

BALLOCH SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

August 2009



Dear Parent/Guardian,

The first term of the new session has got off to a good start and we extend a warm welcome to all new pupils and parents who have joined us this term.

STAFFING

We welcome our two new probationer teachers, Miss Campbell and Miss McCartney who will be working at P2 and P4 and will be supported by Mrs. Thompson who will also be teaching at these stages. Our new Support for Learning teacher, Mrs. MacAlpine has been unable to start work this term as yet. Miss Baird is filling this post in the meantime.

CLASSES

List of classes for this session is as follows:

Nursery - Mrs. Flyn	P5 - Miss Mann
P1 - Mrs. Barbour and Mrs Reid	P5/6 - Mrs. Robertson and Mrs. Cowie
P1/2 - Mrs. Patience	P6 - Miss Craigie
P2 - Miss Campbell + Mrs. Thompson	P6/7 - Miss Campbell
P3 - Miss Fordyce	P7 - Mrs Watson
P4 - Miss McCartney + Mrs. Thompson	

Teachers will continue to be assisted by our very able team of Support for Learning Auxiliaries and Classroom Assistants.

CLASS ORGANISATION

I would like to remind you again about how classes were organised:

- ❖ Due to the number of children in the school it is necessary to have composite classes.
- ❖ The maximum size for a composite class is 25. The maximum size for a straight class is 33. (25 in P1 - P3)
- ❖ Your child's education will not be disadvantaged by being in a composite class.
- ❖ Classes are organised by age not ability or for any other reason (see exceptions for individuals) e.g. older P3 pupils would go into P3 and younger into P2/3. Or older pupils may go into P3/4 and younger into P3.
- ❖ We try to disrupt classes as little as possible and hope that to maintain continuity we may be able to keep your child in the same group for more than one session. However, due to changes in roll it

may sometimes be necessary to re-organise class groups in consecutive years. Unfortunately this is unavoidable.

- ❖ Throughout their years in P1-7 it is likely that your child will spend 3 to 4 years in a straight class and 3 to 4 years in a composite class.
- ❖ When classes do change the next oldest or youngest group move into the composite class as appropriate. Therefore composite classes are organised according to age.
- ❖ The only exceptions to this are the following:
 - i. To establish gender balance in class groups
 - ii. Because of educational needs of an individual
 - iii. Because of behavioural needs

The school staff will decide when these needs arise and how they are to be dealt with for the benefit of all.

Our policy follows the guidelines laid down by the Education Department and supported by the Parent Council. Please be assured that if there were any changes to this policy you would be informed.

SCHOOL UNIFORM

Many thanks to Mrs. Fraser of the BFG who has worked hard to ensure that all orders for uniform have been delivered for the start of term.

Almost all pupils are wearing their uniforms and are a credit to you, looking very smart indeed. We have noticed that some pupils who are not in P7 are wearing black tops rather than school uniform green tops. Our uniform guidelines explain that black tops should only be worn by P7 pupils who have their own black uniform top as a privilege. Black or grey trousers or skirts of most types are suitable as school uniform but not jeans or tracksuit trousers (apart from school type) or football tops. Please also note that football strips are not appropriate for PE. Please continue to encourage the wearing of school uniform throughout the session. Your support in this is very much appreciated.

I would remind parents that although we do not object to pupils wearing simple pieces of jewellery, children should not wear large or dangling earrings or necklaces for health and safety reasons.

We also feel that it is inappropriate for primary age pupils to wear makeup to school and would appreciate it if you could encourage your child to keep this for after school or weekends.

DONATIONS

For many years it has been a custom for parents to make a small donation towards school funds at the beginning of each session - currently £2.00 per child. This support is much appreciated and helps to fund 'extras' for the children during the year. If you wish to make this voluntary contribution please send the money to class teachers as soon as possible.

We also ask that you send along a box of tissues per child. This ensures that each classroom has an ample supply for all when colds are prevalent.

TEACHERS REDUCED CLASS CONTACT TIME

All class teachers are now entitled to 2.5 hours non class contact time per week in which to prepare and mark work and undertake other professional duties.

You will find that if you have a child in P4-7 they will have some subjects taught by another teacher e.g. PE, Drama, Music and Religious + Moral Education. The teachers of these subjects from P4-7 will be Mrs. Scott, Mrs. Pearson and Ms Walker.

Once again there will be no Art specialist for any classes this session. As a result of reduced class contact time arrangements, P1-3 will not have input from specialist teachers in any area. However, some will attend sessions with Youth Music Initiative Instructors such as Kodaly Music which is funded by the Scottish Executive as well as additional PE, games and football sessions.

ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

I would like to remind all parents that if your child is absent from school, we need you to let us know the reason for this by 9.30am on the first day of absence. This measure is put in place for the safety of your child and we appreciate your co-operation in this.

HIGHLAND COUNCIL ABSENCE POLICY

A reminder about this Highland Council Policy. Please note that most family holidays taken within term time will be classified as 'unauthorised'. However, there will still be exceptional circumstances whereby I am permitted to grant 'authorised absence'. Please continue to inform us of any planned absence by letter. Unauthorised absences will appear in published annual statistics for Balloch School.

