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Wednesday 9th February 2022

Dear Families

I hope this update finds you all well and looking forward to the mid-term break. School and Nursery is closed tomorrow, Thursday 10th February and re-opens for all pupils on Thursday 17th February.

Staff Inservice

Of course, our staff will be in school for part of this time to engage in inservice training. We will be making excellent use of this time as we get together in groups to review our curriculum and develop a curriculum rationale that will help us to ensure that our children receive an education which supports them to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes required to flourish now and in their futures. This will be a big piece of work for us over the coming weeks and we would love your voice in shaping what we do and how we do it. I will be in touch in the next couple of weeks to gather your thoughts about what you hope our curriculum will support your child to do. Our Pupil Support Team will refresh their First Aid training and work together to develop a plan to improve the play experiences for our youngest pupils.

School Improvement

Outdoor Learning

Every year we develop our practice in many ways as we strive to provide the very best possible experiences for our children. We identify a range of whole school priorities which we believe will make a positive difference to our learners and the life of the school. One of these priorities has been developing outdoor learning. We used some additional funding to appoint a Pupil Support Assistant whose sole focus is supporting outdoor learning. Mrs Burgoyne has been a fantastic support to our staff and of course, Mrs Woodland who assumes this role on a Monday. All our classes are now using the outdoors to further their learning and this is super to see. We have engaged in lots of training to help us with this. This has included working with our local Forest School to understand the many benefits that outdoor learning can bring and looking at how we can use our environment to teach science, technology, engineering and maths.

Loose Parts

We have developed our outdoor experiences to include a loose parts area. This has been an exciting development which is benefitting our children in many ways. Essentially our loose parts shed is packed with an array of repurposed, open-ended items such as tyres, planks, tarpaulin etc. We are using this resource to develop a range of skills including communication, collaboration, problem solving, critical thinking and of course to embrace creativity. Studies have shown that children and young people prefer to play with loose parts because these allow them to take control and direct their own learning. We engaged in training in November to help our staff implement this and I am so proud of how our staff have taken this forward. I am looking forward to expanding and improving this project as we learn and grow together.

Edible Classrooms

Last year we were lucky enough to receive funding from Keep Scotland Beautiful to invest in a variety of planting resources. In March we will launch our Edible Classrooms whole school project. We plan to work as a whole school team to plan, nurture and harvest a variety of produce which we will then make available to our community at a highly competitive price. We will be the most cost effective solution for all your vegetable needs! I am very aware of the benefits that being outdoors and amongst nature can have on mental health and wellbeing. Also, taking care of plants is a great way to learn about responsibility, so I am thrilled that we are launching this initiative. The raised beds are ready and waiting at the front of the school and we are poised to proceed with planting when the time is right.

Burns

Yesterday we held our annual Burns Assembly which was a real treat for us all. Burns is always fully embraced in Laurencekirk School and this year was no different. All our classes were learning Scottish poems and I am very proud of all the children who took part. We held a recital competition and the judges were completely blown away by the standard on show. Certificates were awarded for each year group. We were also treated to some wonderful dancing, instruments and singing. Thank you to all who sent in video clips, we really enjoyed watching you all. Of course, I must mention the wonderful Art Gallery which was created in our gym hall. Each class created a display of their work on Scottish cities and the children loved walking around it and seeing what their friends in other classes had created. There is always such a buzz around Burns here, something that is not typical in all schools, and I am already looking forward to next year's offering. I would like to mention Maisie in Primary 7 who was awarded our Burns Trophy this year. Maisie performed an outstanding rendition of "Tae a haggis" and was a very deserving winner. Well done to all.

Enterprise

We are working on an enterprise project in our classes at some point before Easter. Information will be communicated to you all via Seesaw. This is such an important topic as it enables our children to develop many critical skills. Our Parent Council have kindly agreed to provide start up loans to each class. On the week of 21st February, each class will make a Dragons Den style pitch to secure the funding they require to launch their enterprise. We are lucky that our Parent Council are prepared to make these loans which are not without risk! We do hope to raise some funds through this project, however, the learning is the most important part. I am looking forward to this hugely.

World Book Day

We always like to celebrate World Book Day in a small way that promotes reading for enjoyment. This year we will be celebrating as a school on the 3rd March and Mr Steer will be in touch with you all once we have made our arrangements. We will not be dressing up for World Book Day. Reading regularly for pleasure has untold benefits and I would like to draw your attention to the Library opening hours:

As from Monday 14th February 2022 Mearns Community Library will be open the following hours:-

PUBLIC ACCESS

Monday	2.00 - 6.00
Wednesday	10.00 - 3.00
Thursday	2.00 - 6.00
Saturday	10.00 - 12.00

CLICK & COLLECT

Tuesday	10.00 - 2.00
Friday	10.00 - 2.00

Seesaw and Ongoing Reporting of Achievements and Progress

We continue to use Seesaw to share our learning and report on progress across the curriculum. This has been a steep learning curve for us all and I am proud of how our staff have embraced the challenge. This is a tool which enables us to share information in real time and we do hope that it facilitates discussion for families at home. As in the previous school year, there will not be a full written report issued. In May, we will share a short written update on Curriculum for Excellence levels, attendance and your child's thoughts on their achievements over the year. Dates to follow. A parents consultation will be made available through Microsoft Teams following this.

I hope this update has given you a flavour of some of the work across the school and wish you a restful mid-term break.

Kind Regards

Jill Smith
Head Teacher

School Holidays

Mid-Term Holiday: Thu 10 – Wed 16 February

Easter Holiday: Mon 4 – Fri 15 April

Queen's Platinum Jubilee Holiday: Thu 2 – Mon 6 June

Summer Holiday: Mon 4 July – Mon 22 August