

**Houston Primary School**

*‘Nurturing the Hearts and Minds of the Future’*

**Newsletter February 2021**

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1 February 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

I hope this letter finds you and all the family well. It’s tough times for everyone however, we are impressed and very proud of the high levels of online learning engagement across the whole school and ELC class.

We appreciate the challenges of managing personal work commitments while supporting children’s home learning. Many of us are parents ourselves, and as much as it is very rewarding, it can also be extremely challenging.

**Online Learning – Google Classroom**

We have continued to build skill and knowledge in the best use of Google Classroom for our children’s needs. We appreciate it can take time to get used to navigating around this resource. Downloading the Google Classroom App on a tablet makes life much easier, however, for some tasks, the laptop does provide better functionality. Google Classroom is secure and available to all schools in Scotland through Glow, which provides access to many digital applications (the G Suite) including Office 365. We will continue to evaluate and improve how we use it.

Google Meet is a function which we have recently started using. (Some classes still use Teams.) This facilitates the planned ‘live’ interactions which take place during the week. It’s been wonderful to see such high numbers attending and participating in the live sessions. The aim being to involve children in fun learning activities more akin to how they would interact in the classroom. Such interactions must come with

guidelines and expectations to ensure the objectives are achieved and that the experience isn’t spoiled for all. I request all parent/carers remind their children that conduct on live sessions are as it would be in a classroom situation where we are mindful of our shared school values; Friendship, Respect, Honesty and Success.

The children have responded well to these opportunities. Feedback from children and parents has been positive, recognising the benefit of seeing and communicating with teacher and peers on a regular basis.

You and/or your child may have received an email from the teacher checking up on how they’re getting on with their online learning. We are required to closely monitor online engagement and will be in touch if we feel anyone is struggling or needing further support. We submit statistics to the local authority daily, who in turn report to the Scottish Government. If your child is unwell, please inform the school office/class teacher as you would under normal circumstances.

Our approaches to online learning will continue to evolve.  We have a committed and hardworking staff and a great strength is our ability to work as a team, share ideas and learn new skills from one another.  This is something we also nurture in our children.

As a staff we will be reviewing and focussing on online learning during the upcoming In-service training day (10 February).

Please remember that we are available to support with technical difficulties, and offer advice or support in other aspects of challenge. Our school website has many links to mental health and wellbeing resources, and these can also be found on our Social Media channels.

We appreciate that depending on your child’s age/stage how learning is evidenced will vary. Thank you to everyone who has shared photographs and videos of their home learning experiences and other interests with their teacher and peers. Some tasks lend themselves better to uploading a photograph and others a document. It’s important staff can see how your child has performed in the task and they have an opportunity to value the children’s work (and parent’s support) by offering praise and encouragement as well as constructive feedback.

If you are looking for help our prepared ‘How To Guides’ can be accessed through the

class blogs at houstonprimaryschool.com

Last week you will have received a text message direct from Renfrewshire Council, to take part in a very short online learning survey. Parents/carers who wish to offer feedback or suggestions can email us at houstonenquiries@renfrewshire.gov.uk.

We remain committed to providing the best online learning we can and continue to be motivated to learn new skills and introduce new approaches, whilst also being mindful not to overwhelm all our learners and those supporting them. This is a very delicate balance to strike and we know each household has very individual circumstances.

**Staffing Update**

On 29 January, Mrs Caroline McAulay retired from her position as a class teacher at Houston Primary School. She had worked with us for 12 years and will be missed as a teacher, friend, and colleague. We wish her a long and happy retirement.

Mrs Neilson returns from maternity leave on 3 February. She takes over responsibility for P3A as Miss McCafferty has already started her maternity leave.

Miss Kidd returns from maternity leave on 17 February. On her return, she will directly support Hub provision and cover online classrooms while others are doing the same.

Mrs Stefanatos returns from maternity leave at the beginning of March. Miss Adam, Miss McGowan and Mrs Gillen will start maternity leave later in the month. Information about replacement class teachers will come in due course.

Thank you to the many people who have communicated to staff their appreciation for the hard work and dedication of all school staff in supporting both our hub and online learning.  This is a huge team effort, with everyone working to ensure that all children’s learning progresses, motivates and engages them through a wide variety of practical and online learning tasks.

As always, don’t hesitate to get in touch if we can be of assistance.

Take care and stay safe.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Murray

Head Teacher