

Being the best I can be

PORTMOAK

Headteacher's Newsletter – August 2020

Dear Portmoak Families and Friends,

We have been delighted to welcome back our learners and I am pleased to report that it has, on the whole, been a smooth return to school. Despite a number of changes to the way we work in terms of arrivals and departures, classes being kept in bubbles, staggered breaks and lunches and lots of new hygiene measures to implement, it has been a joy to be back in school with children who seem to be as happy as we are to be back.

The plan was to spend the first few weeks settling back into school and reconnecting with one another, and we have done this with a health and wellbeing focus involving Mindfulness and Emotional Literacy. However, it quickly became apparent that the majority of our learners were very much ready to learn and keen to get going. We are unable to hold assemblies at this time and we are holding mini virtual assemblies (more about this later), with P6/7 leading the way with the first one last week. I was amazed to see how much learning had taken place already!

This month's newsletter contains a lot of information and guidance, so please take your time to digest all of the sections below.

As always, many thanks for your support at this time – the reason that things have gone so smoothly has a lot to do with our families adhering to the measures set out in previous emails and in the guidance sent out in June.

Best wishes, Paula Woods



Updates

Staffing Update

We welcomed Mrs Crawley, our new Pupil Support Teacher, this term and she is quickly getting to grips with the Portmoak way. She is with us on Tuesdays and will be working with individual children over the next few months, along with supporting staff.

Mrs Morrison continues to be our Area Support Teacher, and will be with us for a few days each term. She will primarily be in the P3/4 class to allow Mrs Cole time to support me with our school improvement priorities, but may also spend time in other classes.

Mrs Baird and Mr Ainsworth's roles have changed slightly this session. As a mitigation measure for reopening the school full-time to all pupils, we are minimising the number of classes that a teacher works with in any one day to two classes only. This means that Mr Ainsworth is no longer seeing every class, nor is Mrs Baird. As their posts enable our teachers to have their non class contact time, this has been particularly difficult to schedule! Therefore, please see the table below for our timetable:

Day	Class	Teacher	Subject
Tuesday	P3/4	Mr Ainsworth	PE
Tuesday	P5/6	Mr Ainsworth	PE
Wednesday	P2/3	Mrs Baird	Outdoor Learning/Maths
Wednesday	P1/2	Mrs Baird	Outdoor Learning/HWB
Friday	P1/2	Mr Ainsworth	PE
Friday	P2/3	Mrs Baird	Outdoor Learning/Maths
Friday	P3/4	Mrs Baird	HWB/Maths/Reading/Outdoor Learning
Friday	P6/7	Mr Ainsworth	PE

Covid-19 Update

As the situation with Covid-19 in Scotland is ever evolving, please find below some changes or additions to our original plans that have been implemented.

Pupils aged 5 and over are now required to wear face coverings on school transport, unless they are medically exempt. Please ensure your child has a small bag or pouch to place their face covering in when they get off the bus and spend some time ensuring that your child knows how to put it on and take it off safely. We will, of course, support children to do so when getting on the bus to go home, but it is helpful if children can be as independent as possible. If you require financial assistance to purchase some face coverings, please get in touch with the school office via phone or email.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank everybody for following the guidance regarding self-isolation and testing, and to reiterate this guidance for families who haven't yet had to consider it:

- If your child demonstrates **any** of the three main symptoms of Covid-19 (a high temperature, a new and persistent cough or a loss of taste/smell) then they, along with all members of their household, should self-isolate immediately until the person with symptoms has had a Covid-19 test with a negative result. Your child can then come back to school, as long as their symptoms have subsided (though any siblings who were self-isolating and aren't symptomatic can return to school immediately).
- If anyone in your household becomes symptomatic, your child(ren) should be collected from school and must self-isolate until the symptomatic person has had a test with a negative result.
- If your child develops a cold with a persistent cough, please follow the advice above regarding self-isolation. If your child develops a mild cold with no cough, they can come to school as long as they feel well enough to learn.
- Please email the school as soon as you are sent test results, whether positive or negative.

- In the event of a positive test result, you will be contacted with further information about the steps that need to be taken.

If your child(ren) is/are having to self-isolate for more than two days, and they are well enough to learn, **please get in touch with us** so that we can provide activities for them to participate in home learning. Their class teacher will send an email which contains information about the learning that has taken place in school so that your child(ren) can continue their learning. If your child is not well enough to learn, then we will not send activities home.

