**Date: 14th December 2016**

**Balhousie Primary School Newsletter**

Dear Parents/Carers,

We are now well into the Christmas season. Merry Christmas to you all, along with your families.

We have a number of key dates that I wish to highlight with you:

* Wednesday 14th November PM - P5/6 Filming with Senior Citizens
* Parties - P1 & P2 Monday 19th December PM
* P3/4 & P4 Tuesday 20th December PM
* P5/6 & P6/7 Thursday 22nd December PM
* **Party clothes can be worn in afternoon only.**
* Monday 19th December AM - Dress rehearsal  for concert
* Wednesday 21st December 13.30 to 15.00 – Concert (seated by 13:20)
* Friday 23rd December, End of term – finish at 12:00.
* The new term will begin on Monday 9th January at 09:00.

New Term: Monday January 9th

Scottish week: Week beginning 23rd January

Burns Day celebration: Thursday 26th January

In-service and Valentine’s weekend: Children off Wednesday 15th –Friday 17th February.

**School Improvement Plan**

This session we continue to develop literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing in school. We also plan to develop three specific aspects of learning:

1. Raising attainment for all children and supporting children at risk through poverty.
2. Children and families more engaged in school leadership and responsibilities.
3. Families to be engaged in learning at all stages.

Although these three sentences are fairly bland, there is a lot of work to be done to make them come true. Activities such as Stay and Play, Open Afternoons, Curriculum Times, public performances/concerts, reading assessments, English as an Additional Language groups, homework club, after school sports, residential’s and educational visits, class assessments, learning discussions and profiles all contribute to these aims. We also continue to ensure that high standards are aimed for in all curriculum areas.

Next term, we will introduce Paired Reading as one tool to improve reading standards for all. I will also be contacting both children and parents and asking everyone to complete an online survey about school. We will also begin to work with pupils so that they can deliver a curriculum afternoon in February. There is a lot going on in school and I value the opportunity to work in partnership with children and parents to make Balhousie a place to be proud of in every respect.

**New Term**

From January 2017, the whole school will begin three weekly sessions of:

1. Paired Reading. This is a carefully set up system that will involve older readers working with a partner from a younger class. The benefits of this can have a dramatic improvement upon reading ability and interest. Please see <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0001/1015/Paired_reading_scheme_toolkit.pdf>

for a link to research evidence. For most children, this will mean that staff will be listening less to reading for one term only. Some children will continue with very regular reading practise.

1. In addition to Paired Reading, we will also be looking very closely at improving spelling in all classes. We will work closely with our Support Teacher, Mrs. Erdelyi, to introduce new,
2. interactive spelling in classes. This will run (in the first instance) from January to April.
3. A third focus will be upon the quality of handwriting and layout in all classes. I do believe that a well laid out piece of work gives structure to a child, helps them take a pride in what they do and makes it much easier for children and staff to be able to see where errors may be taking place.
4. It may also come as no surprise that we will also look closely at the speed of number bonds, number facts and basic numeracy across the school.

Over the course of the new term, we also hope to make more use of GLOW (digital resources) with each child. Included in this is the possibility that we may post homework to classes and for the children to respond from home. Every child will have unlimited free access to the whole of Microsoft Office from home: tablet, PC, laptop or phone. I certainly envisage a time where teachers are able to ask children to make more use of higher order questions as homework and by doing so, to make use of the type of questions that will really stretch the minds of our young people.

Whilst we may have worthwhile plans for school improvement, we really need enough adults to help us support every child. As parents, you can help by continuing to listen to your child’s reading at home, by talking about what they have read and by constantly talking with your child about any words you may see on shops, road signs, street names etc. Older children will also benefit from e.g. discussion about the news, interesting books or film etc. As far as numeracy is concerned, times tables, addition, subtraction etc. can become a quiz that can even be played as you walk to school.

I would also welcome adult volunteers who will be able to help pass on their skills to our pupils. Please speak to me if you think that you can help. If we are to give enough help to all children, we will have to rely upon you as volunteers to give the additional support that is needed. As a school, we will organise training for any teaching methods required.

We have recently been told of a great free course to help get some more men into childcare. It runs at Perth Grammar School Community Wing, beginning in January 2017. Please call 01738 472350 for more details.

Finally – a new Badminton Club for P6 and P7 will begin at school on Fridays (3-4pm) from January 2017. I will give out more information in the New Year.

Have a wonderful Christmas and a very happy New Year.

Here are a number of emergency numbers you may value over the holiday:

Welfare Rights - 01738 476900

Social Work Duty – 01738 476768

Childline - 0800 1111

Perth and Kinross Council - 01738 476200

Yours faithfully,

Peter D. Ferguson

Headteacher