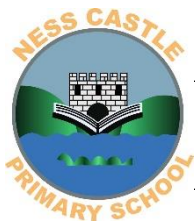




School Handbook 2024/25

Ness Castle Primary School
Brodie Road
INVERNESS
IV2 6FW

Head Teacher: Craig Connon



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A WELCOME FROM OUR HEAD TEACHER

Welcome to Ness Castle Primary School!

It is my great privilege to write this welcome as the first Head Teacher of Ness Castle Primary School.

Ness Castle Primary officially opened in August 2022, within the grounds of Holm Primary School as our new school building was still to be completed. At that time, we welcomed children and young people from Nursery age through to Primary 6 into the Ness Castle family. In February 2023 we moved into our brand new building and we love it! It holds so many exciting opportunities for the children and young people, as well as the staff, parents and local community.

As we are still relatively new, our Handbook will continue to grow as we continue to build our school community, ethos and curriculum. We have built a strong, exciting and forward-thinking community of learners who, with the support of our staff, family and community members, will develop their full potential. As our school grows, so will this ethos. Positive relationships sit at heart of a great school and, through working together, we will continue to support the development of our children and young people.

Communication is vital for our school, and this has to be two-way. If you would like any further information, check out our school website, which includes our class blogs -

<https://sites.google.com/invernessroyalacademy.org.uk/nesscastleprimary>

We very much look forward to welcoming you and your child(ren) into the Ness Castle family. If you have any queries or questions, don't hesitate to get in touch via our email address nesscastle.primary@highland.gov.uk.

Kind regards,

Craig Connon

Head Teacher



SCHOOL INFORMATION

Our School Address and Contact Details

Ness Castle Primary School
Brodie Road
INVERNESS
IV2 6FW
Telephone: 01463 383600
Email: nesscastle.primary@highland.gov.uk
Website: <https://sites.google.com/invernessroyalacademy.org.uk/nesscastleprimary>
X (formerly known as Twitter): @NessCastlePS

Our School and ELC Roll (as at December 2023)

School - 158
ELC - 61

Our School Day

School Day Starts	Whole School	9am
Breaktime	Whole School	10.45am - 11am
Lunchtime	P1 - P3	12.15pm - 1.15pm
	P4 - P7	12.30pm - 1.15pm
School Day Finishes	P1 - P3	2.45pm
	P4 - P7	3pm

Our Early Learning and Childcare Day

Our ELC is open from 8am - 5.30pm, Monday to Friday during term time. Government funded 1140 hours per year or 30 hours per week are offered as parental choice, in partnership with our nursery capacity, with the option to self-fund additional hours if available. Additional information can be found by emailing our ELC/School Aged Childcare Clerical Assistant Barbara Graham on Barbara.Graham@highland.gov.uk.

School Aged Childcare

We offer Breakfast Club for all pupils from 8am and After School Club until 5.45pm. Costs for this are as per Highland Council policy. Please check with the school or Highland Council website for the most current pricing.

Places at Breakfast and After School Club are limited and can be reserved by contacting our ELC/School Aged Childcare Clerical Assistant - Barbara.Graham@highland.gov.uk - who can share the relevant application form. These application forms can also be found on our school website.

OUR SCHOOL IDENTITY

For any school, the school's identity is vital in building a positive school community. As a new school it was important that our children and families were involved in the process of deciding what our school badge and uniform colours would be.

Our School Badge

Our pupils were given the opportunity to take part in a competition to design our school badge. The successful design includes the rolling hills and Loch Ness, as well as a castle appearing out of a book and, of course, our school mascot, Nessie! Well done to Freya (one of our original P5 pupils) for this wonderful design idea!



Our school badge is used on our uniform as well as within the school and on our school communication.

Our School Uniform

Our uniform colour is royal blue (now known as "Ness Castle Blue") and our uniform items include:

- Royal blue jumper/cardigan
- Royal blue polo shirt
- Grey or black trousers/skirt/pinafore
- Blue summer dress
- Outdoor shoes
- Indoor shoes

In addition, we offer a royal blue t-shirt for our ELC children



Parents/carers are not expected to purchase badged uniform. Royal blue uniform items can be found in a number of different local shops and supermarkets.

Badged uniform can currently be found via the following link - <https://schoolwearmadeeasy.com/collections/ness-castle-primary>

OUR SCHOOL TEAM

We have a fantastic staff team at Ness Castle Primary School, all working for the good of the children and families of our school. This is an ever-growing team and, as the school numbers increase, our staff team will also increase in size.

Our Leadership Team

Head Teacher – Craig Connon
Depute Head Teacher – Miss Shona MacLean
Principal Teacher – Mrs Helen Mudie
Clerical Assistant (School) – Mrs Elaine Imlack

Our School Team

P1 – Miss Gemma Munro
P1M – Mrs Helen Mudie
P2 – Miss Kelly MacIsaac
P3 – Mr Craig Munro / Mrs Sarah Tulloch (maternity leave)
P4 – Miss Fareedah Ewen
P5 – Miss Sophie Shepherd
P6 – Miss Brianna Walker
P7 – Mrs Megan Bell
Probationer Cover, PT Cover and PEF Teacher – Mrs Pauline Thomson (Wed and Thurs)
Additional Support Needs Teacher – Mrs Janet Vogan (Tues and Wed)
Pupil Support Assistant – Mrs Hayley Knight (Mon, Tues and Wed)
Pupil Support Assistant – Miss Cara Mackintosh
Pupil Support Assistant – Mrs Morag McGiluray (Thurs and Fri)
Pupil Support Assistant – Mrs Helen McKay
Pupil Support Assistant – Mrs Marie Simms

