

Being the best I can be

PORTMOAK

Headteacher's Newsletter – September 2020

Dear Portmoak Families and Friends,

This feels like it has been a very long term and the children are definitely ready for their holidays (as are the staff!). After a period of high absence rates for the first few weeks of term, this settled into a more usual pattern of attendance with very few absences and even a few days with full classes across the school.

We have been very blessed with the weather this term, with only a couple of rainy days, so have been able to enjoy the outdoors. Our P6s and P7s walked from Craigmoad to Glenvale as part of their John Muir award – this was organised and led by a team from Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre, and it was wonderful to be able to support them at a time when Outdoor Centres are struggling to remain viable. Our Pupil Council was elected and Mrs Mossom will again facilitate the group when they meet according to Covid guidance. Our new Pupil Council can be seen in the photos below.

Looking ahead to next term, we have Bikeability sessions planned for our P6s and P7s on Friday mornings, a special Halloween outdoor learning day on Thursday 29th October (which will also be a dress down day) and virtual Mandarin lessons for P5-P7. Our P1-P3s will be getting started on their nativity for this year, and our P4-P7s will be getting their production of the pantomime 'Cinderella' underway. Our P7s are taking part in a wellbeing programme facilitated by staff from Kinross High School and Active Schools Kinross, and a Community Links Group consisting of senior pupils at KHS are planning some transition activities for our P7s. Our committees will also commence when we return, but instead of them being formed with children across different classes, each class will form one or two committees.

We look forward to welcoming all of our learners back on Monday 19th October.

Best wishes, Paula Woods



Updates

Staff Professional Development

At Portmoak, teachers meet weekly after school to engage in collegiate activities. This term, these have focussed on literacy and numeracy 'recovery' in determining where children are in their learning and looking at a range of teaching resources to support this. We are creating a new progressive pathway in writing which will be implemented after the October break, this builds on last session's School Improvement priority in raising attainment in Writing throughout the school. Additionally, Covid guidance, protocols and

considerations are discussed weekly. Some staff members are currently engaging in other development activities. Miss Kettles and Mrs Mossom have been learning about engaging in virtual Mandarin lessons, Ms MacGillivray is continuing with a Learning Through Play project, Mrs Cole is undertaking professional development in Middle Leadership: Leading Change and I have begun my 'Into Headship' course.

Covid-19 Update

As the situation with Covid-19 in Scotland is ever evolving, please find below some changes, additions or reminders to what we are doing at Portmoak.

Playground equipment – we have found a way to minimise risk with pupils sharing equipment at lunch times. We still have to follow strict guidelines to be as safe as possible in reducing the risk of transmission of the virus through contact with contaminated items. This means that items have to be left for 72 hours between uses and hand sanitisers are used before and after equipment is used by pupils. To ensure we are leaving 72 hours between uses, on a Monday and Thursday, each class has access to their playground box which contains various equipment for use outdoors. They can play football on Tuesdays and Fridays and we are encouraging pupils to be creative and come up with their own games on Wednesdays.

I would again 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

As explained in emails last week, the lunch choices after the October break consist of 2 options, most of which are a hot option. Due to these changes, we have planned a change to our lunch operating system so that most of our children can eat in the dining hall. Please see below for information and timings:

Class	Eating time	Location for eating	Outdoor play time
P1/2	12.15-12.35	Stage	12.35-12.55
P2/3	12.15-12.35	Hall	12.35-12.55
P3/4	12.15-12.35	Classroom	12.35-12.55
P5/6	12.50-13.10	Stage	13.10-13.30
P6/7	12.50-13.10	Hall	13.10-13.30

The chairs and tables will be thoroughly cleaned between classes using them. Timings are approximate, as soon as everyone in a class has finished eating, they will be able to go outside.

