

Dear Families

Please take some time to read this December Newsletter, which gives you a feel for what is happening in and around Abernethy Primary School. It is a bit of a bumper edition – gold star if you can make it through to the end.....but I hope you find it useful.

### **Christmas Plans**

This year the P1-7 children will be performing a show for you called 'Lights, Camel, Action'. It will feature many of our P7 learners in lead roles with each P1-7 class singing and dancing on stage. We hope you can come. We have 2 shows, both on the same date: 10am or 2pm on Monday 18 December. Each family can have 2 tickets, please see the flyer sent home today. We may have spare tickets which will be on a first come/first served basis, later, depending on audience sizes.

Your child will likely be sent home a note in the next few days or so, giving you some time to prepare an outfit. This should be easy to put together, we hope, from around the house, and not something to go out and buy. Please just let your child's teacher know if there's any items we can help you with.

Nursery children will have a special Christmas breakfast and singalong carol concert for their families on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> December at 9am. We can accommodate 3 guests per child. This will include snacks. Nursery staff will keep in touch about arrangements.

Party dates are as follows:

Nursery – Monday 18 Dec (in the Nursery....come dressed up in your party clothes if you like!)

P6 and P7 – Tuesday 19 Dec (bring a change of clothes for the party in the afternoon)

P3/4 and P4/5 – Wednesday 20 Dec (as above, bring your party clothes to change into)

P1 and P2 – Thursday 21 Dec (children can come to school wearing party clothes if they like, or bring a change for the afternoon if preferable)

We are grateful to the Parent Council who are providing snacks and prizes for the fun.

### **Progress with School Improvement**

On our School Improvement Plan this year, we are focusing on early writing skills and maths skills. Our ECP Team are currently putting together a new resource called 'Maths Sacks' which will incorporate many different maths and number skill activities that children can take home and enjoy. Keep a look out for these very soon!

In school we are progressing with the Stephen Graham training which supports learners in their skills of instructional writing. Your children will be able to tell you about the use of time openers such as First, then, after that, etc. These words help children to follow a pattern in their writing so takes away some of the difficult in knowing 'how to start' a piece of instruction writing.

We recognise in Abernethy School that in our Early Years classes, children need lots and lots of verbal skill practice – speaking sentences before they can 'have a go' a writing them. You can help your younger child by encouraging them to use full sentences in their chat – for example ask: how do you play a game of snakes and ladders? Tell me about your day at school. Time openers are really useful. Look out for some support ideas on Seesaw.

Older writers are requiring to uplevel their vocabulary which is subject to any context they're writing about. A good general knowledge will help here. Advice would be to continue to read widely at home and expand vocabulary and sentence speaking where possible. Research shows that most language/vocab is learned indirectly – so children who engage in lots of chat with adults, who read regularly or watch TV that has high quality dialogue – are more likely to have a better vocabulary themselves. It is believed that vocabulary is the best single indicator of intellectual ability and an accurate predictor of success at school.

### **Staffing update**

Last week we said goodbye to Mrs Dowling, who had been working with us since January as our RCCT teacher. RCCT stands for Reduced Class Contact Time, and Mrs Dowling was releasing all the teachers for their allocated times out of class. This is a job that requires flexibility and great communication and Mrs Dowling worked hard to build relationships with all learners and staff. We have really enjoyed her commitment to the Abernethy team and wish her well in her next school.

Miss Farquharson returns from her maternity leave this week and will be with us Mondays through to Thursdays. She too will be teaching in each classroom and will continue to teach subjects in agreement with class teachers.

This week we plan to complete interviews for the Senior ECP position in our Nursery. We will keep you informed of progress in filling this position. We are pleased that Miss Wann will continue in our Nursery full time to cover Miss Brown when she starts her maternity leave, in mid January.

### **Pupil Leadership**

We've enjoyed lots of different activities in school lately including:

An I-Bike breakfast, where Max, James, Neave and Ellie helped Ally (new I-Bike coordinator) serve breakfast to the kids who came to school by bike last week. We are encouraging more active travel to school this week too as we begin the Leg It To Lapland activity – trying to notch up as many miles in walk/bike/scoot as we can to win the PKC competition. Ask your child about it.

We had a Ball Breakfast, led by our Sports Ambassadors, Callan, Dylan, Samuel and Struan on Thursday last week. The boys invited children to bring a ball that they pumped up....while the owners enjoyed a healthy breakfast. Thanks to Branstons, who supported this event so we could buy some nice food to share.

A big thank you to all the Nethy family and friends who came along to support the Nethy House Bingo. Our Captains (Euan, Bella and Amy) did a great job calling out the numbers and all the P7 pupils who helped in the background really did get the chance to develop their leadership skills in different ways. Once again, we were blown away by the family support, in providing treats for cake time and of course a raffle that brought in much appreciated funds. Since then, some of the P7 House Captains have suggested we share our good fortune with those less blessed – and half of the money raised on ParentPay for tickets will go towards Radio Tay's charity Cash for Kids. A wonderful idea from the boys, James and Euan.

