



April
2020

STOP PRESS: Please follow us on twitter using @KingswellsSch for non essential school updates.

Introduction

We are writing this newsletter in the strangest of times and hope our families are keeping well. In the final week inside our school seemed like a safe haven far from the chaos that reigned outside its walls. I was so impressed to see the resilience and support from our children and staff in such difficult times. I want to thank our wonderful Kingswells Staff for working incredibly hard during that week to get to grips with preparing themselves and our pupils for digital learning at home. A big thank you must also go to our Primary 7s who helped out with training and ensuring everyone was ready to learn at home. This training is paying dividends and we are seeing so much fantastic work completed by our pupils. We would also like to thank our parents who have sent message of thanks to staff for their effort in adapting to this new way of working, it is very much appreciated by everyone.

Learning at home

On our school website we have two new tabs offering support. The tab 'support during Covid-19' includes information about how families can seek support and 'Digital Learning' contains guides to help parents understand Google Classroom.

We are grateful to our parents for the ongoing support to ensure learning continues to progress. I can appreciate it is tricky to balance your own home working with supporting your child's learning, please work flexibly, putting into place a system that works for you. Consider supporting your child's learning at a time that works for you; later in the day or at weekends if that is needed. Our PSAs can also help at any time, arranging meetings through Google Meets, please get in touch with the class teacher to arrange if this is needed. It is important for our pupils to engage as much as possible and we are currently undertaking an audit to ensure we are getting it right. Teachers are working hard to keep literacy and numeracy learning aligned with others in their groups, we would encourage you to support this.

In response to parent feedback teachers will identify key learning by placing it first in the schedule of the day or giving it a due date. The key learning will usually be literacy and numeracy. We are grateful to the parents who responded to this and for the appreciative messages to staff.

ASG Partnership – Family Learning

Our next target for our Partnership Forum is to create a calendar of Family Learning opportunities to support parents. We would be interested to hear from our parents about what would help you to support your child's learning so we can make arrangements, please email Kingswells@aberdeencity.gov.uk with your ideas.

Future communication

Aberdeen City Council is shutting down Class Dojo as it does not comply with its GDPR regulations. Thursday 2nd April will be the last day that Class Dojo remains open, please take any photos off this portal before it shuts down. Class Dojo has been a very useful portal for everyone during this week. After Easter parents will be able to get in touch with teachers by private messaging through Google Classroom. Teachers are receiving a huge amount of information through Google Classroom so please be patient if you are waiting for a response. Parents can get in touch with school staff or managers by emailing kingswells@aberdeencity.gov.uk. Nursery staff can also be contacted via school email or on ILD. Please look out for future information about a new app for communication, called Seesaw. It is vital that in these difficult and unsettling times we consider our own wellbeing and that we do all we can to support one another. **We are all in this together so if staff can be of any assistance please do get in touch so we can offer support.**

Supporting key workers children in childcare hubs

To support our key workers to continue their essential work, Aberdeen City Council have opened a number of hubs to provide necessary childcare. Many of our staff have volunteered to take their turn in supporting this work. If your child's teacher is called you will be informed of a change of arrangements through Google Classroom, sharing how this will work for your child. At the time of writing we know that Mrs Wilson from Nursery is supporting at Ashgrove Nursery, Mrs Tait, PSA in Primary 1 has been called w/b 30th March. Mrs Ramage, PE Teacher will be working w/b 30th March and w/b 20th April. Mr Marongwe will be working w/b 20th April; Mrs Wilson and Miss Cowieson will support his class during this week. Mrs MacIver is covering Mile End hub and her work as Head Teacher of Kingswells School. The Depute Head Teachers will be covering a lot of her Kingswells role during this period.

Safe cycle route to Westhill

A focus group of P5 children have been involved in working with Sustrans to consider a safe cycle route from Kingswells to Westhill as the current one is no longer fit for purpose. The children enjoyed being part of this and look forward to seeing the improvements in the future.

further support our pupils. We undertook moderation in writing and reading to investigate whether our own standards in pupil learning is consistent with others. Kingswells School have created a digital portal for teachers to upload children's work and we trialled this with Airyhall School to great success.



Teachers considered the use of quality questioning to ensure pupils are given sufficient opportunity to think deeply about their learning. We also investigated how best to support pupils leading their learning. This information was added to a learning, teaching and assessment framework that we are creating. Time was given to working parties to further develop our School Improvement Planning.