Our ELC and School Aged Childcare Team

Senior Early Years Practitioner – Mrs Rachel MacLuer
Early Years Practitioner – Mrs Angela Budge
Early Years Practitioner – Mrs Fiona Fredericks
Early Years Practitioner – Miss Rachael Gillies
Early Years Practitioner – Mrs Marie Goodman
Early Years Practitioner – Miss Lauren Gordon
Early Years Practitioner – Miss Devon Grieve
Early Years Practitioner – Mrs Christine Jarvie
Early Years Practitioner – Mrs Fiona Patullo
Early Years Practitioner – Miss Skye Scobie (maternity leave)
Early Years Support Worker – Mrs Angie Graham (Mon, Tues and Wed)
Early Years Support Worker – Mrs Kasia Mamzer-Podgorska
Early Years Support Worker – Mrs Tracey Smith
Clerical Assistant (ELC/School Aged Childcare) – Mrs Barbara Graham
School Aged Childcare Auxiliary – Mrs Sandie McBride
Cross Sector Support Worker (ELC and After School Club) – Miss Caitlin Henry
Support Worker (ELC and After School Club) – Mrs Jo Riddell

Our Facilities and Catering Team

Cook in Charge – Mrs Cindy Campbell
Cook – Mrs Karen Andrew
Cook – Mrs Susan Dick
Cook – Mrs Wendy Stewart



OUR SCHOOL ETHOS

As a relatively new school we are continuing to build our ethos, Vision, Values and Aims together. This has and will continue to include working with the pupils, staff, families and community members to build a school which will be at the heart of the wider community.

Our ethos is one which has a family feel. A warm, inviting environment where we are all working together towards a shared goal. We want our school to be an exciting place to come and learn on a daily basis, where we aspire for the best for all our pupils whilst celebrating both in and out of school achievements.



Already we have achieved our Rights Respecting School Bronze – Rights Committed status. We are also a validated Core status Reading School through the Scottish Book Trust. The pupils and staff are currently working towards Silver Accreditation for both Awards.



Our Vision, Values and Aims

We are in the process of undertaking a full consultation to ensure we have shared Vision, Values and Aims that will be engrained in all that we do.

We have recently agreed on our Values, which include – Respect, Friendship, Honesty, Kindness, and Trust.

Equality and Diversity

We are a school which holds equality and diversity at the heart of our work and that everyone is treated equally and fairly. Once established, we will develop an Equality and Diversity Policy which reflects this.

The Council's Equality and Diversity policy for schools can be found on the link below: https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/11627/promoting_diversity_and_equality_policy

We aim to build relationships and partnerships with the wider community. This will include making sporting, cultural, religious and business links to give our pupils a wide range of opportunities and links the “real world”. In summary, our activities in ELC and school will ensure that we:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination
- advance equality of opportunity
- promote good relations



Our school activities will not discriminate against any of the following ‘protected characteristics’- age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity.

This will be supported by our work focusing on the UNCRC Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Promoting Positive Relationships

As a school we promote positive behaviour and foster good relationships which motivates pupils. Our emphasis on all aspects of health and wellbeing and positive behaviour such as restorative, solution focused and nurturing approaches will give pupils and staff a process to follow.

We encapsulate the UNCRC's Rights of the child within our positive behaviour approach, with each class, including the ELC and Out Of School Club, creating a Class Charter each session. The children are encouraged to follow the expectations of their Class Charter on a daily basis.

The school also follows Highland Council's guidance and policies on Positive Relationships and Bullying Prevention which can be found here:

[Highland Council Promoting Positive Relationships](#)

[Highland Council Positive Relationships and Bullying Prevention Policy and Guidance](#)

Over the course of this session, as part of our School Improvement Plan, we are working on creating our Promoting Positive Relationships policy.

OUR CURRICULUM

As we are a new school, we have the exciting opportunity to build our curriculum and rationale that sits behind it to make sure it is relevant for the children in our ELC and School as well as exciting and aspirational. This forms part of our current School Improvement Plan which we are implementing across this and forthcoming sessions.

As a basis we follow Scotland's curriculum guidance, the Curriculum for Excellence. Curriculum for Excellence is designed to achieve a transformation in education in Scotland by providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum from 3 to 18. The curriculum includes the totality of experiences which are planned for children and young people through their education, wherever they are being educated. The curriculum aims to ensure that all children in Scotland develop the knowledge, skills, values and attributes that they need to flourish in life, learning and work.

The knowledge, skills, values and attributes learners will develop will allow them to demonstrate four key capacities – to be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

The totality of experiences

The curriculum includes all of the experiences which are planned for children and young people through their education, wherever they are being educated. These experiences are grouped into four categories known as the contexts for learning.



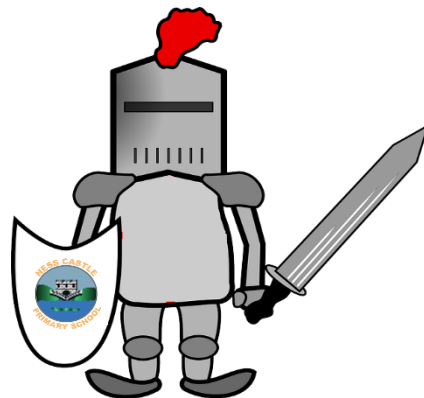
<p><u>Opportunities for personal achievement</u></p> <p>Children and young people need opportunities for achievements both in the classroom and beyond, giving them a sense of satisfaction and building motivation, resilience and confidence.</p>	<p><u>Interdisciplinary learning</u></p> <p>The curriculum should include space for learning beyond subject boundaries which will provide learners with the opportunity to develop insights and apply skills in a way and/or to a degree not offered through the study of a discrete curriculum area.</p>
<p><u>Ethos and life of the school</u></p> <p>The starting point for learning is a positive ethos and climate of respect and trust based upon shared values with genuine engagement across the school community.</p>	<p><u>Curriculum areas and subjects</u></p> <p>The curriculum areas are the organisers for setting out the experiences and outcomes. Each area contributes to the four capacities and consists of: Numeracy, Literacy, Health and Well-Being, Religious and Moral Education, Sciences, Technologies, Social Studies and Expressive Arts</p>

Added to this, because children learn through all of their experiences – in the family and community, nursery and school – the curriculum aims to recognise and complement the contributions that these experiences can make.