School Lunches

Our system for eating lunches in the classroom is generally going well, with the exception of the length of time pupils have to eat. As of this week, we have extended the lunch break by ten minutes, which should help. We have been eating outside whenever the weather permits, but if eating indoors and running out of time, children are permitted to take items outdoors that are easy to eat on the go.

Due to problems with our communication systems following the thunderstorm in the first week of term, our lunch ordering system has been difficult to navigate. All of our P1-P3 pupils are entitled to free school meals, however it has transpired that two meals were put through for the same day, resulting in a charge for one of the meals. We are currently resolving this, so if you have been charged for a meal and are entitled to free school meals, please do not put money into your account as the balance should revert to zero shortly.

Car Parking

I have had a number of comments made to me over the last couple of weeks regarding our car park.

Firstly, due to the staggered arrival and departure times, there are a number of cars arriving when others are leaving and I believe there have been a few near misses. Please drive carefully around the school loop so that you have plenty of time to see any cars that may be reversing.

Our disabled spaces continue to be used by people who are not blue badge holders. We do have families with blue badges who require these spaces for dropping off children and grandchildren, so please leave these spaces for the people who need them. Traffic wardens do occasionally visit the school and I know of a ticket having been issued to someone for having used the space when they were not entitled to.

On a rainy day last week, it was brought to my attention that cars were parking on Bruce Road near the red crossing point (the red painted strip) which meant children were not able to see oncoming traffic when crossing the road at this dedicated safe crossing point. If the car park is full and you need to park somewhere else, please park considerately.

Finally, we are aware that in following our one-way system, there is a greater number of children walking around the block and up towards the park. To support our children to be safe, over the next couple of weeks we will be taking each class to walk around the block to consider danger points and discuss how to stay safe.

September Open Afternoon

We usually hold an open afternoon for our parents at the end of September which coincides with the MacMillan Coffee Morning. We will be unable to invite parents in for such an event this year and are currently planning a digital alternative for you to see your child's classroom and what they have been getting up to.

Friends of Portmoak School: Parent Council – A Note from the Chair

A warm welcome back to all of our Portmoak families, both old and new! We would especially like to extend our best wishes to the incoming P1 class and their families and hope to meet you around school and in the community soon.

Friends of Portmoak School (FoPS) parent council comprises mostly parents, and also includes both the Head and Principal teachers as well as members of the local community. It aims to support the school by:

- Promoting partnership between the school, its pupils and parents/guardians
- Encouraging parental involvement in the school's activities (including specific projects with the major ones being investment in our Outdoor Learning and Wellness areas, assessment of the traffic around the school and various sporting and extracurricular events and fundraising)
- Expressing common parental views on matters affecting education and the welfare of pupils

We tend to meet 5 times per year in the evenings, with the next one being the AGM on **Wednesday 9th September at 7:30pm** via Zoom. As a parent/guardian of the school you are automatically a member and more than welcome to attend. (You can let me know if you are able to attend, or if you wish to raise a topic beforehand, either via a note left with the school or by email to: friendsofportmoakschool@gmail.com).

Throughout the year, please do not hesitate to raise a question or concern with me or the other parent members that you will meet. We hope your children enjoy their time here and that you are able to get involved in whatever way you are able!

Gaming Support

I was sent this link by Pat Doran, our Community Link Worker, which I thought some families may find helpful. In a nutshell, it has some advice about engaging with your children about gaming in terms of understanding the benefits and pitfalls of children's interests in technology.

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-gaming/>

PE

Please find below a reminder for which day(s) each class has PE:

P1/2 – Thursdays (Ms MacGillivray) and Fridays (Mr Ainsworth)
P2/3 - Mondays (Miss Hood) and Thursdays (Mrs Herd)
P3/4 – Tuesdays (Mr Ainsworth)
P5/6 – Tuesdays (Mr Ainsworth)
P6/7 – Fridays (Mr Ainsworth)

On these days, pupils should come dressed in PE clothes and trainers (which should have Velcro if your child is unable to tie shoelaces).

We are unable to hold PE lessons indoor due to current regulations and, as we have an obligation for children to participate in a minimum of 2 hours of PE each week, classes will participate in PE outdoors even if the weather is inclement, with the exception of particularly heavy rain and/or strong winds. Therefore, on PE days, please ensure your child has waterproof trousers or a change of clothes if rain is forecast.

