferencing).

I am pleased to inform you that we appointed a new Senior Child Development Officer in the Family Centre – Mrs Debbie Wilson. Debbie replaces Mrs Tracy O'Neill.

In the school, we will welcome, in the next few weeks, Mrs Dorothy Johnston, Business support Assistant who will fill the vacancy left by Mrs Rachel Murray's departure earlier in the term.

I am also delighted to inform you that Mrs Gillian Hannah, Pupil Support Assistant, has now been made permanent after successful interview and begins her new permanent post with immediate effect.

We have a couple of remaining vacancies that will be Advertised/interviewed for in the next few weeks. This will allow me to make sure we are fully staffed for when school returns. I will let you know the outcome of these remaining positions in my next communication.

Can I personally thank each one of you for your support and understanding during this time. It has been extremely difficult and challenging, coordinating this 'new' hub school / distance learning school. Your support, encouragement and patience has been very much appreciated. Of course I haven't done it alone – I have a wonderful team of staff at Neilston and Madras who continue to amaze us with their commitment and resilience who, as well as trying to support our young people are also supporting themselves and their own families.

Lastly, please remember that we are here to support as best we can. You can contact us via the school website, on the school app or via e-mail. For help, support or guidance etc. Nobody should feel isolated or alone during this lockdown. We are ALL in this together.

Take care and stay safe. My warmest wishes to you and your families.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerard Curley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mr Gerard Curley  
**Head Teacher**  
*Neilston & Madras Learning Campus*