**HT Update 21/05/21**

Gartconner Primary School

Dear Parents

I hope you are well and getting so see more friends and family as the restrictions ease. The pupils and staff are looking forward to the first long weekend in Tier 2 and I have my fingers crossed that the weather improves by next Friday. **A reminder that the school and EYC will be closed on Friday 28th and Monday 31st May for the holiday weekend with pupils back on Tuesday 1 of June.**

It is incredible to see how well the children have done since returning to in-school learning in February and March. On the whole, pupils have coped with the changes but some additional anxieties have appeared with a few children struggling at points of transition when leaving parents in the morning. Please don’t worry as this is a normal response to being at home and spending lots of time with close family. Lots of reassurance will really help as restrictions ease and normal life resumes.

Counselling

The counselling service is back to running a day per week in the school. The funding is provided to support P6 and P7 pupils and this term we are piloting a transition group with some P7 volunteers. The counselling service has now worked with around half the P7s and some of the P6s. We will accept a referral from parents to the service for a variety of reasons. Some children have had support with bereavement, loss, friendships and transition from primary to high school. It can be for any reason so please let me know if you would like your child to access the service.

Reports

All parents received an invitation to a telephone appointment for parents’ night and most families were able to speak to their child’s teacher earlier this month. I would like to thank the teachers for volunteering to do this from home and with their own phones as it is a logistical nightmare with only 2 telephone lines in the school. I know how important it is for staff and parents to share information about the children’s learning and wellbeing and, although not as good as a face-to-face meeting in school, it has at least given an opportunity to discuss individual children’s work. We will follow this up with a written report and will summarise pupil progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The report will be issued at the end of term.

Staff Changes for Next Session

We have a number of staff changes for next session. Mrs Howe has decided to retire at the summer and will leave Gartconner after many happy years. She has loved her time in the school and will be a great loss to the whole Gartconner Family. I am sure you will join me in wishing her well on her retirement at the end of June.

We are delighted to let you know that we have another Gartconner baby on the way with Ms Mowatt expecting her baby this summer. Her P1 children have finally noticed the bump and are all very excited. She plans to continue with her class until the end of the summer term in June. I would like to pass on our congratulations to Mum and Dad and we look forward to seeing the new arrival later in the year.

Mrs Rolinska, who left on maternity leave last year, is returning this August and will be working part-time in the school. It will be lovely to welcome her back to the staff team and I am sure her former class will be particularly excited to see her.

Covid Update

Unfortunately, I am in the position of having to relay very disappointing news regarding the current advice issued detailing limits to end of session events in schools.  I am sure that we were all very excited about the recent changes in the wider community that led to the reopening of venues and services.  I had hoped that this would be reflected in the guidance issued to schools but there are very strict measures still applied to parents coming into the school building and grounds.  These restrictions apply to all EDC schools and Early Years Centres and were issued this week.

Sports Day

New advice states that we can have an individual class sports day but no parents are allowed to attend.  Obviously, this is really disappointing for the whole school family but we will try to share events with you online if possible. Class teachers will let you know when they will have their own class events.

Prize Giving

This year our prize giving service will not be able to take place as an assembly and we will need to keep classes in bubbles for individual ceremonies. We will be giving prizes based on the school’s vision, values and aims. We will recognise the contribution to the school and class by pupils for upholding the school’s values of teamwork, trust, friendship, care, respect and fairness as well as for literacy, numeracy and sporting achievements.

Transition

P7s have been involved in virtual transition visits to the high school and staff from KHS have visited Gartconner and met the children and teachers. We will complete profiles with the children and send these up to KHS to help staff get to know the children. I hope they will be able to attend KHS for an in-person visit in June as part of the transition process. We have two dates pencilled in for this in June and will let parents know if this can proceed nearer the time.

It was lovely to see our new P1 pupils visit the school in small groups on election day. There were lots of excited faces learning about school and eager to get started. We have future visits planned for May and June and P1 parents will be notified directly about arrangements for this.

P7 Leaver Events

The new advice issued this week states that graduation ceremonies can take place in individual class bubbles but no parents can attend even if the event is held outdoors. If all parents are in agreement, we may be able to record an event to share this electronically with you.

There is some better news about school trips. Individual classes will be able to take part in educational visits subject to strict guidelines on transport, distance and type of venue. We have had to change our original plans for the P7 trip but we have managed to book skiing and tubing for them in the Bearsden Ski Centre. We will follow this up with food and fun back at the school. I really hope that they will have a great day to make up for the muted end of year celebrations. If there are any other ways to celebrate within the guidelines, we will do our best to organise this for the children.

Fun Days

Although we are still restricted on music, singing and parties, we can still organise fun days outside for each bubble. We will have a fun day for each class in June and pray for good weather. If parents can donate treats in advance then these can be quarantined for the fun days. We will have them close to the end of term to give us the best chance of more options in what we can provide for entertainment. Please start to send in treats from the beginning of June. I am meeting the PC and PTA in June to discuss this further.

Teamwork, Respect, Trust

Thank you again to all the parents for the amazing support you consistently give the school. It has been another difficult year for the whole school community and you have continued to contribute in so many novel ways this year as home schoolers, art teachers, sports coaches as well as the already tough job of being a parent. Thanks to your efforts, our fantastic staff team members have been able to really focus their work on supporting our children in their learning and their wider wellbeing. As parents and staff, we are a great team but the star players have got to be our children as they have managed to come through the hardest childhood for almost a century and still have the most wonderful can do attitude. This weekend, please give them a pat on the back and a big thanks for being amazing.