Key Workers in our ELC and Class Teachers in the school will share our curriculum throughout the year with families and we will continue to work together to develop what this will look at Ness Castle Primary School.

It is important that achievements – both academic and personal, in and out of school – are shared with one another. Hosting a weekly assembly is one way we do that at Ness Castle, coming together as a whole school. Our assemblies include:

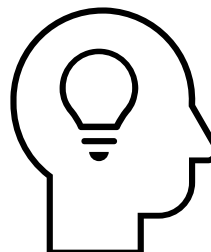
- Every week, each class teacher identifying a “Nessie Knight” who has gone above and beyond that week. They get knighted and presented with their certificate award and sticker.
- A monthly section where good work is shared, with pupils sharing successes with their peers across other classes.
- A monthly section where outside of school achievements are shared. This includes medals, certificates or other forms of recognition of pupils having wider success in their lives.
- An opportunity to come together in song, with the songs having a positive ethos and health and wellbeing theme.
- Each class taking the lead once a session, sharing their learning with their parents/carers and other family members in a showcase fashion.
- “Nessie”, our school mascot, being shared with a class who have shown excellent listening and behaviour.
- A weekly House Points total is shared with the children, where they have been given the opportunity, across the week, to gain House Points for “above and beyond” behaviour and attitude.
- A Community Assembly each term, where parents, carers and members of the local community are invited to join in with a regular weekly Assembly.



LEARNING, TEACHING and ASSESSMENT

As detailed above, within Ness Castle we will be covering all eight areas of the curriculum. These include:

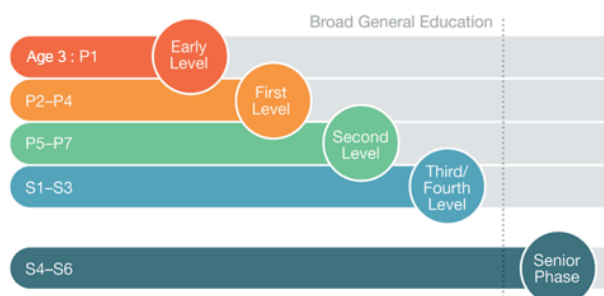
- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Health and Wellbeing
- Religious and Moral Education
- Sciences
- Technologies
- Social Studies
- Expressive Arts



As our initial year progresses, particular detail will be added to exemplify how these will be taught within our school and what learner journeys will look like. Other important cross curricular and interdisciplinary areas that we will consider include outdoor learning, the use of digital technologies as well as skills for learning, life and work.

Our pupils, staff and parents/carers will continue to be involved in this evolving process.

Within the Curriculum for Excellence there are five curriculum levels - Early, First, Second, Third and Fourth - in the Broad General Education (BGE) and then pupils move to the Senior Phase.



Please Note: This is a general guide. Learners will progress at their own pace through the curriculum levels - the framework is designed to be flexible to permit careful planning for all pupils.

As a school, we seek to provide information to pupils, parents and staff to assist in the effectiveness of learning and teaching process and in raising attainment.

Teachers will use the assessment process as an evaluative, diagnostic and formative tool to provide evidence of pupil attainment and progress and to inform learning and teaching approaches and pupil targets.

Pupils should view the assessment process as a motivating experience which takes place within the overall context of a supportive school. Pupils will make use of feedback, in all its forms to inform next steps for the improvement of their own learning.

Parents/carers will receive feedback on their child's progress through pupil reports, progress checks and target setting information. Pupils will also get a chance to reflect on this within their class on a regular basis. Our annual reporting programme includes: Early September - "Hopes and Dreams" meetings, where parents share information about their child to their new class teacher, as well as any hopes and dreams they have for the coming year.

November - Parent Consultation 1 - where class teachers and Key Workers share an update on children's progress, including strengths and development needs,

March - Parent Consultation 2

June - A End of Year School Report is issued, which includes teacher comments on successes and areas of development, as well as an age-appropriate learner statement, created by the pupils.

As a school, we are keen to keep parents/carers informed regularly with regards to pupil progress, with nothing coming as a surprise within a Pupil Report or Parent Consultation session. Parents/carers wishing to enquire about their child's progress are invited to get in touch with the school via telephone or the school's email address (nesscastle.primary@highland.gov.uk) and their child's class teacher will get back in touch. A member of the school's Leadership Team can also be contacted if this is more appropriate.

Achievement of a Level Data

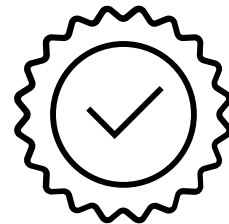
At the end of Primary 1, Primary 4 and Primary 7 we share our attainment data with the Scottish Government to show our progress in attainment:

- ✓ Primary 1: % of children that have achieved the Early Level of Curriculum for Excellence
- ✓ Primary 4: % of children that have achieved the First Level of Curriculum for Excellence
- ✓ Primary 7: % of children that have achieved the Second Level of Curriculum for Excellence.

Teachers at Primary 1, 4 and 7 make these judgements through ongoing assessments and monitoring children's progress in class, linked to the Benchmarks for each of the levels identified by Education Scotland.