The Pupil Council (Vanessa, Winnie, Emma, Destinee, Harry, Eleanor, Keir, Annabelle, Skye, Olivia, Milli and Mirren) have been working alongside Mrs Hodgkinson as we work towards being a Rights Respecting School. You will have had a letter about that previously – and we'll keep you posted on our developments. Interestingly, we collected the children's views on 12 questions about their Rights and their wellbeing. We have displayed these in our foyer and our intention is to try and improve the 'scores'. It may be helpful for parents to know that one of the questions we asked children was "Do you like the way you are?" Responses were surprising with almost 40% of children saying 'sometimes' or 'not sure'. This clearly gives school and parents some work to do. We'll share our developments on this as we progress.

P6 buddies have been busy alongside our Nursery children at the hard work of playing this term. We are building good relationships and getting to know each other. Social skills start early and getting to know each other is really helpful especially when we start to think about transition into P1.

Our Nursery children showed off their leadership skills by hosting an Intergeneration St Andrews Day ceilidh for some of our older friends, from St Bryde's Church. The children see them when they visit the Church each month so it was lovely to have some friends here for some Scottish songs, dances and of course shortbread and oatcakes n' cheese. Thank you to our friends who came to have fun with us.

### **Values, Relationships and Behaviour**

Lately, teachers have been taking part in training webinars run by the Educational Psychologists about the importance of relationships. We discussed that often behaviour difficulties can stem from a difference in values between young people and adults. Sometimes a gap in children's understanding about the importance of values (whether these are your values as parents or the school's) can cause tension. This reaffirms for us the importance of talking more about values, rights and a 'common good'.

We are about to take another look at school values with children which may (or may not) result in a change to our vision, values and aims. Importantly, here at Abernethy school we as a staff recognise a current need to support children to better understand kindness and empathy as values and behaviours that will make relationships between peers (and indeed with adults) better. While this features as an integral part of school health and wellbeing curriculum, we'll be having a whole school approach towards this in January. We are striving towards all pupils at Abernethy School being respectful and having a good attitude towards each other and learning.

I'm afraid we only got 7 responses to our Vision, Values, Aims questionnaire from parents/carers. This may be because it was 'missed' on the 2 occasions we sent it out by email. We will send it out once more, this time on paper, in an attempt to include parent views as we look at this together. Those 7 folk who answered need not do so again. Parental Engagement is an important thing and each parent is encouraged to take a look and have your say. You help shape school policy.

### **Active fun**

A message from the team at Perth Leisure Pool below for families to note:

*Grab your swimsuit and enjoy a splashing good time at Perth Leisure Pool with the family for only £10! Offer available Monday – Friday 16:00 – 20:00\*. Advance booking not needed – just come along!*

*\*Offer available at Perth Leisure Pool until 21st December 2023. Family swim consists of up to 2 adults and 3 Junior/Concessions. And don't forget – under 5s swim for free!*

*Please note, the Full Moon will be closed for its annual service from 4th – 8th December, reopening from 9th December.*

### **Severe Weather protocols**

Every year, the Council and individual schools review procedures for emergency closure. As the winter sets in, it's worth recapping procedures with families.

Almost all of our children walk to school, with a few getting into a car for their journey. Meanwhile, all of our teaching staff and nursery ECPs drive some distance to get into Abernethy. We are lucky to have support staff who live locally. Weather can cause difficulties when the weather is bad (flooding and snow/ice). All staff are encouraged to get to school when it is safe to do so. If staff cannot get to their own school they need to try and get to their nearest school. That means, while Abernethy staff might not get into the village, we may benefit from other PKC staff members who arrive at our school because they can't get to their own school. This means school can continue to be open, perhaps with different/unfamiliar staff members.

PKC may make a decision to close all Perth and Kinross schools. That decision would be made known to parents via Radio Tay, Perth and Kinross Council website and typically from communication by us – on our School website/Seesaw and/or Xpressions/email message directly to parents. Please make sure your contact details held by us are accurate.

### **Weather as it affects our children**

First day of snow for the children in school yesterday.....and oh dear! We know it's an essential part of growing up for kids to play in the snow. We encourage it. Pre 9am, when it was in better condition, we allowed children to throw snowballs on the grass. General rule: if you are on the grass, you need to accept you may be hit by a snowball. Anyone who doesn't want to be hit by a snowball should not go on the grass. All was good.

However, by morning break and lunch time the snow was not suitable for throwing or kicking. So the rule changed to no snowballs. Sadly, many older children struggled to accept this and it resulted in a lot of complaints from hurt children and - very disappointingly - some disrespect shown to staff who were trying to keep the peace. It is very difficult to please all the people all the time – but children do need to respect the rules and abide by them. Generally speaking, there is a small number of children requiring support, who cannot accept an adult's decision or the word 'no' without arguing back or being disrespectful. This is becoming a growing issue. It can have an impact on relationships between staff and children and between peers. Note the link here, to what I've mentioned previously in this newsletter about values. It could be an

interesting talk at home with children about how they feel relationships and behaviour is, at our school, and any useful ideas could be shared with the Pupil Council reps or a teacher.

It would also help us if parents remember that a change of socks/trousers is often needed in weather like this. We had a lot of wet children yesterday, with not enough spare school clothes to go around. Lots of children wearing trainers, too, which is a recipe for wet feet, complaints and chilblains. Ouch. Please plan ahead for the weather.

**Please note that nursery and school close on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> December at 12 noon. Children who are entitled to a free lunch, where families receive benefits, can order a bagged lunch to take away on that day. An email was sent out about this previously, but feel free to phone Mrs Beattie in our office to see if this applies to your child/ren.**

Many thanks

Fiona Whittet, HT