Engineering Award

Before schools closed in March 2020, all pupils in school took part in the Primary Engineering Leaders' Award, for which they had to create an invention that solves a problem, draw and label their design and pitch their idea to the judges. The results are in and a number of our pupils have made it through to the second round of judging. Congratulations to:

Oscar Robertson, Emma McIntyre, Zoe Stockdale, Cameron Sellars, Helena Verden-Anderson, Heather Cox and Sophie Gardner.

I haven't yet heard about the date for the next round of judging, but I will let you know when we do.

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 were unable to invite parents in for such an event this year so each class created a digital tour of their classroom along with examples of what they have been learning. P1/2 parents were sent a QR code for the P1/2 videos and all other classes' videos can be found on their class Microsoft Team. If you have difficulty accessing these, please let me know.

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

I hope everyone is now well settled into the autumn school routine and now looking forward to the October break! The Parent Council had our AGM and first ordinary meeting via Zoom on Wednesday 9th September. Minutes will be available shortly. The office bearers remaining include me as Chair and Nicola Aitken as Secretary. Plans are afoot to have the Treasurer position transition from Anne-Marie McKenzie to Gaynor Cowe, who has offered to step into the position as a new member of the Parent Council. We would like to take this opportunity to say a huge thanks to Anne-Marie for all of her efforts over the years as Treasurer, in addition to her other responsibilities as a member of the Parent Council.

We had several new faces joining us, which was lovely to see, and it was good to get new parent representatives with lots of great energy and ideas, some of which are detailed below.

As you may have already heard, a **Christmas Art Fundraiser** has been organised by the parent council. The children will complete their Christmas Art in class the week we go back after the October holidays. In addition, families will have the opportunity to create additional designs at home over the October break to enable them to order even more personalised products on offer (cards, mugs, tea towels, aprons, water bottles and more). The art at home does not need to be Christmas themed eg a self-portrait water bottle, etc. The deadline for art done at home is Tuesday 20 October. Details of how to place an order will then be emailed out with orders taken between 26 and 30 October. The Friends of Portmoak Parent Council will be hosting a **Virtual Book Fair** from the 2nd to the 6th of November. It is an opportunity to help fundraise for Portmoak Parent Council and start your Christmas shopping! Information and special offers will go live the week of the 2nd November on the Portmoak Parents Chat Facebook Page. In the meantime, please browse the link below and e-mail Joan Cotsford (Usborne Rep) if you would like any more information about the books.

<https://org.usbornebooksathome.co.uk/bookhappy/catalogue/catalogue.aspx>

(When ordering, please place all orders by e-mail, not the website, and include your name, a contact number and your Child's name / class. Joan will arrange payment and contactless delivery of the books when they arrive).

Please note also, it is not essential to be on Facebook to browse or order books.

bookhappyjoan@gmail.com

That is all from me for now. Our next meeting is planned for the last week in October. Details will be made available in due course and as always all parents are welcome! We hope you have a safe, healthy and happy October break.

~ *Tanji Verden Anderson*

Parent Contact

We will be unable to hold our November parent contact sessions in the usual way. Our current plan is to hold these consultations by telephone. As we only have two external lines, only two teachers will be able to hold their consultations at one time. Each teacher will have two blocks of time allocated for this – one during the school day and one after school/early evening. After the October break, we will issue time slots for you to choose from and provide further information.

PE

We continue to be unable to hold PE lessons indoor due to current regulations and therefore classes will continue to 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, and come dressed in PE clothes and trainers (which should have Velcro if your child is unable to tie shoelaces) regardless. PE days for next term are as per below (please note a change for P2/3).

P1/2 – Thursdays (Ms MacGillivray) and Fridays (Mr Ainsworth)

P2/3 - Mondays (Miss Hood) and Fridays (Mrs Herd)

P3/4 – Tuesdays (Mr Ainsworth)

P5/6 – Tuesdays (Mr Ainsworth)

P6/7 – Fridays (Mr Ainsworth)

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 in our younger classes:

P1/2 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 Ms MacGillivray and displayed on the Promethean Panel for your child to talk about.

P2/3 parents will be contacted via the School App to let them know when their child is scheduled to take part in Show and Tell. Please send a photo to portmoak@pkc.gov.uk and it will then be forwarded to Miss Hood.