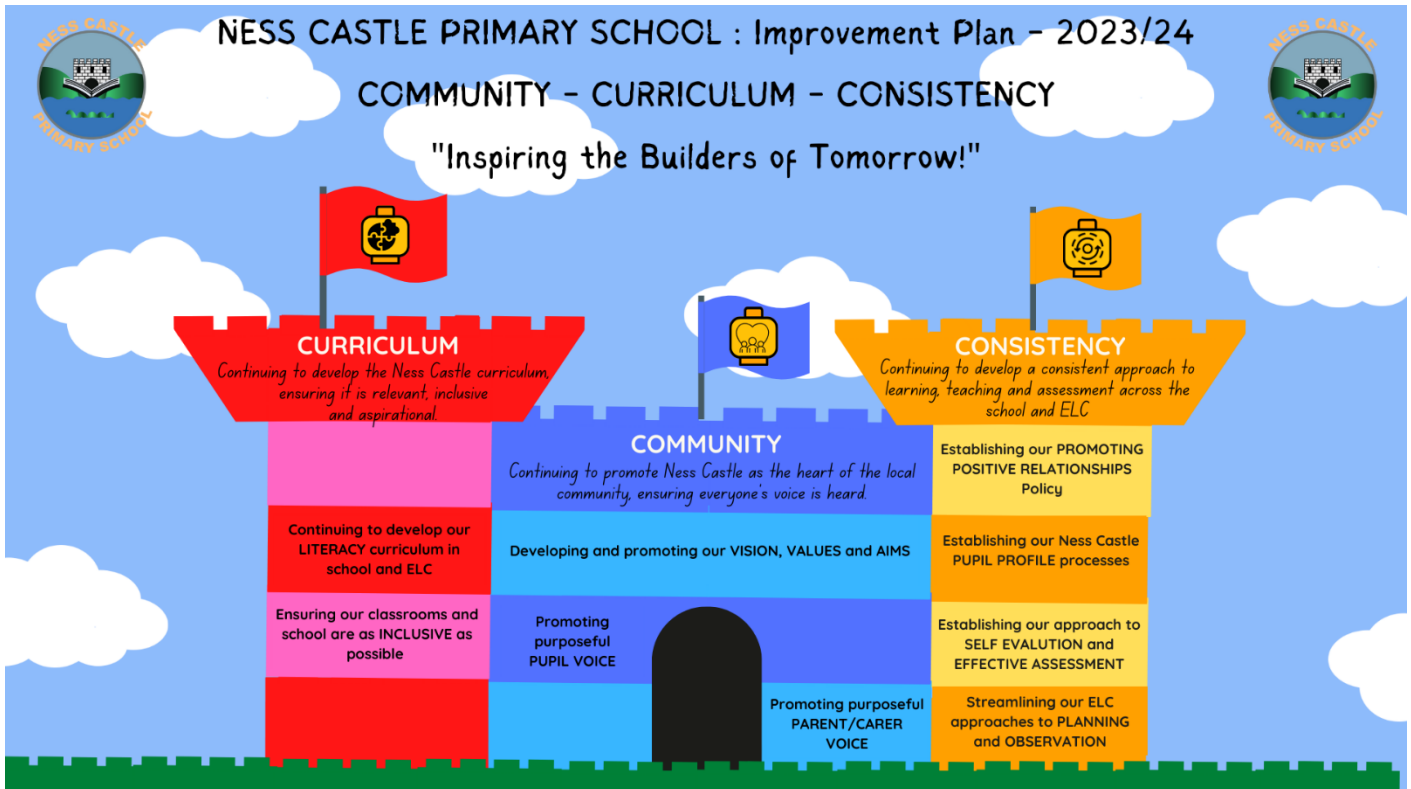
Further information on Assessment can be found here -

<https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/learning-in-scotland/assessment-and-achievement>



OUR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT JOURNEY

Our School Improvement Plan for the session 2023 – 24 is detailed below. This is a simplified child/parent/carer friendly version of the plan. A full and detailed plan can be requested via the school.



We will continue to work with staff, pupils and parents/carers on an annual basis to decide upon our Improvement Priorities as well as evaluate the previous year's plan, creating a Standards and Quality Report. These will be published on the school website as well as shared with the Parent Forum.

As part of our Improvement Journey, over time we will be able to compare Ness Castle's performance to that at both local and national level. Further information on school data in general can be found here:

<https://education.gov.scot/inspection-reports/highland>

<https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/my-school/school-information-dashboard/>

ENROLMENT

Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Enrolment

Children born between 15 August 2018 and 28 February 2021 are currently entitled to a funded Early Learning and Childcare place (as at Dec 2023).

For Early Learning and Childcare places, enrolment week takes place in mid-February. Current details can be found here -

https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/878/schools/11/enrol_your_child_for_early_learning_and_childcare/2. The enrolment process can be undertaken by clicking on the link above and enrolments can continue to be made throughout the course of the session. Please contact the school if you have any queries or questions.

Additional guidance for ELC Enrolment can also be found here -

https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/17451/early_learning_and_childcare_enrolment_guidance_for_parents_2022-23

Primary 1 Enrolment

If your child will be five years of age on or before 28 February 2024, they are eligible to enrol for Primary 1 during this session. (as at Dec 2023)

Enrolment week for Primary 1 takes place towards the end of January/start of February, but enrolments can continue to be made after this date. This can be done via the Highland Council website -

https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/878/schools/887/enrol_your_child_for_school. Please contact the school if you have any queries or questions regarding Primary 1 enrolment.

Additional guidance can also be found here -

https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/17207/enrolling_your_child_for_school_guidance_2022-23_english

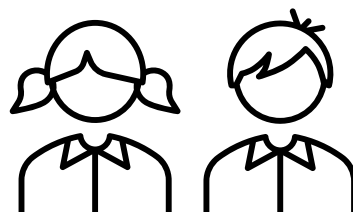
School Placing Requests

Each school serves its own particular catchment area. Pupils whose homes are located in that area will have priority in being allocated a place in the school. However, parents have the right to specify the school in which they wish to place their child. Placing request applications can be made online at:

https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/878/schools/887/enrol_your_child_for_school/2

Transportation to and from school, for placing request pupils, is a parental responsibility.

If you live out with the school catchment area and you wish your child(ren) to attend Ness Castle Primary School, you should contact the School Office to arrange a visit. A member of the Leadership Team will be more than happy to show you around and answer any questions you may have.



TRANSITION

Transitions take place at many times throughout a child's school career – into Nursery, from Nursery to Primary 1, between classes (e.g., from Primary 4 to Primary 5) and from Primary School into Secondary Education. Each of these are exciting times for pupils and you as parents/carers but they can also be nerve-racking, having a fear of the unknown.

