



Loretto RC Primary

September 2020



Dear Parents / Carers

We hope you all had a good weekend and we are delighted to welcome everyone back to school, with the first half term's settling and learning behind us. Although things are different, there's lots to look forward to for the children. Already our P1 children are well settled and busy learning early literacy, reading and writing and numbers through play and activities. Our P7s have taken up their leadership duties, and our Pupil Voice is loud and clear in Loretto with the children leading ideas and Rights Respecting Schools ideas.

School Google Assemblies and Class Meets

Although we are very careful and don't mix up the groups we can and do still meet by Google classroom. P7 and P1 buddies are really enjoying this and we have also had our first Pupil Council meeting.

Outdoor Learning and Learning through Play

At break and lunchtimes each class has its own box of playground toys. Children have allocated areas in the playground and again this helps us reduce mixing groups. The children are very creative and enjoy making up all kinds of games with them. Skipping ropes and hula hoops can be anything! We do already have some hula hoop trees. Mrs Hill has secured a small development grant for outdoor learning and P7s are currently writing for a real purpose and asking local businesses if they can support us with some resources. This is an area that constantly needs topped up so it is good to see the children involved here too. Please see our website to find out how you can help.

We are aiming for lessons outdoor as often as possible and I have seen some great examples of this. Please give us a 'like' on Twitter - this is very motivating for the children (and the teachers) and lets you see the different ways the children enjoy learning.

PE

We are still bound by the national guidelines on PE and organised sports and although these were reviewed earlier in September there was no significant change. For the foreseeable future PE will remain outdoors. Please help us (and we hope this helps you too) by sending your child to school wearing their PE kit on PE specialist days eg for P3-P7 on Wednesdays by rota. Please ensure this is suitable for outdoor PE.

Staff

Mrs Francine Wallace will be leaving us shortly to begin her maternity leave. Mrs Wallace has done a power of preparatory work providing lots of ongoing advice and differentiated resources for class teachers. Over the last two years, as a school we have been working on inclusive teaching and learning, and teachers have lots of strategies and resources in place. What makes good teaching and learning for your child who needs a little additional help is generally good teaching and learning for everyone. For example, all classes use common visual timetables. Teachers and staff in classes plan and differentiate for your child. We are currently holding Child Planning Meetings via Skype as we still must restrict the number of people and visiting professionals in school.

I am sure you join me in wishing Mrs Wallace well. We await the good news.

School Lunches

We are continuing to provide packed school lunches, now with hot soup which the children are very much enjoying. All children in P1-P3 are entitled to a free school lunch which must be ordered using SchoolPay at home. Please do not hesitate to use this service. Even if your child is bringing a packed lunch from home, please make sure you note this on SchoolPay in advance.

Across the school, free school meals are available for some people in certain financial circumstances. Please contact the school office and Mrs Ayton will talk you through how to claim these, or see the school website for a form and info on how to claim. Sometimes people are a little reluctant to claim free school meals but this is a great help in these challenging times and there are no differences in the systems or serving processes. It is also a help to the school as funding to the school takes account of free school lunches – so please do claim even if your child is in P1-P3.

Remember to order your Friday packed lunches online by Wednesday at 1pm!

Reporting to Parents

Thank you to everyone who was able to join our virtual Welcome afternoon and to the teachers for hosting this.

It won't come as a surprise that our traditional parents' evenings cannot take place during Covid restrictions. We aim to preserve our three way 'chat' by working as usual with the children in class to prepare their own self-assessment on their wellbeing and approach to learning. Instead of the usual ten minute appointment, teachers will prepare a short written report. This is based on the principle of ten sentences in ten minutes. We will send this home on paper in the week beginning 12th October along with your child's 'smiley' self-assessment sheet. This short report will give you an update on the main areas of focus in our refreshed recovery curriculum; Health and Wellbeing, Literacy and Numeracy. You and your child you will be able to chat over their resettling and progress. Should you have any questions or feedback, please email this to the school mailbox and the teacher will follow up. After the October break, the teachers will send home our usual target sheets to help you see the next steps in learning and your child's progress.

We do miss chatting to you but the time, workload, logistics and equity of virtual parents' nights are prohibitive.

