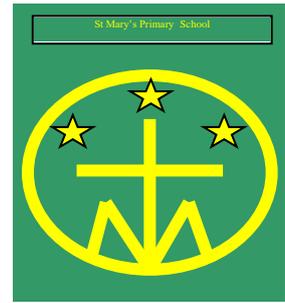


St Mary's Primary School
Term 1 Newsletter

August 2020



Dear Parents and Carers

On behalf of all the staff in the school, I would like to welcome you back for a new year and look forward to building up a great partnership with you for the benefit of your children and our whole school community.

The children have settled down very quickly into their new classes and are ready for all the hard work and new challenges this year will bring. They have also been very understanding of our new routines and restrictions to help minimise the impact of Covid-19 on our school community.

I would like to welcome all our Primary One children and parents to St. Mary's Primary. We are all delighted with how well the children have adapted to school life and would like to thank everyone who helped with our nursery/primary transition programme.

Staffing

I would like to welcome Mr Reynolds (P4), Mrs McLevy (P6/5) and Miss Stephens (additional recovery support) to the school. We hope that they will be very happy in St. Mary's.

Uniform

Although we have agreed that, if you wish, the children can wear the relaxed uniform for the first few weeks, we hope to get back to wearing the full school uniform as soon as possible.

In the meantime, I would like to remind you that the relaxed uniform is still the school polo shirt and usual school sweatshirt, jumper or cardigan (no hoodies or different coloured jumpers, please!).

The children are not able to change for PE, therefore they should wear the relaxed uniform on PE days (the PE days were sent out a few days ago).

Please remember to make sure your child wears a jacket to school as they will be outdoors for PE and whenever the weather allows.

Names on Clothing

Please remember to put your child's name on **all** items of clothing, bags, packed lunches, pencil cases etc. This makes it much easier to return lost items to their rightful owners.

We have very little storage space for lost property and need to clear it out on a regular basis. We often have new jackets, jumpers and even shoes (!!) that are never claimed and end up in the Ragbag bin, which is such a waste. If your child's name is on it, we won't have to do that.

In order to protect your child and others, Inverclyde Council requires that pupils remove all jewellery prior to taking part in physical education. Where this is not possible e.g. due to recent ear-piercing, this may limit the physical education activities available for your child to take part in for up to 6 weeks. For this reason, and to ensure that your child can safely partake in all school activities, we would ask that serious consideration is given to the timing and type of piercings you may allow your child to have.

Parent Partnership Group

On behalf of the pupils, I would like to thank all members of this group for their hard work and generosity over the past year. Some of the ways in which we have benefited from their services include:

- gifts for each pupil receiving First Holy Communion and Confirmation
- a shoe bag for each of our new entrants
- a gift for each child moving on to secondary school
- crisps, chocolate and juice for our Christmas parties

As you can imagine, shopping for so many children costs a lot of money! Without your help, their fundraising would not be possible – thank you for your support with this.

The next Parent Partnership meeting will take place on Monday 5th October through Zoom - please come along to show your support.

Moving back to St Mary's in Patrick Street

It now seems very promising that we will be moving back to our lovely, refurbished school in October.

The timescale is as follows (although this is still subject to change):

Friday 9th October – schools close for holiday (last day in Westmorland Road)

Monday 12th – Friday 16th October – October holidays

Monday 19th October - In-Service Day for staff (pupils do not attend)

Tuesday 20th – Thursday 22nd October - Exceptional Closure Days (pupils do not attend)

Friday 23rd October – pupils return to school (first day in Patrick Street).

Unfortunately, we will not be able to arrange visits to the school for parents or our former Primary 7 pupils, but will aim to do this as soon as it is considered safe.

Parents' Evening

This would normally take place in November, however, it is unlikely that the current restrictions will be lifted by then. Instead, we are planning to send an interim report for each child before the October break, with the option of a follow-up phone call if any parent still needs this.

Christmas Concerts

Unfortunately, this also means that Christmas concerts will not be possible this year either. Fingers crossed that everything gets back to normal for next year.