Nursery expansion

From August 2020, in a bid to reduce Scotland's attainment gap, all pre-school children will be entitled to 1140 hours of government funded education. This nearly doubles the current allowance of 600 hours per year and is hoped to support many parents back into employment. From August, Kingswells Nursery will provide 80 Early Learning and Child Care spaces for morning and afternoon sessions which will run from 8am-1pm or 1-6pm; there will be space for 40 children in each session. There is no full day provision at Kingswells but this is available at Brimmond and Stoneywood Nursery. We will be open for 46 weeks a year; closing during the 2 week Christmas holiday, 1 week at Easter and 2 weeks in the Summer holidays. Nursery will also be closed during Bank Holidays but be open during In-Service days. The new model is 'fully flexible' meaning parents can choose to use their full entitlement or part of it; allowing nursery children to attend during holidays if they wish but not as a requirement. Contrary to media reports there is no extension or new build at Kingswells but some small adjustments to the set up inside; new flooring and decoration. With extended hours and reduced ratios we will welcome some new members to our team in the new school year. Nursery applications have closed and we hope that families will hear about their provision in term 4. Parents will be contacted directly by the Early Years Team.

*Please note that since writing this Scottish Government has lifted the deadline of August 2020. More details will be shared in due course.

Curricular Evenings

Kingswells School has offered four opportunities for evening events for parents this term. We held a Primary 7 transition event for parents. This was co-hosted by Kingswells School, Bucksburn Academy and two Secondary 1 pupils who transitioned to Bucksburn Academy last year. This evening gave parents information about what they can do to support their children to have a smooth transition from primary to secondary school. We will review the arrangements to support our pupils with this transition once we have more information about when we can get back to school.

We have been developing a new programme for teaching sexual health and relationships education and we shared this information with P5-7 parents. Our parents said they appreciated the clarity of what children will be taught. Further information can be found in Relationship Education in P5-7 on our website. Our health and wellbeing working party are now looking to develop the curriculum for P1-4.

We had a very successful Loch Insh meeting for our P6 parents and their parents. This was presented by three Primary 6 pupils and was well attended. We are hoping that this trip will go ahead at some point in the next year.

Sadly, our nursery curriculum evening was cancelled due to lack of interest.

PSA job

Following competitive interviews, we have appointed a new Pupil Support Assistant. Last week we welcomed Lynne Middler to our team. To say she had an unusual introduction to her new role is an understatement but we are very happy to have Lynne on board. She will be supporting in Primary 5.

P1 enrolment

At this stage we have a small number of P1 applications for next session. This will make a smaller year group than we usually have and continue the trends of smaller numbers of pupils coming into school, reducing our role overall.

GLEE

P7 worked hard preparing for the Glee competition at the Beach Ballroom earlier this month. They performed exceptionally well on the night but were unfortunately beaten by Broomhill, who were the winners of the heat. They were delighted to get the news the following week that they had won a 'wild card' and were due to compete again in the final later in the term. Unfortunately this will not go ahead but the children and staff really enjoyed the experience and were proud of their achievements.



World Book Day

Mrs Beattie, supported by the library monitors, planned a fun filled World Book Day for Kingswells school pupils again this year. There were lots of fantastic costumes, we have some very creative parents! It was lovely to chat with the pupils about who they were and which books they enjoyed. A competition where pupils had to try and 'guess the bookcase' of staff members by looking at photos hidden around the school had many pupils puzzled, although it was easy to guess who had the copy of 'How Good is Our School' on the shelf!



Sportshall Athletics

A number of pupils enjoyed attending the Sportshall At organised through Aberdeenshire Active Schools and Disability Scotland. A small group of enthusiastic boys participated in a range of adapted athletics activities against pupils from other Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire schools. The indoor athletics activities included speed bounce, javelin, shuttle runs, target throw, standing long jump, hi-stepper and seated chest push. In the afternoon the children participated in a range of relay races. The pupils engaged in the activities really well and enjoyed a very active day out! They had the opportunity to meet other pupils from local schools and developed their confidence in a range of sporting activities.



PTA Disco

Well done to our PTA for organising our Spring Disco. It was well attended and lots of fantastic dance moves were displayed! We are glad the pupils had this chance to have fun together before school closed. As you know, we are postponing our May Fair but as soon as we are back to school our PTA will be busy planning an alternative. I bet some of our talented parents are, even now, coming up with ideas for new, fun games for our Fair whenever it will be.

