

**Gartconner Primary School
Early Learning & Childcare**



Autumn Newsletter

2019

We are well in the swing of the new school year and it has been a wonderful start for all our pupils and staff. We continue to grow and have 166 pupils currently registered for P1-7. The summer seems a long time ago and I have already had a chance to meet with the PTA to plan out a host of exciting activities and events across the school year. The list of activities was sent out at the start of the year in the special bulletin.

Please download the Groupcall Xpressions app to help keep up with all the events planned in the school or visit the school website. Texts are prohibitively expensive.

Edinburgh Zoo Trip



Our school summer trip to Edinburgh Zoo was a great success and pupils were full of exciting stories when they returned to school. We will continue to plan a whole school trip with the pupils for summer and any suggestions would be more than welcome. Pass on your ideas to the children and we'll get next year's trip booked up as soon as possible. The trip costs around £2000 so our fundraising throughout the year helps to subsidise the final trip cost for parents.

MacMillan Coffee Morning



We had an amazing turnout for the MacMillan Coffee Morning and raised almost £500 for the charity. Cancer impacts on so many families and the work that MacMillan does to help those in greatest need provides great

comfort. Thanks for all the generous donations from our families and staff. Thanks to Mrs Jackson for leading all the work in the school, our parent volunteers for their help on the day and our fabulous MCs Robbie and Ian.

School Uniform

The children look so smart in their new school uniforms so thank you for all your efforts in getting them so well prepared for school. The new uniform supplier, MAPAC, seems to have delivered on time for the new school year and without any difficulties.

You can access their site by following the link below:

<https://www.mapac.com/education/parents/uniform/gartconnerprimaryg663th/boys-blazer>

School Improvement Planning



Our School Improvement Plan (SIP) this year focuses on improving writing through the use of a new approach called Talk4Writing. This approach has shown good results in other local schools and we are keen to help our learners move forward with writing. Staff will be undertaking training over the course of the year and working with colleagues from other schools to help improve their practice. Mrs Gilmour will be leading the initiative in the school.

Risky Play

Sedentary children are very safe in the short term and tend to be free from bumps, bruises, breaks, sprains and strains, except for their square eyes, of course. In the long term those same sedentary children will suffer from the effects of inactivity and this will seriously impact on their wellbeing. On a recent course led by Inspiring Scotland, I learned that hospitals are reporting an increase in

fractures and sprains due to children's muscles developing more than their bones. This is caused by inactivity as the bones density and strength can't develop without the natural strain of activity pushing and pulling against them. We often hear of a health crisis amongst the young and we try to find as many opportunities for outdoor play as we can.

Mrs Rolinska was successful in gaining a grant of £2000 to promote healthy eating and activity and we have purchased a mobile kitchen and a range of outdoor equipment, including outdoor protective clothing that will enable our children to participate whatever the weather.

Throughout the year we will be organising activities to explore the local area so that children can then take their families to these local spots and share what they have learned.

Our community partner, Debbie, from Luggie Watch, has again been working with the school to help promote an understanding of the local environment. We have a Luggie Walk planned for October 24th where we will be looking for our bird and bat boxes that our pupils built (from scratch) last term. We will be looking for our pupils to help with some of the work of Keep Scotland Beautiful through conducting litter surveys and collecting seeds and cuttings.

Barratt Homes

The landscapers from the Braes of Yetts development across from the school have kindly offered to work with our pupils to redesign the planters in the P1 garden and add in some new plants.

School Lunches

The new school lunchtime menu has been met with a mixed reaction from pupils with

some of the favourites being changed. Please reassure your child that they can try something new and if they don't like it we can give them an alternative that day. They may find they like some of the new dishes.

Snacks and Packed Lunches



It is great to see such healthy snacks coming into school. There are so many benefits for a youngster in coming to school well rested and well fed as they can play, think and learn with their friends. Avoiding high salt, sugar and fat content will really help with regulating pupils' wellbeing to avoid sugar highs and lows and encourage long term healthy eating habits.

St Agatha's Site

I have not had any further update on any work that is due to take place at the site. The access gates have been made secure following the occupation of the car park during the summer. Please remind your children of the dangers posed by the empty site as it looks exciting to explore but it is very dangerous.