At Ness Castle we aim to make these transitions as smooth as possible.

Transition into ELC

All children get the chance to undertake some settling in sessions within the ELC, before they stay for a full session. This would generally include some time in the setting with a parent/carer, a shorter session without a parent/carer and then a longer session. This is adaptable, depending on your child and how well they settle. This will be discussed on an individual basis.

Transition into Primary 1

Visits to your child's current Nursery establishment will take place between April and the end of June. This will allow us to see your child in their current setting as well as talk with their key worker. Other transition experiences will also take place for both pupils and parents/carers. The details of these will be shared directly with parents/carers as they change each session. As part of this transition, children will be matched up with a senior pupil within the school to be their buddy. The buddies will help the children to settle in and with general routines within the school and playground.

Transition from Primary to Secondary School

Pupils normally transfer to Secondary between the ages of 11 ½ and 12 ½ years old so that they will have the opportunity to complete at least four years of Secondary Education. Parents will be informed of the arrangements no later than December of the year preceding the date of transfer at the start of the new session. Pupils from Ness Castle will transfer to:

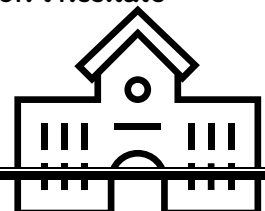
Inverness Royal Academy
Culduthel Road
Inverness
IV2 6RE
Telephone - (01463) 667800
Email - ira@highland.gov.uk
Head Teacher - Mr Nigel Engstrand

Throughout the course of Primary 7, and even before, children will take part in a number of different transition events to support this big change.

Enhanced Transition

To ensure all pupils make a successful transition to Ness Castle, or from Ness Castle to their Secondary School, enhanced transition experiences will be available. This will ensure all pupils are given the best start to their school experience.

If you would like to discuss your child's transition to or from Ness Castle, don't hesitate to contact Mr Connors or another member of the Leadership Team.



OUR PARENTS/CARERS and FAMILIES

Establishing our parents/carers as positive partners is vital in ensuring our school becomes the heart of the community, providing a healthy exchange of information.

Parent/Carer Communication

Good communication is vital, and we ensure this in a variety of ways...

- School Website:

Our school website contains a vast amount of information about the school, our classes and curriculum. Each class within our school has a blog within the website which each class teachers keeps updated on a weekly basis. This allows us to share learning and exciting achievements with parents/carers and the wider community. The link to our website is -

<https://sites.google.com/invernessroyalacademy.org.uk/nesscastleprimary>



- X/ Twitter

Our X/Twitter feed (@NessCastlePS) is used to share news and achievements with parents/carers and the wider community.



- School App

Our School App is used to share specific information with different groups of parents, both ELC and school. This can be downloaded to any mobile phone from the App Store or Google Play Store by searching for "School App for Parents". Once downloaded search for Ness Castle and you can select which class groups you are a member of.



- Email

Various communications are issued via email. As a parent/carers of a child in the school, please ensure we have an up-to-date email address for you.



- Monthly Newsletter

Each month we share a monthly newsletter, "The Nessie Natter". This will include up to date information and upcoming events, reviews of learning and events held throughout the year, as well as a calendar.



Wider face to face and other communication threads will continue to be established. This already includes a combination of Parents' evenings/consultations (September, November and March), School Reports (June), Class Assemblies and events, classroom visits and open days. The detail of these will be shared within our monthly newsletter.

Parent/Carer Involvement and Engagement

As detailed earlier, we believe that the strength and success in our school lies within the positive relationships built between staff, pupils and our parents/carers and families.

Within our ELC, your child's key worker is your initial point of contact. In school, your child's class teacher will take on this role. They will share your child's learning across the year through a range of different approaches.

Part of this partnership will be providing opportunities for parents/carers to become involved in your child's learning. This will involve you supporting learning at home,

establishing positive home-school partnership links and ensuring we have effective parental representation when we are developing our school ethos and curriculum. We will continue to gather parental opinion and encourage the sharing of views.

Our Parent Council

We have a strong and well-established Parent Council within Ness Castle Primary School. With representation across the school, from ELC and Primary 7, this group of parents have been a very positive and important “voice” for the parent body of the school.

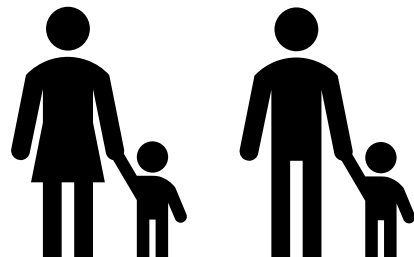
They have established a Parent Council Fundraising Group who are keenly coming up with ways to raise some funds to help assist with the “extras” that form an important part of the life of any school.

All parents/carers are invited to come along to the meetings, and the detail of these is shared via the Newsletter and School App. No matter your experience level, please come along and let your voice be heard.

Our Parent Council can be contacted via email - nesscastle.primary@highlandpc.co.uk

Parent Zone

Useful information for parents and how to get involved in your child’s education, how to support the school, information on curriculum developments can all be found at Parentzone: <https://education.gov.scot/parentzone>



SUPPORTING OUR PUPILS

All children have a Named Person. In P1-P7, the Named Person for your child is Craig Connon, Head Teacher. In Early Learning and Childcare this will be your child's Health Visitor.

ELC Key Workers and Class Teachers, in conjunction with our Depute Head Teacher, Miss MacLean (who is our Additional Support Needs Coordinator) and our ASN Teacher (Mrs Janet Vogan) monitor the progress of pupils with additional support. The needs of such pupils are generally catered for within the normal curriculum but with specialist advice and support as required.

If necessary, a Child's Plan may be put in place to help plan, organise, monitor and regularly review a child's progress. Parents and pupils will be involved in these procedures and in reviews.

Parents will always be involved in discussions about any additional support being suggested for their child and any need that may be identified within the school.

