



## September 2019 Bulletin

Dear Parents

It's hard to believe that we're at the end of another brilliant term! I've really enjoyed the beginning of this year and the children have settled in really well to the changes we've made to make our school a calmer and more purposeful environment for all. I've especially enjoyed sharing in the children's learning about Australia! It's reminded me of my Primary School life in Australia all those years ago.

One thing that I didn't have to contend with back in the 80's and 90's was the rise of social media and the impact that it can have on developing minds. Just recently, we have heard reports that some of the older pupils have been upset by messages sent by others using Snapchat and text messaging. It could be that these messages were not meant to cause upset, but it's important that we speak to children about the way messages can be interpreted and shared. It's a great challenge for us as parents to try and balance the positive influence that social media can have while protecting and teaching our youngsters at the same time. We will be working on this here at school, but please do let us know if you have any concerns related to social media and internet use.

If you've had the chance to visit the school recently, you would have seen the amazing displays dotted around the corridors and classrooms. We have seen Aboriginal art, collaborative work and plenty of evidence of learning. You may have also spotted our display about Alfred's journey from Vietnam to the Hope. This was capped off by a wonderful morning on Wednesday when we got to wave MV Alfred off as she sailed to Kirkwall. You may also have seen some posters about the pesky stoats and the threat they represent to some local Orcadian species. The children have set animal trackers around the playground to see which animals share our playground when we're not around. All of this fantastic learning is a great example of how we can focus on our local community and then extend our learning across the globe. I can't thank the teaching staff enough for the brilliant opportunities they've given the kids this term.

I've been spending plenty of time this week looking through the children's SeeSaw profiles. As I explained earlier this term, SeeSaw replaces the Learning Journeys that you would have seen in previous years. It enables us to communicate the pupils' learning to you quickly and efficiently and it also lets you comment and join in on the conversation. If you've got any thoughts and feedback on the new system, please do let me know!

Winter is coming! As the nights draw in and the clocks turn back, the school must consider carefully how we make sure the children stay safe in adverse weather conditions. The council has released it's own advice for schools and parents which can be found on our website, but it's worth reminding ourselves of the procedures we use here at school. All children should wear high jackets or vests when travelling to or from school for the next two terms. If the school does need to close early, we will send a text message to all parents before making sure we speak to you on the phone. Whenever possible, staff will remain in school until at least 3:30pm even if the school does close early. Should school decide to close before 9:00am, we will also send out messages and phone every family. If it is safe to do so, staff will still be at school even if it is closed for the day. If the barriers are closed and some staff can't make it to school we will endeavour to find cover in the local area or run a modified

school day if necessary. We are confident that we can achieve adequate staff to pupil ratios even if the barriers are closed for an extended period of time.

We have begun to transform our school into a Low Arousal School. This means (in a nutshell) that we make the school as calm, supportive and safe as possible for the children without removing the fun! So far we have turned the bells off and removed the lines at the beginning of the day and after break times. This reduces distraction and avoids the need for pushing, shoving and generally becoming unsettled while waiting to come inside. The emphasis for the children is on the fact that we trust them to come in calmly and quietly themselves. So far, so good! We are also aiming to keep the physical environment as calm as possible by only having displays on display boards. The staff have begun some CPD and are heading to some training by Paul Dix, who is an expert in the area. If you are at all interested, his book is *When the Adults Change, Everything Changes*. It's worth a read.

Thank you all once again for your support this term. There is a terrific atmosphere here at the moment and if you haven't been in to visit and see some of the terrific work taking place, I encourage you to do so. I hope the children have a wonderful October break.

Cheers!

**Steve Arnold**

### **Dates for Your Diary**

**28<sup>th</sup> October – Inservice**

**29<sup>th</sup> October – Inservice**

**30<sup>th</sup> October – Flu Vaccine**

**30<sup>th</sup> October – Young Scott Applications issued for P7s**

**14<sup>th</sup> November – Dental Inspections**

**15<sup>th</sup> November – Exhibition Opening at Loft Gallery**

**20<sup>th</sup> November – Flu Vaccine catch up**

**21<sup>st</sup> November – Parent's Evening**

**16<sup>th</sup> December – Christmas Carol Concert**



