



The Brownlee Newsletter

February 2020

*"A school where the individual is valued in a supportive and safe environment
where everyone's learning experience is celebrated."*

Dear Parents

February is always one of the busiest months of the school year. At the end of January, the results of the Grammar School entrance tests were published and last week parents were making important decisions about post-primary education. This is also the time of year when a considerable amount of curriculum work is covered throughout the school.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate all the children who sat the AQE and GL Grammar School entrance tests. We were pleased that children performed as expected and many did very well indeed. We know this is a large intake year for post-primary but we trust that each child will obtain a place in their school of choice. We are extremely proud of all our P7 children and many of them are presently down in Dublin for their Shared Education residential visit with Fort Hill Integrated Primary School.

It was a pleasure to meet with P7 parents last week for the Transfer Interviews and have the opportunity to discuss your child's preferences for post-primary schools. It is difficult to believe the children are at this stage of their education as it only seems like yesterday that they were starting P1. I want to thank you for your encouraging comments, during these meetings, about our school and the staff. This means a lot to us both as a staff and individuals, especially at this time when schools are dealing with so many additional issues and pressures.

P1 Enrolment 2020/21

We very much appreciate the fact that many parents have recommended Brownlee Primary School to neighbours and friends. We are once again over-subscribed for P1 in September 2020 and I will look forward to contacting the successful applicants in due course. The pre-school has also had an excellent response this year.

Half Term and Exceptional Closure

School will be closed for a week over half term from Monday 17th – Friday 21st February.

P6 Transfer Preparation

After half term, Mrs Woods will begin working with P6 children who are interested in entering the AQE and GL tests in November. She will support Mrs McManus by working with groups of more-able children in the P6 class and ensuring that these pupils have additional experience in answering the type of questions and problem solving activities that they may face in the future. Mrs Woods will also be running an after-school club for P6 every Wednesday afternoon for those children planning to sit the entrance tests. As

children become more familiar with the practice tests, each child's responses will be analysed to find if there are any areas where additional support is required. Progress will be tracked and we will aim to ensure that children sitting the entrance tests are reaching their performance peak around October / November.

For those children not planning to sit the tests, nothing will change. Mrs McManus will continue to deliver the P6 curriculum as normal and they will not be disadvantaged in any way. If you have questions at any stage, please feel free to discuss these with Mrs McManus at the Parent / Teacher interview next week or alternatively please contact me if you need any further clarification.

Valentine's Party and Disco

There will be a Valentine's Party for P1-3 and a Disco for the children from P4-7 during school on **Friday 14th February**. These will be organised by the Parent Teacher Association with the P1-3 party beginning at 9.30am and finishing at 10.30am. The P4-7 disco will run from 10.30am – 11.30am. The cost will be £2 per child as we will be supplying free tuck for the older children. Flyers from the PTA and the image contains more details.

Parent / Teacher Interviews

Parent / Teacher Interviews will begin on Monday 10th February. A separate letter has been sent out to parents regarding this. To facilitate the interviews, school will close that week at 12.35pm for P1-3 plus older siblings and the remainder of the children will leave at 1.00pm.

Link with US School

I will be away for a couple of days prior to half term to visit a school called the Berta Weathersbee Elementary School in LaGrange, Georgia in the USA. Our P5 class are currently developing a link with this school in America and have already written pen-pal letters to them. I will be meeting the Principal, Mr Cooks, and staff, as well as teaching the 3rd Grade (P5 age) children about Brownlee and life in Northern Ireland. I hope this will be the start of a new link for Brownlee, which will complement the existing links we already have with schools in India and Myanmar. The town of LaGrange in Georgia is also twinned with my home town of Portadown and I have been involved in supporting the 'Sister City' project for over ten years. This visit will not be of any cost to our school as I have been able to incorporate it into a singing tour I am doing to the Southern States over the half term break.



School Policies and Routines

Every 18 months or so, I have to write out to parents just to ensure that everyone is aware of our school policies and routines. Many of these are published on the school's website and are primarily for the safety and wellbeing of all the children in the school. There are a few little matters which I trust will be easily corrected, however, it is important that I bring them to your attention, especially if you are relatively new to the school.