Meet the Teacher

I hope you were able to make it along to our Meet the Teacher event. This was a great opportunity to get to know your child's new teacher and see some of the work coming up in their class. .

Parking



On behalf of the pupils, can I thank all of the parents who support our pupils' safety by minimising their use of private cars around the school. We are in a particularly unique position as Gartshore Road is historically a farm road and most of it is single track. The area around the school is therefore very difficult to navigate due to the narrow road and we ask all of our parents to avoid bringing cars to school. All of the catchment pupils who don't have access to the school bus

service live within a 15 minute walk of the school and we ask all parents to encourage their child(ren) to walk, scoot or cycle to school.

Stranger Danger

As the school grows it becomes more difficult for staff to determine who is a member of the school community and who is a stranger. This is even more challenging when there are nursery children using the playground from 8am to 6pm and Merkland pupils accessing the school via the school car park.

To ensure that children are kept safe the only people allowed to have access to the school building and car park are EDC employees; EDC sanctioned delivery drivers; registered, PVG checked taxi and bus drivers; and invited visitors.

Despite numerous reminders, we continue to have other car drivers using the school car park and due to the stranger danger posed by these unknown users I will be using CCTV footage to report unauthorised vehicles to the police.

General Teaching Council Awards



Mr Nicol and I will be attending a very swanky black tie event to receive the award for Excellence in Professional Learning for the Kirkintilloch Learning Community. We will be accompanied by representatives from the other Kirkintilloch schools. It is wonderful for the school to receive such a prestigious national award and pays tribute to the commitment of our staff to their professional learning and its impact on developing our learners.

Scottish Learning Festival

Mr Nicol has been selected to present the work of the cluster in Maths and Numeracy to a national audience at the SECC. This is based

on the work done to achieve our professional learning award and we are very proud of this great accolade for Mr Nicol and Gartconner.

Clubs

We will again have a range of afterschool and lunchtime clubs for our pupils to enjoy and details of these will be sent out as they are established. I will thank, in advance, the wonderful parent, staff, pupil and community volunteers for their support in running the clubs. Any more volunteers out there who could spare an hour per week would be greatly appreciated.

Parental Involvement in Schools

We really value all our stakeholders and the contribution that they make to the school. Please get involved in making the school better for your child(ren) by joining our PTA and Parent Council.

Skills Afternoons

Our pupils have a fabulous opportunity to develop skills and friendships across the school community by participating in skills groups with other pupils from other classes. Teachers and support staff hosted a range of activities such as art, yoga and relaxation, football, cookery, board games and dance. It was a real mix and gave the pupils a chance to try something a little different in school. Thanks to all the teachers and support staff for putting in the extra preparation and time to make it such a big success.

Leadership Groups

Our new leadership groups will start up in October and pupils will have the chance to make changes to the school and help develop their skills in negotiation, team work and creativity.

We will have regular updates from the Newshounds this year via the school website and the Groupcall Xpressions App.

Staff Changes

I would like to welcome Mrs Burns and Ms Cairney to the staff team. They are already doing a wonderful job in our P4 and P5 classes and tell me that they both love their new classes.



French

2 of our teachers are out on French courses this term to brush up on their language skills. Hopefully we will hear la différence in the class soon.

Class Dojo

Parents continue to like the use of Class Dojo to help them keep in touch with school. It is a very effective tool but feedback from other schools who stopped using Dojo indicated they did so due to the increase in workload for teachers. We are fortunate that our staff see Dojo as a great way to support the family ethos in Gartconner but I do rely on their goodwill to continue to use it.

It is a tool for occasional communication from home as, with up to 33 pupils in a class, even

a quick message from home repeated 33 times is an onerous task. Lots of enquiries relate to information available on the school website calendar or via the Xpressions App. Please keep this in mind to allow teachers to be able to respond to the key issues that only they would deal with. If you are unhappy with any aspect of a teacher's conduct direct contact through Dojo is not an appropriate way to deal with this. Any issue should come to the headteacher via the office. I will be working with the Parent Council to establish a user policy that promotes effective and efficient communication.

Open Door

Please remember that I am always available for parents. Your child's concerns, however small they may seem to us as adults, may be a great worry for them so please let me know as early as possible to ensure that your child is happy at school.

Website

Our school website is now live and can be accessed at:

<http://www.gartconner.e-dunbarton.sch.uk/>