

19 March 2020

Dear Families

It is a very concerning time for us all. Routine, as we know it, has changed. That can be difficult for some young people (and indeed families). Yesterday in school, I talked to the children (who were present) about what may happen over the next few weeks/months. Things are still uncertain, and as a school staff we will of course be guided by Perth and Kinross Council's Education Department. However, we have also been encouraged to start planning for home learning. I hope this letter helps to clarify a few things. More information will no doubt come to school leaders every hour/day as things unfold, but I hope you find this letter useful for now.

### Communication

As of Monday 23 March, we imagine that school staff will be 'working' (probably from home) where possible. There will likely be no one at school to answer the phone, but you can contact us using our school email – [Balhousie@pkc.gov.uk](mailto:Balhousie@pkc.gov.uk). Again, I ask for your patience in using this, as I will be monitoring emails most days. But in the early stages of this terrible time, I cannot guarantee to reply to all communications quickly. It is our great wish that Balhousie children continue to work at home, with the guide of teachers but most importantly the support of you, the family.

### What will teachers be doing?

Teachers will likely be asked to work from home, and to prepare learning to share electronically with learners. The Education Department are hoping that we make the most of e-learning. This is ideal for those with computers/tablets. Phones may not be so successful.

### What might home learning look like?

Over the past few days, we've been making sure all children and parents access SEESAW. This will give us an opportunity to send some work ideas home to groups / whole class that are relevant to the children's needs and skills. Yesterday some children brought home a note with new HOME LEARNING CODE on it. We will also try to send this out to parents electronically so you don't lose it. I will email a letter to help you understand what to do with it.

Teachers plan to give a RANGE of activities home – that may include the following:

Maths practice, language skills, active learning in/around the home, reading, research, ideas for physical activity.

We are not exactly sure how it will 'pan out' but Teachers will most likely 'post' learning activities on Seesaw or through GLOW. Children will be asked, sometimes, to show their teacher evidence of their learning by taking photos or sending messages to the teacher on Seesaw.

### How will School support families?

Teachers should be accessible to parents through Seesaw – but we ask you to be patient and understand that it will take time to get into some sort of routine over the next few weeks. We ask that parents and children keep their posts to teachers within school hours. Your child's teacher will help families get used to the new systems. It may take time to respond to individual parents – please be patient.

Some work may require a jotter to record children's work, and some activities may be 'active' involving playing games and/or creating/making things. We will try to get a good mix for families.

There will always be learning that families can access themselves, at children's own pace. A list of on-line games can be found below.

We know that not all families will have extensive access to WIFI or computers...and it may be tricky to try and get it right for all families. We will do our best.

### How much time should children spend 'learning at home'?

We understand that not all parents/carers may have 'all day' to do 'learning' so we will be realistic in how much we ask children to complete at home. However, please encourage your child to do the tasks we set. I've always said, where parents support their children and learning, children will do better. And now, this is when it really counts.

A suggestion may be to have a 'set learning time' each school day and a 'set time' for relaxing/playing. Please help your child by restricting how much time they have on a 'device' so that thumbs don't drop off! We all know how much that kind of activity can have a negative effect on concentration and attention span.

We will try things out and over time it's over to you to manage how your child accesses the learning in such a different way. We do understand this is truly a difficult time for everyone.

Ultimately, everything is still up for consideration and we are working hard to make sure we get this right. Please bear with us.

Most importantly, I hope you all take care of your families and community friends, and hope you stay well. We chatted with older children on Wednesday about what this all means, and how things will change. And even us as adults don't really know yet... it's going to be a huge change for everyone.

The school office staff checked with as many parents as possible, yesterday, to check if you're all on the School App. This will be the cheapest and quickest way for me to communicate with families. Sending school texts only give you wording for 2 sentences...and it costs us a lot of money. School App is free! So – if you're not already on it, it's essential you get on it please! Please check with your Balhousie family friends.

### What you can do now...

The teachers have put together some CORE materials that you may find helpful in the coming weeks/months. Children who are at school today will bring these home with them. For those who are not present at school, we encourage parents to pop in and collect their child's folder. We will send you a message on the School App to say when these are ready. You are not obliged to do this...but we recommend it. This will likely include a blank jotter, photocopiable tasks for wee ones, number square, and some basic things to help with the learning. We trust that most families will have pencils and drawing materials.

We can also send longer letters by email to parents on ParentPay. Please ensure your email address is active and that we have it.

Fun Resources your child can access without teacher guidance can include...

<a href="http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk">www.oxfordowl.co.uk</a>	A selection of e-books if you sign up (free) to this site. These are the same books we use in school, so if you know your child's ORT reading level, you're in business!
<a href="http://www.educationcity.com">www.educationcity.com</a>	All children have a username and password – they can access lots of learning and games, featuring literacy, maths, French and more.

<a href="http://www.sumdog.com">www.sumdog.com</a>	All children from P2-7 have access to these maths and number online games.
<a href="http://www.coolmathsgames.com">www.coolmathsgames.com</a>	Fun maths games for all
<a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/primary">www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/primary</a>	Little clips for learning – you choose the area of interest
<a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround">www.bbc.co.uk/newsround</a>	Regular clips throughout the day, highlighting the news for children to understand – suitable for children from P2 upwards.
<a href="http://Timestables.me.uk">Timestables.me.uk</a>	For P2 upwards, practising the timestables with games
<a href="http://www.snappymaths.com">www.snappymaths.com</a>	Suitable for all age groups to practise maths skills
<a href="http://Topmarks.co.uk">Topmarks.co.uk</a>	The middle/older pupils really like these maths games online

I will try to communicate with parents as quickly as we can.

Many thanks

Fiona Whittet

Head Teacher