- Each morning we run a Breakfast Club in the school's assembly hall. This runs from 8am – 8.40am. After that time there are staff deployed to the playground to supervise children as they arrive. Any child on the school grounds prior to 8.40am MUST go to the Breakfast Club. Children must not be left unattended in the front garden or in the vicinity of the school. Any child found on the grounds at this time will be brought into the Breakfast Club and parents will be asked to pay the £1 for Breakfast Club supervision.
- When children arrive at school each morning, they should enter through the front garden and into the playground. Children should not be coming through the front door at this time. All children should now be able to enter the playground and line up with the other children in their class. Pupils should not be entering the school in the mornings with their parents unless a specific agreement has been made with the class teacher. This creates a bad routine for your child and can become difficult to break as the child gets older. There is also a child protection issue here and parents or other adults should only be in school if they have an appointment or are visiting reception. Parents should not be in the cloakroom area unless escorted by a member of staff and no parent or adult should be in the pupil toilets at any time.
- A number of children are consistently late in the mornings and this again is a bad routine which we need to break. Over the course of a week a significant amount of teaching time is lost due to lateness and this has been noted by our Education Welfare Officer during her monthly audits. School starts at 8.55am and if your child is late due to an accident on the roads or another one-off legitimate reason, they should enter the school through the front door unaccompanied unless the parent has a reason to speak to Mrs Oliver at Reception. Once again, parents and other adults should only be in the school building if they have an appointment, are going to visit Reception or have been invited into school by a member of staff.
- From 8.40am – 8.55am there are many meetings taking place among members of staff. As Principal, I find this to be a convenient time to consult with teachers and other staff prior to the start of the school day. This period is also an important preparation time for the teaching staff. If you need to speak to any member of staff first thing in the morning, please ring ahead the day before or prior to coming in to confirm if it is going to be suitable. We will try to facilitate a meeting if there is an urgent matter to deal with, however, please do not be offended if you are asked to come back at another time.
- Please note that parents are welcome to use the outer porch to shelter from poor weather conditions at collection times.

As a school we highly value our parents and always want you to feel welcome in our school. We have to balance this with our teaching commitments the need to have consistent policies and procedures for ALL children and parents. This will ensure the well-being of all the children, protection for parents and minimal disruption to the teaching and learning in the classroom. I thank you all in anticipation.

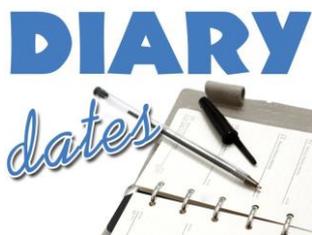
School Show

Tickets for our school show at the Island Theatre will go on sale shortly after half term. The show, entitled 'Hitzville' will take place on the evening of Thursday 2nd April and a specific letter will follow providing all the necessary information. As we are limited to just under 400 seats, we will initially distribute 2 tickets to each family, however, more can be requested and we will do our very best to ensure that everyone who wants a ticket will have the opportunity to purchase one.

Breakfast Club

I am throwing out the net once again to see if any parents could assist our Breakfast Club staff from 8am – 8.40am on Monday and Friday mornings? Voluntary support helps keep the price of the club at a very nominal rate and if we can get several replies, we can spread the load. If you can help, please contact Mrs Oliver at Reception or send a DoJo message to your child's teacher.

Here are some dates for your diary this month; I appreciate that a few of these have already happened.



Tuesday 4th February

Ian Patterson visited the school with his birds of prey. The children really enjoyed these workshops with the live birds and the cost of £170 was covered by the PTA. Once again I want to sincerely thank the PTA for supporting this event.

Wednesday 5th February

We were able to do an official big cheque presentation for £1000 to Rebecca Oates from the Northern Ireland Cancer Fund for Children. Thank you again to everyone who contributed through our non-uniform day and the collection at our school's Carol Service back in December.

Thursday 6th February and Friday 7th February

Children from P7 are visiting Dublin as part of our Shared Education programme with Fort Hill Integrated Primary School.

Monday 10th February

Parent / teacher interviews begin this week. Details of interview times will be included in a separate letter. Please note the early closure of school on each day of that week. **P1-3 plus older siblings will leave at 12.35pm and the remainder of the P4-7 children will leave at 1.00pm.**

Miss Maginess, who is a student from Stranmillis University College, will be starting her 6-week placement at Brownlee.

Friday 15th February

Valentine's Party and Disco.

Half Term

School will be closed for half term from **Monday 17th to Friday 21st February.**

I will keep you informed of any additional information as the month progresses. We will also keep you updated on Class DoJo.

Yours sincerely

Colin Elliott

Principal