Highland Council would seek to work in partnership with parents at all times, but sometimes you will have a concern that you don't feel is being addressed, or will want to talk to someone out with the school. Should you have any concerns that your child's additional needs are not being met, you should contact your child's Key Worker or Class Teacher in the first instance and/or a member of the Leadership Team. If your concerns continue, there are a number of means of resolving difficulties and disputes and information on this can be found at: www.highland.gov.uk/info/886/schools_-_additional_support_needs/1/support_for_learners

Other useful information can be sourced from

- (a) [Enquire](#) - the Scottish advice and information service for additional support for learning
- (b) [My Rights, My Say](#) - an advocacy and advice service for young people over 12 with additional support needs
- (c) [Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance](#) - an advocacy service to support parents and children
- (d) [Scottish Child Law Centre](#) - an organisation providing free legal advice to young people

CHILD PROTECTION



From time-to-time incidents can occur within the school setting which cause concern and could indicate that a pupil is suffering some form of abuse.

In terms of Highland Child Protection Committee Inter-agency Protection Guidelines, Education Service staff must report such incidents to Social Work Services which can lead to a joint Social Work/Police investigation.

All agencies involved in Child Protection are obliged to make the welfare of children their paramount consideration and this will be the priority for Education Service staff.

Copies of Highland Council's Child Protection Policy Guidelines are available online at http://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1361/childcare_and_family_care/438/child_protection

ATTENDANCE and ABSENCE

Good attendance is vital if pupils are to achieve their full potential. But if a pupil is absent from school, a parent/carer should phone the school (01463 383600) on the first day of absence.

It is Highland Council policy that where a child is absent or late (and the school has not been given prior notice), the school will make concerted efforts to contact parents/carers to find out why. Therefore, it is vital that all parents/guardians should contact the school by 9.15am. Failure to contact the school will result in an unauthorised absence. All unauthorised absences are actively pursued by the school.

Three Day Rule for Unexplained Absence of Pupils

Day 1; First day of unexplained absence of a pupil

The school will endeavour to make contact by telephone or email to parents, carers or emergency contacts informing them that the child is absent and requesting a reason for the absence. If no contact can be made with the parents/carers or emergency contacts on the first day of absence this will be noted by the school. If the family is known to other agencies, because of possible concerns about his/her wellbeing, then contact will be made with these agencies.

Day 2; Second day of unexplained absence of a pupil

The school will make vigorous attempts to contact a carer or family member by telephone, or e-mail. If no contact can be made on the second day of absence, this will be noted by the school.

Day 3; Third day of unexplained absence of pupil

If no contact is established, a member of staff will arrange a home visit to check the situation. If the child is not found and no satisfactory explanation is given for absence, the police will be notified of the child's non-attendance. The police will treat this as a missing persons alert. The police may be involved to conduct visits where it is not possible for the school to do so. If a decision has been made to contact the police, our Area Education Manager will be notified.

Steps for Parents

- Keep the school up to date with your telephone number, including mobile phones if you have one, and other details for emergency contacts.
- Inform the school of any pre-arranged absence e.g., attendance at hospital appointment prior to the absence taking place
- Inform the school or ELC of your child's absence by 9.15am daily
- Respond promptly to contacts from the school

The diagram below shows the importance of ensuring a high level of attendance within the school year.



Permission to leave during the school day

If a pupil needs to leave during the school day for an appointment etc, pupils need to bring with them a note from parent/carer. Pupils must report to the school reception where parents/carers can collect their child. If returning the same day, they must report again to the reception and sign in. Where at all possible, medical and dental appointments should be made out with school hours.



Illness

If pupils fall ill during the day, parents are contacted for them to collect their child, therefore it is essential that we have up to date daytime contact numbers and emergency contact numbers for all pupils. We follow the Highland Council advice on all illnesses. Children, who are unwell, should be kept at home until they are fully recovered and ready to cope with school again. We strictly adhere to the 48 hour return rule following any vomiting or diarrhoea related illnesses.

Holidays During Term Time

When parents are considering whether or not to remove their children from school for a family holiday, they should be aware that such a decision:

- will result in a significant loss in classroom experience;
- will result in a pressure to 'catch up' on missed work by pupils;
- could result in pupils missing assessments with consequential impact on pupils and teachers;
- could result in the loss of curricular activities;
- will affect school attendance records and efforts to raise standards of attendance;

Under the guidance issued at a national level, most family holidays will be coded as unauthorised absence, only in exceptional cases will the absence be recorded as authorised.

We would ask parents to be aware of these considerations when making decisions on planning holidays during term time.

Highland Council School Holidays

Here is a link to the school term dates on the Highland Council website to aid parents in planning any holidays they may be considering.

https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/878/schools/32/school_term_dates

If parents decide to make holiday arrangements during school term, this should be confirmed in writing to Mr Connon.

MEDICATION and HEALTH CARE

Administration of Medicine

National Guidance on the Administration of Medicines in Schools has been issued by the Scottish Government and can be accessed here - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-children-young-people-healthcare-needs-schools>

This guidance is based on a number of common principles that will be consistently applied when identifying, supporting and reviewing the healthcare needs of children and young people in Highland schools to enable them to make the most of their learning.

Under Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, all children have a right to the highest attainable standard of health and to health care services that help them attain this. Article 7 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states that children with disabilities have the right to express their views freely on all matters affecting them. The arrangements for each individual will therefore take account of the health professionals' advice, the pupil's views and, where appropriate, their parent's views.

NHS Highland, Highland Council and school staff will work collaboratively to ensure that pupils receive the service they need in the way most appropriate to their personal circumstances.

We will work with pupils and parents/carers to support the healthcare in our school, making reasonable adjustments that children and young people with healthcare needs might need and require.

Where appropriate, we will make arrangements for staff providing healthcare to pupils to receive appropriate training from a health professional, or other accredited source in the care they are providing.

Assistance with intimate care may be needed by children in any school and this will be provided if required to support these needs quickly and with respect for children's privacy, dignity and rights.