DINNER TICKETS

Please continue to send lunch money for the week on a Monday. Most parents now do this and it is most helpful to teachers and kitchen staff and helps shorten the length of time pupils have to queue for lunch. If you are paying by cheque (payable to Highland Contract Services) could you please put name, address and pupil's class on the back. A school lunch currently costs £1.65.

P1 PARENTS TO LUNCH

Parents of new P1 pupils who take school lunch are invited to come to school to join their child for lunch on September 24th - more information will follow.

PARENT HELPERS

Please help us to update our current list of helpers. Even if you have volunteered in the past please return the slip if you are still available. The time and help offered by parents is greatly appreciated especially when we take pupils out of school on trips and extra curricular activities. If you are interested in helping, please return the slip to school by Monday 7th September.

If you are interested in running a club of any kind for the children please contact me.

MEDICINE IN SCHOOL

I attach a further copy of the guidelines regarding administering medicine in school. Please keep for future reference. The Medication Consent form should be used if you want a member of staff in school to administer medicine or to supervise your child taking medicine.

SCHOOL AIMS

A list of our school aims at Balloch features at the beginning of each School Improvement Plan. I have attached the list for your information.

1. To offer all pupils a wide range of progressive and relevant learning opportunities within a safe, supportive, inclusive and welcoming environment.
2. To promote the well being of all children through opportunities to develop socially, physically and intellectually, learning to care for themselves, others and their world.

3. To encourage parents and carers to play an active role in supporting learning both at school and at home.
4. To ensure that school staff members work within a professional environment where they can take advantage of opportunities for further training and development in order to enhance teaching and learning, ensuring that we offer the highest quality learning experiences for our pupils.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Each session we draw up a plan for future developments in school. I have summarised work for the coming session as follows:

Priority 1 - Numeracy - Engagement with Curriculum for Excellence

Outcomes

- ❖ Teaching and learning in maths is more interesting and stimulating for children through increased use of ICT resources by teachers e.g. Interactive Maths resources already in school and through cross curricular links.
- ❖ There is continued emphasis on pupils improving mental maths skills.
- ❖ Pupils learn more often in an active way.
- ❖ Pupils more able to self assess effectively and set work to personal targets in all areas of mathematics work.
- ❖ Children are better at supporting others through constructive peer assessment.
- ❖ Children have more opportunities to develop working together skills and independent learning.
- ❖ Pupils follow a curriculum in mathematics which more readily meets their needs.

Priority 2 - Second year of Developing Study Topics or 'Context for Learning'

- ❖ Contexts for learning will better reflect pupil needs and interests.
- ❖ Contexts for learning will be designed around a Curriculum for Excellence approach offering more opportunity for pupils to lead learning.
- ❖ Contexts for learning will encompass Curriculum for Excellence outcomes and reduce the number of 5-14 outcomes thus offering a more appropriate curriculum for pupils.
- ❖ Contexts for learning will provide opportunities for pupils to self assess and to recognise progress in learning.

- ❖ Pupils will learn in a more cross curricular and collaborative way and teachers will plan more cross curricular teaching.
- ❖ Pupils will have more opportunity to develop understanding of citizenship and sustainability through contexts for learning offered.
- ❖ Increased involvement of parents through shared information.

Priority 3 - Planning for Learning

- ❖ Teachers should have less paperwork and therefore more time to spend planning effective learning activities for pupils.
- ❖ Programmes planned for pupils will reflect Curriculum for Excellence principles, offering a more appropriate curriculum.

STANDARD + QUALITY REPORT

This document is now produced annually in school and gives an account of school developments, activities, achievements etc. In the interests of economy I have not reproduced this for every parent but should you wish a copy you are very welcome to have it. Please request one from the school office.

SUGGESTION BOX

A suggestion box is situated on the table at the school entrance. Both parents and pupils are welcome to 'post' their ideas for changes/improvements for us to consider. During the session I will also be asking for your views/opinions from time to time.

BICYCLES IN SCHOOL

Some pupils, mainly older ones, may wish to cycle to school. Please note that P6 and P7 pupils have priority use of the cycle racks. Where a rack space is not available, children may leave their bicycles by the ramp outside the P7 classroom. Please note that we cannot take any responsibility for bicycles left in school.

MOBILE PHONES

Very few pupils have brought mobile phones to school and we appreciate your common sense in this matter. We would be grateful if you could follow these guidelines regarding mobile phones:

If a parent considers that for safety reasons their child requires to carry a phone to school this is acceptable. We would ask that you send a letter to me to inform us of this.

Even with permission, children will be expected to keep mobiles switched off in school and kept in their school bag at all times.

We see no reason for mobiles to be used within school therefore, mobiles carried without written permission will be kept in the school office until collected by a parent.

The school does not accept any responsibility for any phones which are brought to school.

