

Dear Parent/Guardian,

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 start the term with several staff changes. Mrs. Butler will be teaching P4. Mrs. Miller has now retired and Mrs. Johnston will be working as our Support for Learning Teacher. Mrs. Reid will be teaching one day per week in P1 for Mrs. Barbour and Mrs. Black will be working part time in P4. Mr. Hassan will be teaching in P2/3 while Mrs. Thompson is on maternity leave - congratulations to Mrs. Thompson who has recently given birth to a lovely baby boy!

CLASSES

List of classes for this session is as follows:

Nursery - Mrs. Flynn	P4/5 - Miss Mann
P1 - Mrs. Barbour and Mrs Reid	P5 - Mrs. Robertson and Mrs. Cowie
P1/2 - Mrs. Patience	P6 - Miss Campbell
P2/3 - Mr. Hassan	P6/7 - Miss Craigie
P3/4 - Miss Fordyce	P7 - Mrs Watson
P4 - Mrs. Butler	

Teachers will continue to be assisted by our valuable team of Support for Learning Auxiliaries and Classroom Assistants who have been joined by Mrs. MacKay on a part time basis.

PRIMARY 1

This session we have been instructed that P1 pupils must have a full school day from 9.00am - 2.30pm from day one. Although this has not been an ideal transition for some pupils, the little ones have done very well in adapting to all the new challenges of school - even though some have been in 'nap mode' in the afternoon. Many thanks to the parents who helped the children settle into the lunch time routine.

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 and 30 in P2 + 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. Crawshaw of the BFG who has worked hard to ensure that all orders for uniform have been delivered for the start of term.

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.

Almost all pupils are wearing their uniforms and are a credit to you, looking very smart indeed. Please continue to encourage the wearing of school uniform throughout the session.

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 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.

LOST PROPERTY

We still have lots of items not claimed from last session. If you think your child may have lost anything please ask them to check with the janitor or do so yourself. Any items remaining at the end of next week - September 5th - will be disposed of.

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. Please note that these arrangements do not mean that your child has any reduction in teaching time. The teachers of these subjects from P4-7 will be Mrs. Scott, Mrs. Walker, Mrs. Pearson and Mrs. Black.

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.

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 10.00am 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. Mrs. Halls (cook in charge) has asked that if you are paying by cheque 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 25th - 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 8th 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.

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 - Teachers will spend time studying the Curriculum for Excellence draft outcomes for Literacy. They will consider how our current curriculum and methodology compares and plan any changes/improvements needed to enhance teaching and learning in this area.

Priority 2 - Teachers will be working together to design new Environmental Studies topics which will reflect the ideas promoted through a Curriculum for Excellence. Pupils will be more closely involved in decision making regarding their learning and will have opportunities to learn in a more cross curricular and collaborative way.

Priority 3 - We will work with other primary schools in our local area and also Culloden Academy to share understanding about approaches to teaching Maths and improve transition between P7 - S1. Our P7 pupils will enjoy opportunities to work together in Maths Activity sessions with P7 pupils from other schools along with staff from Culloden Academy.

This session a Standards and Quality Report will also be issued to parents about the end of November.

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

Until lately, few pupils, if any have brought mobile phones to school and we appreciate your common sense in this matter.

However, there have been a few, usually older pupils, who are bringing phones, giving the reason that they do not live close to school and want to contact parents as they are walking home.

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 lost or broken.

EDEN COURT PANTOMIME

We intend to take all the children to the pantomime again this year - see diary dates. 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 for a partial donation to ticket cost nearer the time.

OPEN AFTERNOON

An Open Afternoon will be held on October 7th from 1.30 - 2.30pm. This is not a consultation meeting but rather an opportunity for parents to visit your child in class and find out more about their day to day work in school.

PHOTOGRAPHS IN SCHOOL

During the session it is likely that children and staff will be using digital cameras from time to time in the classroom. 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.

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.

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 - 2008/2009

	<u>School Opens</u>	<u>School Closes</u>
TERM 1	19 th August	10 th October
TERM 2	29 th October	19 th December
TERM 3	5 th January	27 th March
TERM 4	14 th April	2 nd July

February Holidays	13 th and 16 th February
May Day Holiday	4 th May
In-Service Training Days	27 th + 28 th October 2008 12 th + 17 th February 2009

September	22 nd - 26 th 25 th	P7's to Nethybridge P1 Parents to Lunch
October	7 th 10 th 29 th	Open Afternoon End of Term Back to School
November	18 th - 21 st 19 th + 20 th	Book Fair Parents Evenings
December	17 th 19 th 19 th	Pantomime - trip to Eden Court P1-7. Christmas Service End of Term
January	5 th	Back to school
February	12 th + 17 th 13 th + 16 th	Teachers In-service Training Day Holidays
March	24 th 27 th	Easter Service End of Term

April	14 th	Back to School
May	4 th	May Day Holiday
	19 th - 22 nd	Book Fair
	27 th	Sports Day (provisional)
	29 th	Reports issued
June	3 rd + 4 th	Parents Evenings
	16 th	Nursery Parents Information Meeting
	22 nd	P1 Information Meeting
July	2 nd	Closing Service
	2 nd	End of Session