If your child requires medication, please note that this will only be administered by staff when there is clear written guidance from a parent/carer, providing:

- The name of the medicine
- The quantity of the medicine to be given
- The time it has to be given.

As far as possible prescriptive medication should be given at home by parents/carers. If it is required to be given in school, the medication should be unopen, clearly marked with the directions from the pharmacist and administered as part of an agreed medical protocol.

An Administration of Medicine form should be completed if you require medicine to be given in school. This form can be downloaded from our school website here - [Our School Documents - Medication Administration Form](#)

Minor injuries

At school we will only deal with minor cuts and bruises. These will be cleaned, and a plaster applied. If your child is injured, falls or becomes unwell during the school day you



SCHOOL MEALS

School Lunches

The school meal service offers nutritionally balanced, well-presented food in an environment that is safe, well ordered and sensitive to the needs of pupils in order that they may enjoy the lunchtime social experience. Healthy choices are very much in evidence in all menus. Food and drinks served meet the requirements of The School (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. A copy of the school menu can be found here - https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/878/schools/9/school_meals and we currently have the three choice menu at Ness Castle.

At present, children in P1-5 are entitled to a free school meal. Children in P6 and P7 pay £2.30 for a lunch.

Within the ELC, lunch orders are taken on a termly basis.

Within the School, lunches are ordered every morning within the classroom. This is done through the i-Pay Impact system. Each child has a unique login for this system, which parents can access at home. Parents can see what their child has selected, as well as pay for meals if their child is in P6 or P7.

Packed and Home Lunches

Pupils may also choose to bring in a packed lunch from home and in keeping with Highland Council's Health Promoting Policy, it is the school's hope that this packed lunch should contain a healthy balanced diet.

Any child wishing to go home for lunch should indicate this to their class teacher during registration in the morning.

Special Diet/ Food Allergies

If your child requires a special diet for health reasons, please fill in the Special Diet Food Allergy form available on the link below and from the school Office. The request will be considered by the head teacher in consultation with the school meals service. Where appropriate, they will seek the advice of the local dietician.

For information and guidance on healthy living topics check out - [Healthy Living Guidance](#)

Further information on school meals can be found here - [Highland Council: School Meals](#)

Further information on special diets can be found here - [Special diet and nutrition](#)



OTHER PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Extra-Curricular Activities

We are continually expanding our variety of extra-curricular lunch time/after school clubs. Information on these will be shared with pupils and parents/carers as they are introduced through our School Newsletters or via the School App. Currently, our extra-curricular choices include

- O.J.Sports
- Karate Alba
- Athletics - in the run up to the Baillie Cup and Interschool Athletics Competitions
- A range of Active Schools lunchtime clubs throughout the year

Homework

Homework at Ness Castle, for each of our classes, will...

- Be an opportunity to revise or revisit concepts covered in class
- Be appropriately levelled to your child's needs
- Be a task which can generally be undertaken independently

We are aware that children take part in many additional activities outside of school, and as a school we value the learning which happens within such clubs and hobbies. We understand that fitting in homework across the week can be tricky.

We will provide short home learning suggestions which are optional for families to complete. A jotter will be provided, but this will not be marked by the class teacher.

On a weekly basis the tasks provided by your child's class teacher will include phonics/spelling and reading. This links to our current Literacy focus within our School Improvement Plan. In addition to this, your child may receive occasional additional materials as targeted support or as a one-off task.

PHONICS/SPELLING	READING
<p>The phonics/spelling pattern that your child is currently learning will be shared within their jotter.</p> <p>A suggested format for the type of activities which can be completed will be sent home by your child's class teacher.</p>	<p>Your child will either be given a book/text home from school or encouraged to select a book of their own choice.</p> <p>The main purpose of this is for them to read for a short time each week to help develop their fluency.</p> <p>Reading at home is an excellent means of developing thinking skills, developing language skills and helping children develop confidence with their reading.</p> <p>Taking time to share stories with others, no matter what age, is extremely important. Being read to or listening to a range of texts is actively encouraged.</p>

Pupil Voice and Leadership

Collaboration and the voice of pupils – from ELC through to Primary – is vital in the success of Ness Castle Primary School and ELC. We will facilitate various opportunities for pupils to get involved in the life and decision making for our school. This will include sharing suggestions and ideas as well as involving pupils in leadership roles.

We have established our monthly “Nessie Natter” groups. These are to allow for areas of School Improvement to be purposeful and meaningful for the pupils. Each class teacher facilitates one of these groups, leading a mixed group of P1 – P7 pupils in taking an element of our Improvement Plan forward. “Nessie Natter” groups for the 2023 – 24 session included:

- Reading Schools
- Rights Respecting School / Sustainable Development Goals
- Developing our Outdoor Spaces
- Involving our Community

Our School Houses

One area of Pupil Leadership is the chance for our P6 and P7 pupils to become House and Vice Captains. Our four Houses are named after local Castles. These include:

- Brodie - Purple
- Cawdor - Orange
- Dunrobin - Green
- Urquhart - Red

Every child and member of staff in the school is a member of one of our four Houses. Across each week, in class and across the school, pupils get the chance to gain House points for going above and beyond.

Religious Observance

The Rights of Learners and Families Religious observance adopts an open and respectful approach and does not seek to compromise the beliefs of any pupils or their families. Under the terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, parents have the right to withdraw their child from religious observance. The terms of the Act state that “no pupil in any such school shall be placed at any disadvantage with respect to the secular instruction given therein by reason of his being withdrawn”. The school will deal with such requests with sensitivity and understanding.

Mr Connon is happy to meet with any parent wishing to withdraw their child to ensure that they are clear about the school policy. All pupils participate in Religious & Moral Education however, parents have the right to have their children excused from religious observance. Where a child is withdrawn from religious observance, the school will make suitable arrangements for your child to participate in worthwhile alternative activity.

