

Gartconner Primary School

Head Teacher Update

Easter 30.03.21

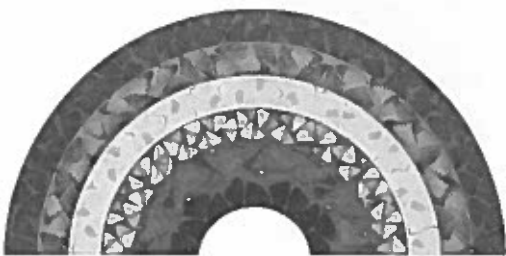
#### Vandalism Update

Police Scotland visited the school and were able to use the CCTV footage of the latest vandalism that has beset the school and nursery playgrounds. Thankfully, the image of the perpetrator was very clear and I am confident that they will be able to identify him. Fortunately, Police Scotland had already recorded the details of the youths who were seen around the school on the night in question and with the additional footage, I hope that we will see the last of the vandals around the school.

Thank you to all the pupils, parents and members of the local community who kept an eye on the school over the evenings and weekends as it was thanks to a tip off from a member of the local community that the police finally were able to catch the youths in the school grounds. I know that a fund was created by a parent and with the support of the PTA and PC she shared our story in the media and online. The generosity of the parents and the local community in giving to help support the school at this difficult time is really wonderful. Our thanks to Julie Houston who established the fund and to all those who contributed.

#### Anniversary of Lockdown

I can't believe it is just a year since the start of the first lockdown.



It has certainly been a very challenging time for us all. The children and staff all paused for a minute's silence on the anniversary of the lockdown to remember all those impacted by covid. The older children discussed some age appropriate issues from the past year and the messages of hope for the future. Our younger children had the opportunity to participate but we really focussed on how well they have all done in the last year.

#### Memorial for Wilma Black



As you know, Wilma, our janitor, sadly passed away in December after a very short illness. She was a much loved member of staff and we were considering a way to have a lasting tribute to mark her contribution to the school and the local community. Her family are very touched at the response of the school community and wanted to pass on their thanks for all the kind words and thoughts. They thought the idea of a memorial would be a lovely idea and thought something like a friendship bench would be a fitting way to remember her. She really was such a kind and friendly person and I think that would be a lovely idea. We will speak to the children to think of a fitting place and design for Wilma's bench.

#### Holidays

Joan has already sent out a reminder of the early finish on Thursday. We will all finish at 2.30pm and this will cause a little more congestion around the school. Please remember just one adult per child in the playground. If all adults could move further down and away from the school entrance to allow the older children a clear path out. We will then bring out the younger lines for dismissal.

I hope that you will all have a great Easter holiday and enjoy some time off without the

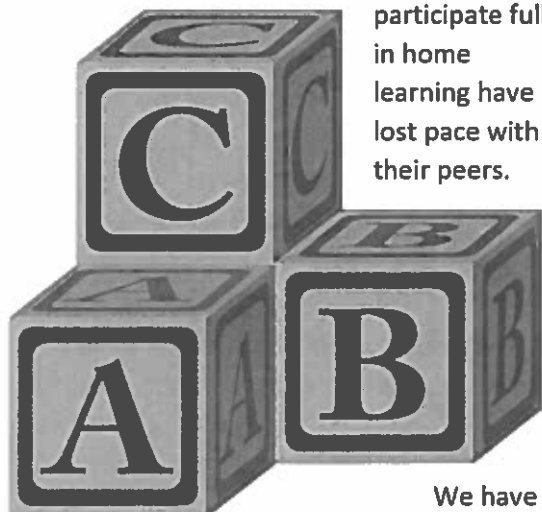
dreaded homelearning to do with the kids. Although there is only limited freedom, at least I may be able to get my hair done!

The PTA has supplied Easter eggs for the children and they will receive these on Thursday. They were handed in last week and they have been in quarantine since last Thursday. I am sure the children will love this wee treat and I would like to give a big thanks on their behalf to the PTA for organising this.



### Back to School

It has certainly been a smooth transition back to school for both the P1-3 and P4-7 cohorts. We've had a few road bumps and the odd tear but overall the transition back has been very successful. In terms of learning loss, the difference with the first lockdown is quite marked with far less learning loss in most pupils. Obviously those who were unable to



participate fully in home learning have lost pace with their peers.

We have put in additional staffing to support pupils returning. These smaller groups and more one-to-one support can help with bridging any gap in learning. I would like to offer some after school sessions for pupils to help target learning loss so please let me know if you would be interested in this kind of support.

### Departing Staff

Ms Heather Allan, one of our support for learning assistants, came to the school this year to help with the response to covid. She was an addition to our staffing team and has been a great support for P3 and Ms Mitchell. I would like to thank her for her contribution to the school as she has been a wonderful member of staff and I am sure you will join me on wishing her well as she moves on to competing her university studies.

### Transition

The P1 and P7 transition programme is underway and we have a plan in place for this. Much of this is behind the scenes at present with online meetings and information passing from nursery to school and from Gartconner to the high schools. I also make time to meet the pre-schoolers in our own nursery to start to build these relationships.

Obviously, with the inevitable changes being made at national level we can't make firm arrangements for in school visits but we will propose dates for plans and hope that the prevailing conditions allow them to go ahead. We have sent out a questionnaire to the new P1 parents and have their views on how they want to access the transition programme. The buddy programme may also run properly this year and this is a great help for our new learners as well as our big buddies. Assuming there are no great changes over the Easter holidays, we will issue a plan for the summer term as soon as we return. Pre-school children who are in our own nursery will be able to visit the P1 classrooms over the Easter holidays as there is enough time either side of the visits to quarantine the rooms. The day cleaners will thoroughly clean all the toys and any materials used during the visits so there will be no additional risk.

### P7 Trip and Hoodies

Usually the P7 pupils pay for their own summer trip and hoodies through the earnings that they make from the Christmas enterprise topic. Unfortunately, last year the

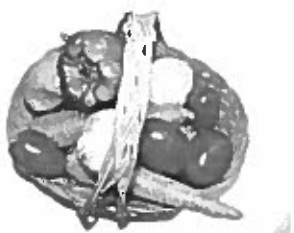
children didn't get their trip and this year the children couldn't really run the enterprise topic and make a profit. We had hoped in the early days of covid that we would welcome back our P7 leavers to celebrate with them but the whole year has made that impossible. We will support the current P7 leavers with the residual funds from the previous year's group so they don't lose out. I hope that by the summer we can find a suitable venue for their treat.

#### The Big Pedal

We will be participating in the Big Pedal this year. It will run in the weeks just after the Easter holidays. We hope that the children will be able to scoot or ride to school and help burn off those Easter eggs as well as reducing pollution and congestion. We will send out more information after Easter.

#### Food for Thought Grant

As well as the sterling efforts of our parents to raise money, staff from the school and EYC have also managed to secure £1500



of funding to develop the school garden. It will be transformed over the coming weeks and months and the Food for Thought grant will enable us to plant and grow our own food.

#### Final Thought

I would just like pass on my thanks to all the parents, pupils and staff who have been on this difficult journey with us throughout lockdown. It is an incredible bunch of youngsters we get to work with every day and despite the difficulties you have faced as parents, they are all back and doing well and that is due to the support you have given them. I am also extremely proud of our teachers, janitor, support team, office,

catering and cleaning staff and Rachel, our Lollipop Lady. They deserve tremendous praise for giving their best all year.

On behalf of all of the team at Gartconner, Ms McGoldrick and I would like to wish all our pupils and their families a very happy, healthy and safe Easter break.