Face masks

As you know, children from the age of 5 will now be expected to wear face coverings on the school bus. If this would cause you hardship or you have any particular concerns about your child wearing a mask, please just get in touch.

P6 Residential Trip

The latest advice we had from Education Headquarters is that we can continue to plan for trips in 2021, on the understanding that they may have to be postponed in the event of further outbreaks of Covid-19.

Learning Logs

Now that we are back into a new term, we will soon be sending home the Learning Logs again. Although this is only a snapshot of the week, it will give you greater insight into an aspect of learning that has been important to your child and how well he/she feels this has progressed.

The Learning Logs will normally go home on a Monday and should be returned to school the next day. This is particularly important just now as they need to be quarantined for 72 hours before being used again.

We would be grateful if you would take time to discuss with your child what he/she has written. Please also sign the Learning Log each week and, if possible, write your own positive comment underneath or on the next page. This will give your child regular encouragement and help him/her to understand that we are all working together for the same purpose.

When reviewing the Learning Logs, the class teacher will not correct the spelling (unless to make it easier to read). For these activities, it is important that the children feel they can write what they want to say, rather than being restricted to only writing words they know how to spell.

Your child's Literacy, Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing targets for September – December will also be going into the learning log so that you and your child can talk regularly about them.

Home learning

I would like to thank all of you for the support you gave the children with home learning over the lockdown. I know that this was very challenging, as many of you were also managing work commitments.

We will begin homework from the week beginning 14th September, although reading/sounds in the infant classes will go home sooner.

Pope Francis Faith Award

We are now into our eighth year of completing the Pope Francis Faith Award for P6 and P7, and our P6 pupils are due to start the programme soon.

The Pope Francis Faith Award is a two year programme, starting in P6 and then carrying through to P7. As part of their ongoing Religious Education over the next two years, the children will begin to:

- reflect on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit about which they are learning in school
- commit to certain Faith actions at home, in school and (if they are Catholic) in their parish (when it is safe to do so)
- note their actions and reflections in a Faith Journal.

During their P7 year, when they have gathered sufficient evidence, this will be assessed and the Scottish Catholic Education Service (SCES) will award them with a certificate and badge to mark their achievement.

This programme is very much part of the Religious Education programme in P6 and P7 and an excellent preparation for Confirmation. We would recommend that all children at these stages take part, however, if you would like further information or do not wish your child to be involved, please contact the school.

Mobile Phones

As a parent, I fully understand that mobile phones are a very important means of keeping in contact with children and provide peace of mind for both parents and children.

If your child needs to bring one for safety reasons whilst travelling to and from school, the phone should be switched off prior to entering the playground in the morning or going on the school bus and should not be turned on again until he/she has left the school grounds or school bus at the end of the day. Phones should also remain switched off whilst participating in all off-site school activities e.g. swimming, sports events, field trips etc.

As you will appreciate, mobile phones have a number of functions and their potential for taking photographs, accessing the internet, inappropriate texting etc could present a risk for children in school.

If a child needs to get a message to his/her parent during the day, he/she should speak to a member of staff. In the same way, if a parent needs to pass on a message to a child, this should be done through the school office.

As per Inverclyde policy, where a school pupil is found by a member of staff to be using a mobile phone or associated technology without permission, the phone or device will be confiscated from the pupil and returned only to the parent/carer.

Toys

We know the children love to play with their own toys at Golden Time and playtime but, due to current regulations, these are not allowed in school.

Sacraments

First Holy Communions which should have taken place in May will now be celebrated over three Saturdays (19th and 26th September and 3rd October).

The children will celebrate First Confession beforehand. More information about how this will be celebrated will be sent out very soon.

Confirmation for our former P7 children has still to be arranged.

School Fund

I would like to thank everyone who has already contributed to our school funds. This is a suggested, voluntary donation of 50p, which is paid through Parentpay (we are not allowed to accept cash just now). If you would like to make a one-off payment for the year (suggested, voluntary payment of £20, or whatever you can afford), that is also very much appreciated.