CLUBS

Clubs already planned for this term are:

Chess - P4-7	Monday	3.00 - 4.00pm
Tag Rugby - P4-7	Tuesday	3.00 - 4.00pm
Scripture Union - P6-7	Wednesday	3.00 - 4.00pm

We hope to add to these during the session e.g. Badminton, Recorder, Athletics, Relaxation, Capoeira.

OPEN AFTERNOON

An Open Afternoon will be held on October 5th from 1.30 - 2.30pm. This is not a consultation meeting but rather an informal opportunity for parents to visit your child in class and find out more about their day to day work in school. The children really enjoy this occasion - if you cannot manage to attend, a grandparent, aunties etc are welcome.

EDEN COURT PANTOMIME

We intend to take all the children to the pantomime again this year on Monday 21st December. Hopefully giving advance warning at this stage will help with other arrangements you may be making around that time. The school and BFG usually pay for transport and some of the ticket cost. We will ask you for a partial donation to ticket cost nearer the time.

PHOTOGRAPHS IN SCHOOL

During the session it is likely that children and staff will be using digital cameras in various curriculum areas. Photos taken would only be used in the classroom or school building and occasionally for press coverage of events. If you have any objection to your child being photographed please inform his/her class teacher in writing.

LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

During the session teachers may wish to use areas outwith the school grounds as a learning resource. We would not normally seek specific permission for these local outings. If you have any objection to this please let us know. Details of visits further a field would be sent home in advance and specific permission sought.

HOUSE CAPTAINS + CLASS REPRESENTATIVES

Congratulations to our new House Captains and representatives.

BIRCH	FIR	LARCH	OAK
Daisy MacGowan – C Kai Fraser – VC	Hannah Murray – C Hannah Lamont – VC	Vicky MacRae – C Ross Urquhart – VC	Cameron Lisle – C Nicola Speight – VC

CLASS	SCHOOL COUNCIL	F.F.A.B	B.E.S.T
P1	Finn Fraser	Harry Ratcliffe	Mya Cruickshank
P1/2	Jack Stuart	Ryan Thom	Zara Whiteside
P2	Tom Rennie	Cal White	Ross King
P3	Fraser Munro	Caitlin Sheridan	Rachael Taylor
P4	Sophie Young	Ben Johnstone	Elle Fraser
P5	Ainsley Macdonald	Charlotte Carson	Calum Donaldson
P5/6	Jamie MacKintosh	John Wilson	Emma Booth
P6	Alasdair Gibson	Kieran Jamieson	Andrew Gray
P6/7	Nina Robertson	Kirsten Moss	Anna Rodgers
P7	Robert McCormack	Emma Smith	Douglas Traynor

We normally have 2 parent representatives/advisors in the FFAB group. Many thanks to Mrs. McKenzie who has been one of these for several years and is now standing down. Mrs. Macdonald will continue but we need another volunteer. Could anyone interested please contact me - it is good fun and not very time consuming.

DIARY DATES

Attached is a list of events planned for this session, plus holiday dates etc. Please retain for future reference.

Finally may I remind all parents that our aim is to provide the best quality education for your child. We always appreciate your support in your child's learning, so if there is any matter that concerns you and you would like to discuss further, please do not hesitate to contact me, Mrs. Petrie or your child's class teacher.

It is best to make an appointment. However, if you need to see a member of staff quickly this can usually be arranged. May I remind all parents that they should contact the school office first on any visit and not go to a classroom without letting us know you are in school.

We look forward to and appreciate your continuing support for the coming session.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher

PARENT HELPERS

I would like to have my name on the list of parent helpers. I am free on the following days and times.

Name _____

Days _____ am, pm or both _____

Special interests or skills to offer _____

Pupil (s) Name (s) _____

Class(es) _____

HOLIDAY DATES - 2009/2010

	<u>School Opens</u>	<u>School Closes</u>
TERM 1	18 th August	9 th October
TERM 2	29 th October	23 rd December
TERM 3	11 th January	26 th March
TERM 4	12 th April	2 nd July

February Holidays	12 th and 15 th February 2010
May Day Holiday	3 rd May 2010
In-Service Training Days	26 th , 27 th and 28 th October 2009 16 th + 17 th February 2010

September	21 st - 25 th 24 th	P7's to Nethybridge P1 Parents to Lunch
October	5 th 9 th 26 th - 28 th 29 th	Open Afternoon End of Term School closed - INSET days Back to School
November	18 th + 19 th 24 th - 26 th	Parents Consultation Evenings Book Fair in school
December	15 th 17 th 21 st 22 nd 23 rd	P4-7 Concert Nursery Nativity Pantomime - trip to Eden Court P1-7. Christmas Service End of Term
January	11 th	Back to school
February	12 th + 15 th 16 th + 17 th	Holidays Teacher's In-Service Training Days

March	26 th 26 th	Easter Service End of Term
April	12 th	Back to School
May	3 rd 26 th 28 th	May Day Holiday Sports Day (provisional) Annual Pupil Reports issued
June	2 nd + 3 rd 9 th 16 th	Parents Consultation Evenings Information Meeting for new P1 parents. Nursery Parents Information Meeting - for new Nursery parents
July	2 nd 2 nd	Closing Service End of Session