Show and Tell

We understand the importance of the children having the opportunity to take part in Show and Tell. They enjoy sharing things from home and it is also part of our Listening and Talking curriculum. Unfortunately, due to current circumstances, we cannot have children bringing in items from home. To ensure the children are still able to take part in this valuable activity, parents can take a photo of the item which can then be sent to the school email address portmoak@pkc.gov.uk The photos will then be forwarded to the class teacher and displayed on the Promethean Panel for your child to talk about.

Changing Seasons

As we begin to leave summer behind and autumn approaches, so does a change in the weather. We continue to value the importance of being outdoors, particularly in these times where children don't have the opportunity to move around the school.

Waterproof trousers and a coat are very important – we are fortunate to have lots of outdoor seating areas now, but they can remain damp for a while after rain and we don't want our children to feel uncomfortable in sitting in wet trousers/skirts. Our top and bottom pitches can get quite muddy after prolonged periods of rain, so a pair of wellies for outdoor learning, breaks and lunches are also required. We ask that wellies are not worn to school if possible, but kept in a bag for children to change into when required. This means that your child will have a clean pair of shoes (the ones they wore to school) to put back on and won't need to wear wellies all day in class. Wellies can be brought into school on a Monday and left for the week, to be taken home on a Friday (or left here for a whole term should you have a second pair at home).

If anyone would like financial assistance to purchase wellies and waterproof trousers, Friends of Portmoak School (our Parent Council), has provided a bursary specifically for this purpose. Please contact the school office and we will arrange for this confidentially.

Mindfulness

All classes are taking part in Do-be Mindfulness lessons throughout the week. The children have been learning about mindfulness by participating in daily mindfulness activities. This regular practice can help children develop life skills that will benefit their mental health, emotional wellbeing and academic performance. All P2-P7 pupils have been given a mindfulness activity book to complete as homework which is to remain at home until it is completed. The class teachers will send out an app message each week to let you know which page they would like the children to complete at home. This will generally be issued on a Friday, to be completed by the following Friday. These pages will tie in with the mindfulness practice they have been learning at school. Both staff and pupils are already seeing benefits of mindfulness practice and we are looking forward to continuing the mindfulness journey together.

Assemblies

Although we are unable to have whole-school gatherings at this time, and our classes are segregated, we have been thinking about ways to ensure that the lovely Portmoak Family feeling continues. We have decided that each class will film a digital assembly, in which they talk about what they have been learning, so that children can still feel in touch with other classes. Classes

will take turns and they will be viewed each Friday. On Fridays, I will also visit each class to hand out our Special Mentions and celebrate birthdays, as well as talking about various important issues.

Kinnesswood in Bloom

We very much value our collaboration with Kinnesswood in Bloom, who are unfortunately unable to come in and work with our children at this time. Norma Smith, John Nicol, Mrs Cole and myself met last week to consider how we can continue to work together. We have come up with 'School Grounds Missions' for each class, for which Norma and John will video a 'How To' guide to share with pupils, and there will be opportunities for a live link for pupils to ask them questions. The missions include:

- Planning a new orchard area
- Cleaning up the pond area
- Cutting back the willow
- Renovating our 'quiet garden'
- Harvesting crops and preparing beds

P6/7 will also be making lavender bags and P1/2 will be planting bulbs.

Mandarin

Our P4s-P7s loved their Mandarin lessons with Miss Su last session. This session, Mr Struth at Kinross High School is arranging for virtual Mandarin lessons with two teachers who are currently in China. Our P5/6 and P6/7 class will have weekly lessons on Thursday mornings, commencing at the end of September. Fingers crossed that all of the technology works!

A Few Wee Requests

- Please return the annual data check form along with the NHS flu forms by Wednesday 2nd September. The flu form should be returned whether or not you give your consent.
- If your child still has a reading book from before schools closed in March, please return as soon as possible, we seem to be quite short of a number of reading books at the moment.
- Please complete this survey if you feel that you would require before school childcare from our Safe Start provision at this time:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=6dxqdyZdSUEiAvCf7-EFkLyEjavopaRDsKtvBe3QCYpUM0VVQVZYMTZMUUpRQkFCQkRaU1dZU01ZMy4u>

Don't forget to save both school numbers 01577 867290 (school office) and the absentee line & answer phone on 01577 867196