



Dirleton Primary School

Dream it, Live it, Achieve it



School Newsletter

April 2020

School Priorities for 2019/20

- Review the implementation of activities to support the development of pupil Health & wellbeing
- Develop a consistent whole school approach to learning, teaching and assessment of learning
 - Develop approaches to engage parents/carers with family learning and partnerships
 - Develop approaches to support high quality play

Dear Parents

As we enter the 4th week of home learning, I wish to take this opportunity to communicate some key points as schools remain closed.

The first thing you should know is that we miss school, as I'm sure you do, and we miss spending time with your children. We look forward to a time when we can resume to some form of normality and see you all again 😊

In the current circumstances, I would like to point you to the priorities we were addressing in school this session, all appear particularly relevant at this time. One of the priorities we were addressing was to support the health & wellbeing of our children. With school closures still in place we continue to encourage your children to be mindful of their wellbeing, all be it that we are doing this from a distance, our message to you and your children is to prioritise your health and wellbeing at this unusual time.

Know that we are all in this together and that school staff are also dealing with situations similar to yourselves, so we understand the difficulties that school closure may present and the disruption to home life, working patterns and education. At this time we remind you to be kind to yourself and your children and to do what you can in relation to your children's learning. If there are days when it is more difficult to engage your children, try not to worry.

Learning at home

The current situation in relation to home learning is that activities offered to your children through Google Drive are aimed at consolidating and reinforcing learning that we have been doing in school. We will offer opportunities to deepen learning and to broaden the learning by utilising and applying skills in different contexts.

Successful learning of new concepts largely depends on successful interaction between teacher and student. This ordinarily takes place during a normal school day with skilled teachers planning a variety of approaches to suit the different needs of learners. However, these are not normal days and approaches to the delivery of education is evolving to the current the situation; approaches to home learning may develop and change over the next while.

I will keep you informed of any changes to our approach but the message for the moment is to support your children to develop their knowledge and understanding without worrying about teaching new concepts. I recently offered parents the opportunity to share thoughts, ideas and feelings on the current situation through a questionnaire on home learning. Thank you to all those who responded; as I write this newsletter, the majority of families have responded and the response has been very informative and helpful as we consider our next steps.

Next Steps

The results of the questionnaire on home learning highlighted what we thought – that the circumstances currently experienced by families are varied and can be very different; please be considerate of your own circumstances and needs and do not worry what others are doing – you know your children and you know what is best for them at this time. There is much coverage in the media about 'home schooling' and there may be many online comments through social media that may make you feel overwhelmed or discouraged but I would encourage you not to worry. The one common theme that comes through the research about 'home learning' I have read, is that the most important thing to focus upon at this time is the happiness and wellbeing of your household. What one child may accomplish without much fuss in 1 hour may take another child 3 hours and

with much fuss into the bargain. What one child can do independently, another may require parental support that a parent finds difficult to offer due to other commitments at this time. When school resumes in a normal capacity we can address what needs to be addressed.

With all the personal difficulties you may be facing currently, it was encouraging and pleasing that almost all parents provided complimentary comments and showed their appreciation for what is being offered currently by the school. School staff are adapting to remote learning as this situation evolves and these comments are really helpful at this time.

From your responses, it is clear that the children enjoy seeing the staff in the videos they are posting and this is something we are trying to develop. The visual nature of 'keeping connected' is powerful and we are now working toward an opportunity for teachers to host online meetings to speak directly with the children in their class. Information about these meetings will shortly be posted in your child's Google Classroom. We will be using the platform of Google Drive to host these meetings; a protocol that must be observed when children attend these meetings is that a parent must be in the room with the child whilst they are online with their class, they do not need to be on camera and will not be involved in conversation. Initially, these meetings will be hosted for 20 minutes and will provide an opportunity for teachers and children to say hello and to engage in dialogue 😊 Questions may be asked and clarity about learning tasks may be sought from children if necessary. You will be aware of many online platforms for 'keeping connected' but the use of Google Drive is encouraged by East Lothian Council and is considered a 'secure' option.

I must stress that these online meetings are being offered as an additional opportunity for engagement but if you cannot manage to engage in this manner, do not fret. We will try to offer various timings for these meetings over time to offer a degree of flexibility for children and families.

The way we communicate learning activities through 'Google Classrooms' will largely remain the same. We will continue to offer learning activities in a daily manner; the intention of doing it this way is not to overwhelm children or families with too much stuff at once! Remember, children can go back and do tasks at any time.

We now intend to highlight 'key' learning tasks each week with an * These are the tasks that teachers will endeavour to feedback upon in a constructive and personal manner. We are currently considering how best we can do this but one difficulty we are finding is that often the photographs submitted of completed work can be difficult to read; please keep this in mind when

photographing work, your help with this would be greatly appreciated.

Transitions

At this time of year the transition programme that prepares our new P1s to join our school and for our P7s to prepare for their progression to high school begins in earnest. I'm aware there may be some concern from our P7 parents about this but key information about transition to NBHS will be communicated shortly and will hopefully alleviate any concerns you may have. We have been in meetings over the past couple of weeks to ensure that the transition programme offered meets the needs of all our learners.

Whole School Learning

At this unusual time when world news consistently conveys the current difficulties, we want to remind our learners that our world is a beautiful, diverse planet. Therefore, all classes will participate in a virtual journey around the world; keep an eye out for updates from Mr T. Guide (***all destinations cancelled***). Children have identified what they would like to learn and we will use this theme as an opportunity to develop a general knowledge of our beautiful planet.

Helpful links to guidance / support / advice

East Lothian Council have composed a number of information leaflets that can be found on the school blog <https://www.edubuzz.org/dirleton/category/news-from-the-head-teacher/>

Parent Zone Scotland have a number of related links that you may find useful. Access them at <https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/learning-at-home/covid19/be-at-the-heart-of-your-child-s-learning-during-covid-19/>

Within this web page you will be directed to a number of supportive educational resources

<https://www.npfs.org.uk/2020/03/19/school-closures-educational-resources-for-parents-and-families/>

And finally,

Please tell your children how super proud we are of them and all they're doing at this time. They are demonstrating resilience whilst applying and developing their knowledge across the curriculum through their engagement with tasks and activities set by school. This is a difficult moment in time but this moment will pass and when it does I hope we can look back and say it made our community stronger, that kindness flourished and friendships developed.

Dates for your Diary

- **Monday 4th May – May Bank Holiday (school closed)**
- **Friday 8th May – VE Day Holiday (school closed)**
- **Monday 18th May – In Service Day (pupils off)**
- **Friday 26th June – end of term > summer holiday begins**

Take care & Stay safe

B. Moody
Head Teacher