Autumn/Winter weather

Although the colder weather is definitely upon us, 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.

Uniform

For the next term, we are continuing with the same guidance about uniform as this past term. This means that we politely request that pupils wear a Portmoak jumper (or a jumper in Portmoak colours), but that it is up to you what trousers/skirts your child wears. Most families are opting to send children in full uniform, but as we are continuing to spend lots of time outdoors, if your child would be more comfortable in more casual trousers, that is fine. Comfortable and waterproof footwear is required, whether these are trainers or shoes/boots.

Portmoak Community Council

I have been asked to share the following with you from the Portmoak Community Council.

The monthly Portmoak Community Council meetings on the second Tuesday of each month are open to the public for useful civil discussion, and the CC is appointed to represent the local community views on matters that affect everybody in the community, including topics that I'm sure affect parents and children locally such as road safety for example. PKC Ward Councillors attend the meetings also and can escalate items and advise on issues.

Members of the public are welcome to attend and meeting dates can be found at the Community Council website <http://www.portmoak.co.uk/> . If you would like to sign up to receive the agenda, minutes and any other updates / info the CC sends out, you can register online at: <http://www.portmoak.co.uk/subscribe.html>.

The Community Council are keen to have members of the public from all sectors (eg farmers, parents, older residents and young people) to hear their views, concerns, suggestions, and maybe co-opt their expertise or get involved with projects – many hands make light work. The CC and Ward Councillors will try to help where possible. By being more involved in the discussions at CC meetings, people would feel more consulted in the actions of the council, understand the processes better, and feel more empowered in the local community.

Homework

For the first term of this session, homework for P2-P7 took the form of the Mindfulness booklets which accompanied activities taken in school. After the October break, we will be returning to more 'normal' homework, though this will on the whole be paperless, with instructions and activities being delivered through Microsoft Teams for P2/3 upwards, and Seesaw in P1/2. I explained previously that GLOW passwords have changed slightly, to include an exclamation mark on the end. Please let me know if you are struggling to access Teams.

Black Watch Castle and Museum

Over the October holidays, the Black Watch Castle and Museum are running a variety of family events, a flier has been copied to the last page of this newsletter.

To keep safe, each group will be given their own craft table with materials provided for each paying child. Each table can accommodate up to 6 people with adults from one household and must be booked in advance.

OCTOBER HOLIDAY FAMILY EVENTS

Decorate Your Own Keepsake Box

Monday 5th, Friday 9th, Monday 12th, Friday 16th October

10.30am-12.00pm | £5 per child

Soldiers often made keepsake boxes to keep their precious letters and souvenirs safe. Join us at the Castle and decorate your own unique keepsake memory box using decorative paper.

Animal Model Making

Thursday 8th, Thursday 15th October

10.30am-12.00pm | £5 per child

As they travelled around the world, Black Watch soldiers encountered lots of different and unusual animals. Let's get crafty and decorate our own model animal using coloured paper, tissue, feathers, and gems.

Make Your Own Clay Soldier

Monday 5th, Thursday 8th, Friday 9th, Monday 12th, Thursday 15th, Friday 16th October

1.30pm-3.00pm | £5 per child

The Black Watch Museum is brimming with statues and figures of Black Watch soldiers. Come along to create your own clay soldier, complete with kilt, Tam o' Shanter and the world-famous red hackle.

Life on Western Front

Monday 5th, Thursday 8th, Friday 9th, Monday 12th, Thursday 15th, Friday 16th October

10.30am-12.00pm & 1.30pm-3.00pm | Included in Museum entry

Explore the Museum and meet WW1 soldier Private McNiven in the galleries as he talks about his experiences of life on the western front.

To keep safe during our craft sessions each group will be given their own craft table with materials provided for each paying child. Each table can accommodate up to 6 people with adults from one household.

To book visit theblackwatch.co.uk or telephone 01738 638152, option 1



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

