



Parent Information – June 2020

School and home life have certainly been a very different experience over the last few months and although we have not been able to enjoy our summer term events and celebrations in the usual way, we have managed to make our own, slightly adapted versions to try and keep things as normal as possible. For example, Primary 6 and 7 were able to participate in and enjoy a virtual residential week. The whole school got involved in the virtual Olympics and pupils are in training for sports day too! Even some of our teachers got involved in an egg and spoon race and netball match! We have had a virtual assembly, videos galore, both at home and in school, and all of these have helped us stay connected at this very uncertain time. Thank you for everything you are doing at home!

Return to School in August 2020 We are looking forward to welcoming our pupils back to school in August although I don't yet have confirmation of an exact start day back. Teachers return on Tuesday 11th August which is an in-service day but we don't know yet if pupils return on the Wednesday or Thursday. Many of you may be feeling anxious about the return to school and I want to reassure you that we are doing everything we can to make sure that our school is a safe place for all of our children and staff. Preparations for August are well underway with all classrooms and spaces reconfigured to ensure safe social distancing for everyone. I am very grateful to the whole school team who have worked so hard over the last few weeks to move furniture, clear out classrooms and make everything safe. It has been a real joint effort involving teachers, support staff and janitors but I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Principal Teachers, Miss Shearer and Mrs Duncan particularly, as they have been the driving forces in overseeing this operation. They made sure we all had a clear plan and worked tirelessly to keep us all on task! There have been a lot of hot baths needed recently!

Pupil Groups Pupils will be returning on a part time basis; Monday/Tuesday or Thursday/Friday. Information about your child's group and group teacher will be issued soon. These groups will be called 'bubbles' and children will stay in their 'bubble' while they are in school. This means that intervals, lunch times and use of outdoor space will be timetabled so that we can safely follow social distancing guidance. The school day has been extended slightly. This is to ensure that all pupils receive the recommended 11 hours of teaching time and also to allow a staggered start and finish to the day. This will ensure children are not all arriving and leaving at the same time. As you can imagine, this involves a lot of very careful planning. We will provide information about that as soon as it is available.

We have organised the 'bubbles' to accommodate as many factors as possible, including parent working patterns, siblings and friendship groups. We have also had to factor in room capacity which means that some groups will be moving to a different classroom or using a different space altogether. For example, we will be using our ICT room to accommodate a bubble at the beginning and end of the week. Each bubble consists of approximately 10-15 children, depending on the room capacity. Hopefully these arrangements are temporary but as we don't know how long this will be for, we have organised every learning space so that all learning will be effectively delivered and supported in school.

You will be notified of your child's 'bubble' and class teachers very soon. Please be aware that it will not be possible to make changes to the groups as there are too many factors to take into account. The groups have been planned as carefully as possible to accommodate as many factors as possible and one small change has a knock-on effect across all groups. As I said, this is hopefully not going to last any longer than absolutely necessary and groups will be coming together to form classes later in the year.

Transition Usually at this time of year, children have the opportunity to spend a bit of time with their new teacher and classmates. As children will be unable to meet their new teacher in person, teachers will make an introduction video message which we will post on Seesaw. We are also working on making a short video to show you some of the changes pupils can expect to see in school.

We couldn't possibly let our P7s leave us without marking the occasion in some way and so we have been able to organise a very small scale leavers' presentation for them. We have invited small groups of children to a number of very small presentations on Monday 22nd and Tuesday 23rd June. Sadly parents and friends will not be able to

attend but we will take lots of photographs and videos to share. This situation has been most challenging for our P7s who haven't been able to say a proper goodbye and get the send-off they should have enjoyed. We will do our very best to make this as special as possible for them in the circumstances.

Our new P1s are also having the opportunity to visit the school. Over a few afternoons they are visiting in small groups and will spend a bit of time in our Urban Jungle before a quick visit to their new classroom. Again, parents will not be able to attend due to social distancing advice.

I am very grateful to the teachers and leadership team for organising this. We know how important transition is in managing change for our young people and hope this will help in a small way. I would like to say a special thanks to our Depute Heads, Miss Kirk and Miss McElhone who have had the challenging job of managing the Nursery/Primary and Primary/Secondary transitions. This is always a very complex process but has been made incredibly difficult this year with the current situation. They have spent countless hours contacting nursery and secondary schools to ensure that our pupils and their families have been supported in transition.

Staff News I am delighted to inform you that Miss Eve Gordon, Miss Janet Galloway, Miss Callie Dorward and Mrs Kirsty Christie are remaining at Merrylee and have been appointed as permanent members of the staff team.

Sadly Miss Vallejo Ceron, who is currently in Spain on a career break, is unable to return to Merrylee in August as planned because of the pandemic situation. It is with a heavy heart that she has decided to extend her career break for a further year as it is unlikely she would have been able to travel to return in time for August. Miss Conejo and Miss Brown have also decided to extend their career breaks for a further year. This is understandable in the current circumstances.

We also say goodbye in June to Mrs Joanne Boyle, Miss Alanna Cassidy and Miss Mary Alice Shaw who will be moving to new schools in August. Mrs Karen Kilpatrick and Mrs Rachael Simpson, support for learning workers, are also heading to pastures new as they embark on a post graduate course in education at university. We thank all of them for their contributions to Merrylee and wish them success and happiness in their new ventures.

Miss Debra Reid will also be leaving us, temporarily, in June. I am sure many of you, like us, will be saddened by this news. Miss Reid has been at Merrylee for many years and is highly regarded by our families and community. However, it is not forever! Miss Reid has been offered a fabulous opportunity to work abroad for a year and will be taking a career break. Although we are very sad that Miss Reid is leaving us, albeit temporarily, this means that we have a position at Merrylee which I am pleased to inform you will be taken up by Miss Rachel Lynagh-Dunbar. Miss Lynagh-Dunbar has been working at Merrylee on a temporary basis for the last two years and I am delighted to have her in a full time role at Merrylee. We are very sad to say bon voyage to Miss Reid but wish her a very happy and exciting future in her new adventures and hope to see her back at Merrylee before too long.

School Holidays School closes for the summer holidays on **Wednesday 24th June at 1pm**. I'm afraid I don't yet have any information about summer childcare provision. As this has been an online process out with school, I assume you will be notified this week. There will be lots of school information to share with you about arrangements for August which we are working on to have ready before we finish up for the holidays. Please continue to check Seesaw regularly for announcements.

And finally...

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every person in the Merrylee school community for your outstanding support throughout this time. There are still many challenges ahead and I would not have been able to get through this without the support of, not only my incredible staff team, but all of you too. We know school is going to look a bit different in August but together we can make it work. The sense of community has always been a strength of Merrylee and will help us get through this in one piece! Stay safe and take care, Colette Haddock.