Sacraments

P5 are currently revising and continuing their spiritual preparation for First Holy Communion. This again has to be very different this year. Fr Basil has kindly agreed to offer additional masses so that families can still come to Mass and celebrate this special moment in your child's religious journey. We surveyed P5 parents and almost everyone preferred to join a small group. You will be advised of your exact date individually. This won't be a school Mass in the usual sense. Staff may not be able to attend. Children will sit with their own family. Fr Basil will support and direct families throughout the Mass. We are hoping that it will still be memorable for you whilst being a simple and holy liturgy. Social distancing will be in place. Families are asked to provide contact details for Test and Protect and must hand sanitise on entry and leaving. Masks must be worn although there is an exemption for the First Communicant. We ask that each family group respects and follows all national guidelines. If we follow these rules strictly we will protect our families and school staff and keep our school open.

When there is further news or advice for current P4 to make their First Confession from last session, I will pass this on. For P4 First Communion this session, we will await further guidance from the Archbishop and Fr Basil.

Reading and Homework

Following a gentle and nurturing start we are now looking to ways in which we can pick up reading time for children beyond the school day. Homework will mainly be reading, spelling or sounds. Teachers will post any homework on the Google classroom and any limited returns should be made here.

We believe reading is the gateway to the curriculum and can also be a great pleasure. In school we dedicate time to teaching reading and also to affording the children personal reading time.

In P1 we do not usually send any reading home until a bit later in the term anyway as children familiarise themselves with stories in class and are learning initial letter sounds.

P1-P3/P4

Our plan for reading is that the teacher will 'teach' your child, usually by group during the week. The following week your child will bring home that short reading book on a Monday to read at home again with you. This should be returned to school in your child's book bag or plastic wallet on Fridays. The reading books will lie in 'quarantine' over the weekend ready for safe use by another group. We will not be writing in reading homework diaries and sending these back and forth. This is to reduce the teacher having to touch frequently touched surfaces.

P4-P7

This will follow the same two week pattern though with longer books reading. It will be essential that children return reading books on their allocated days so that the safety time can be followed and learning can continue in class. Your child's teacher will let you know your child's return day. Please do not worry about dedicated reading books as we have several reading skills lessons in class each week. This includes, as before, individual reading texts in SRA and class guided reading lessons using our 50 Shared Texts resource. Please encourage your child to read at home. They can join the local library - there are lots of e books available and many are linked to our Accelerated Reader system.

School Gardens

Over lockdown and the summer holidays our school gardens have become very overgrown. Unfortunately, pupil gardens are not maintained by East Lothian Council - this has always been our own responsibility. We got on top of this last year and enjoyed our own harvests of radishes and lettuces etc. The weeds in our raised beds are now bigger than the children (and me)!

If you are a keen gardener and would be willing to drop into the grounds after school or over a weekend and have a bit of a clear - safely outdoors following the Covid rules - please give us a phone to arrange. If you can offer any help we would be very obliged.

Loretto Parent Partnership

The new AGM date for the Parent Council is Monday 28th September at 6pm. If you would like to attend by Google Meet please contact the Parent Council directly at parentcouncil@loretto.elcschool.org.uk

Flu Immunisations – Tuesday 3rd November 2020

You have received an invitation from the NHS for your primary aged child to receive a FLU immunisation in school. Unfortunately in previous years we had a very low uptake for this valuable service. FLU can be very serious for young children, the elderly and those with serious health conditions. Young children are super spreaders of this seasonal illness so the more who are immunised the fewer people suffering.

This year especially we are doing all we can to try to avoid spreading illness. Please make sure you have returned your form. It is not too late to return your papers and have your child safely protected. For more information see

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/806857/PHE Protecting Child Against Flu leaflet.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/806857/PHE_Protecting_Child_Against_Flu_leaflet.pdf)

School trips and seasonal celebrations

As Covid restrictions continue we are operating in a very different way. We cannot have evening events and visitors in school. As you know there will be no school residential trips this academic session. Traditional events such as the Christmas outing to the Brunton Panto have already been cancelled. At this time in Loretto there are no plans for any day outings as we consider keeping staff and pupils as safe as possible. Teachers are aware of what our children may be missing and are looking at fun and motivating seasonal activities in school. We will be asking the Pupil Council and Parent Council for ideas in plenty of time. Let's get our thinking caps on!

Kind regards

Margaret Anne McBean

Margaret Anne McBean
Head Teacher