Our school fund helps to provide additional treats for the children and also allows us to top up playground games (inside and outside), library books and other resources for the children that can't be bought through our school budget.

MISSIO

As you may know, MISSIO is the preferred charity by the Scottish Bishops for primary schools. Last year, we collected £136 through your voluntary contributions – well done and thank you very much for your generosity!

Again, any donations you would like to make should be done through Parentpay.

MISSIO's motto is "Children Helping Children". It would be lovely if the children did some odd jobs about the house to earn pocket money to support MISSIO, rather than just asking parents for it.

Playtime Snacks

I am delighted to see that many children are continuing to bring in healthy snacks – keep up the good work!

Since we have a number of children in school with a peanut allergy, may I also ask your continued vigilance in ensuring that no snacks and packed lunches contain nuts (including peanut butter sandwiches!).

Medicines

If you would like us to administer medication to your child during the day, a consent form must be signed. If you contact the school, we will send one out – please note, we can't administer medicines until we have this.

Please do not allow your child to keep medicines in his/her bag, as this could potentially harm other pupils. The only exception to this is an inhaler, as current medical guidelines recommend that older children should begin to take responsibility for their own inhalers.

At present, our procedures for inhalers are as follows:

- In P1-5, the teacher will keep an inhaler in class and the spare one will be kept in the medical cupboard (ground floor).
- In P6 and P7, the child or teacher will keep one (depending on the child) and the spare one will be kept in the medical cupboard.

If you do not already have **two** inhalers for school, could you please arrange to hand in another one.

If you think your child would need access to his/her inhaler when travelling to and from school, could you please make sure he/she has it every day.

If you would like to discuss this further with me, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Parentpay

We are now into our fourth year of Parentpay and I hope that you are finding it useful for lunches, school funds etc.

I have been asked by Inverclyde Council to remind everyone to keep a close check that accounts always remains in credit. Regular letters are sent out to parents to inform them that their accounts are in debt, and I know that this can sometimes cause upset. You can also set up an email alert on Parentpay which lets you know when your account has gone overdrawn.

Attendance/Timekeeping

As you will appreciate, good attendance and timekeeping are extremely important for your child's progress in school and we would ask for your continued support in making sure that your child is at school regularly and on time each morning (I have already noticed some children arriving late for school).

If your child is late, please bring him/her to the school office entrance, where he/she can be marked present at school. As per Inverclyde policy, I am required

to write to you when your child has been late for school on a number of occasions.

Please also remember to contact the school office between 8.30 and 9.30 am if, for any reason, your child is not going to be at school. If we do not hear from you before 9.30am, we will make every attempt to contact you by text, phone or email, as we need to check that you are aware that your child has not turned up to school.

In the event that we still cannot contact you, we will send a letter or, if there are other agencies involved, we may need to get in touch with them for advice. It is vital that we always have up to date emergency contact numbers. By working together, we will ensure that our children remain safe. When your child returns to school, could you now please email in confirmation of the reason for the absence, rather than send in a letter. Also, it would be very helpful if letters for appointments could now be scanned or a photo taken and emailed into the school to limit the handling of paper in the school office.

Online Games

Parents often contact me about inappropriate verbal or written comments made by children on social media and when playing online games. As well as causing upset at home, this can impact negatively on children's relationships within the class and out in the playground.

As adults, we are well aware of the impact of a thoughtless comment made on social media. Once it has been posted, it can spread like wildfire and cause great offence. Indeed, I'm sure that some of you, as adults, have also been victims of this and realise how upsetting this can be! Please be very vigilant about what your child is saying/doing online and take time to talk about the responsible use of technology.

Annual Data Check/Consent form for Trips

As you know, these were recently issued. If you have not already done so, please complete and return all forms as soon as possible. We are unable to take children out on any school trips until we have this information.

Newsletter

Since this is the first newsletter of the year, we are sending home a paper copy as well as emailing it to you. If you do not receive the email, would you please let the school office know, as you will be missing out on lots of other emails as well.

And finally..... If you would like to speak to me about any matter, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Guthrie
Headteacher