School QA visit

This term a team from Aberdeen City Council, including Head Teachers and Quality Improvement Managers, visited each class in our school to quality assure the standard of learning and teaching and give us guidance for next steps. The feedback was very positive and many strengths were identified in our staff, pupils and our school community as a whole. We were pleased that all of the areas for next steps suggested were those our school team had already identified and will be included in our School Improvement Plan for next session. The report from this visit will be included in our School Improvement Plan for next session and will be discussed at a future Parent Council meeting. You are welcome to come along if you wish to find out more, date to be advised.

Parent Council

To support parental engagement with learning, our Parent Council created a questionnaire for parents. You can find a summary of the findings below.

Parent Council Engagement Survey results

Participation- 63
(x% of families)

Trends & findings

- ✓ Highest respondents came from P1
- ✓ 65% of respondents would find a dedicated parent representative per class valuable
- ✓ 22% of the above would be happy to fulfil the role
- ✓ 90% of respondents have engaged with children's learning through supporting home amidst other initiatives
- ✓ The majority of respondents found the most effective support tool to be Dojo as well as direct interface with teachers and other parents
- ✓ The main barriers faced by parents are: work commitments, timing conflicts and childcare.

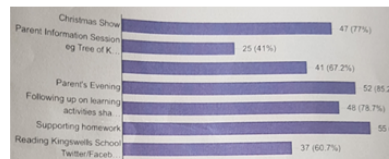
Actions & Next Steps

- ✓ Create more opportunities for pupils to present at parents information sessions to drive parental engagement
- ✓ Introduce greater flexibility in the scheduling of events and sessions to suit more families: for instance, rotation of days & times.
- ✓ Parents who are interested in taking up "Parent class representative" duties to contact Parent Council team
- ✓ Remember, you can contact the Parent Council team at:

Pckingswells@aberdeen.npfs.org.uk

Opportunities

- ✓ Increase number of respondents in future engagement surveys to drive continuous improvement
- ✓ To maximise the impact of parent information sessions to better support children's learning. (ref below and low uptake of information sessions)



Life Skills

This year the Life Skills group started up again with some new members and some familiar faces. Term 1 and 2 were spent developing kitchen safety and cooking skills and exploring the wider community. The pupils had the opportunities to find out what facilities were on offer in Kingswells, Bucksburn and Westhill. During term 3 the pupils enjoyed developing independence in a fun way this term. Each pupil had to plan a trip for the whole group, connected to a particular interest of their own. This involved researching their chosen location, making all the necessary arrangements and phone calls and even thinking about the risk assessment needed. There were also plenty links to numeracy as the children had to work out the timings of the trips and the costs involved. This enabled them to develop their money and time skills in a real life and practical way. Plans were made to visit parks, museums, cafes etc. Unfortunately not all trips went ahead but hopefully they will be able to do this when we all return to school.



Rotary Quiz

A small group of P7 pupils represented Kingswells at the Rotary quiz at Airyhall Primary School earlier this term. They spent a lot of time preparing for the quiz and practising general knowledge questions and they performed really well on the day. The competition was extremely close, with Kingswells coming in third place. Well done to all who took part.



Commented [GM1]:

Friendship Bench

Last session our Young Leaders of Learning identified that it was hard for new pupils to know which of our benches was the friendship bench. They worked hard to contact various companies to source thermoplastic signage for the bench and after a few disappointments we found Emerald Maintenance who were extremely helpful and efficient. The new markings were laid on 10th March and are just what we had been hoping for! Hopefully we will be back at school soon to enjoy them and continue to practice 'just being nice' in our playground. You may have noticed that some of our pupils around the bench are wearing spotty tops, this is to remember Mrs McPherson who loved spots. We are grateful for your fundraising and the PTA who have kindly funded these playground markings.



Boccia

In term 3 Sarah Fraser, our Active Schools Coordinator successfully achieved a grant from Prime 4 to run an after school family Boccia session. Initially this was very well attended, however our numbers have dropped significantly and this will now be run as a pupil lunchtime club on Mondays with our Boccia coach Rebekah.

Congratulations

Congratulations to Mrs MacNay who got married in February. We wish the happy couple lots of happiness for the future.