School Policies

Highland Council School Policies, Procedures and Guidance can be found here - www.highland.gov.uk/info/893/schools_-_general_information/29/school_policies_procedures_and_guidelines

Severe Weather /Emergency Closure Plans

In the result of severe weather, Highland Council have a designated school closures web page and a dedicated school closures phone number. These details are:

- Web Page – www.highland.gov.uk/schoolclosures
- Phone Number – 0800 564 2272

When contacting the closure line, a pin number is required. Ness Castle’s pin number is **04 1840**.

We will also update the School App, email parents and send an update text if either the ELC or School were to close.

School Session Dates

Up to date School term dates can be found by accessing The Highland Council website here –

https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/878/schools/32/school_term_dates

Military Families

Our school welcomes and supports families, their Children and Young People from Armed Forces families: Serving, Reservists and Veterans.

We understand some of the challenges that mobility of service life can bring and we look forward to working with you to ensure a smooth transition for your Child/Young Person coming into or moving on from our School or Early Years setting. Please get in touch with us as soon as you can so we can work with you to ensure the transition is as smooth as possible.

Highland Council have proudly committed to the Armed Forces Covenant and as such support our Armed Forces community. There is a dedicated Highland Council partnership, The Military Liaison Group (Education), often referred to as “The MLG” which has been formed to promote and ensure the equity and equality for your Children and Young People within an educational context. Visit the Highland Council Armed Forces Families Website for lots of helpful information and support for both families and Educators. The Enrolment page may be particularly helpful.

<https://armedforcesfamilieshighland.wordpress.com/>

Please get in touch with your child’s named person or the Headteacher if you have any concerns or if you would prefer, contact the MLG (Education) lead.

DATA PROTECTION

Data Protection Legislation

Information on pupils, parent and guardians is stored on a computer system and may be used for teaching, registration, assessment and other administrative duties. The information is protected by data protection legislation and may only be disclosed in accordance with the codes of practice.

Transferring Educational data about pupils

The Scottish Government and its partners collect and use information about pupils through the Pupil Census to help to improve education across Scotland. This note explains why we need this information, how we use it and what we do to protect the information supplied to us. Further information can be obtained from <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/ScotXed>.

Data Policy

Information about pupils' education is collected through our statistical surveys in partnership between the Scottish Government and Local Authorities through the ScotXed Programme which aims to help schools and Local Authorities by supporting efficient collection, processing and dissemination of statistical information. The Scottish Government then provides analysis of the data to support research, planning, management and monitoring of education services as well as to produce National Statistics publications.

Education data within Scottish Government is managed effectively by secure systems and is exploited as a valuable corporate resource, subject to confidentiality restraints. As part of its data policy, Scottish Government will not publish or make publicly available any information that allows individual pupils to be identified, nor will data be used by Scottish Government to take any actions in respect of individuals. Data is held securely and no information on individual pupils can or would be made publicly available by Scottish Government.

The individual data collected by Scottish Government through the Pupil Census is used for statistical and research purposes only. Information on why we collect data about pupils and who we share this data with can be found in Highland Council's Privacy Notice which is available here: https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/1095920/enrol_your_child_at_a_school

Why do we need your data?

In order to make the best decisions about how to improve our education service, Scottish Government, education authorities and other partners such as the SQA and Skills Development Scotland need accurate, up-to-date data about our pupils. We are keen to help all our pupils do well in all aspects of school life and achieve better examination results. Accurate and up-to-date data allows us to:

- plan and deliver better policies for the benefit of all pupils
- better understand some of the factors which influence pupil attainment and achievement
- share good practice
- target resources better
- enhance the quality of research to improve the lives of young people in Scotland

Your data protection rights

The collection, transfer, processing and sharing of ScotXed data is done in accordance with data protection legislation. We also comply with the National Statistics Code of Practice requirements and other legislation related to safeguarding the confidentiality of data. Data protection legislation gives you the right to know how we will use your data. This note can give only a brief description of how we use data. Fuller details of each individual ScotXed survey, including the purpose of each and the published data, can be found on the ScotXed website
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/ScotXed/SchoolEducation>

Scottish Government works with a range of partners including Education Scotland, Skills Development Scotland and the SQA. On occasion, in order to help meet our aim of improving the life of young people in Scotland, we may make individual data available to partners such as the National Registers of Scotland to carry out research relating to the national population census and also academic institutions and organisations to carry out additional research and statistical analysis to meet their own official responsibilities. Any sharing of data will be done under the strict control of Scottish Government, and will be consistent with our data policy. This will ensure that no individual level data will be made public as a result of the data sharing and that these data will not be used to take any actions in respect of an individual. Decisions on the sharing of data will be taken in consultation with relevant colleagues and individuals within and outwith Scottish Government. At all times pupils' rights under the Data Protection Act and other relevant legislation will be ensured.

Concerns

If you have any concerns about the ScotXed data collections you can email the Head of Schools Analysis at ScotXed@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or write to The ScotXed Support Office, Area 2D, Victoria Quay, Leith, EH6 6QQ. Alternative versions of this page are available, on request from the ScotXed Support Office, in other languages, audio tape, Braille and large print.

Access to Pupil Records

The Pupils' Educational Records (Scotland) Regulations 2003 extend to parents the right of access (with certain specific exceptions) to any record held by the Authority in relation to their child. Parents may make application to Mr Connon, the Head Teacher.



COMPLAINTS

If a parent has any concerns they should contact their child's key link in the nursery/ class teacher in the first instance. This can be done via the School Office on 01463 383600 or by emailing nesscastle.primary@highland.gov.uk. If it is deemed more appropriate, Mr Connon can be contacted via the same email address.

The school will always endeavour to resolve issues by listening to parents and seeking solutions in partnership. Should a situation not be resolved, parents can contact the Area Education and Learning Manager, Fiona Shearer on Fiona.Shearer@highland.gov.uk

Further information can also be found on the Parentline website:
<https://www.children1st.org.uk/help-for-families/parentline-scotland/>

Please note that transport is not a school responsibility, and any queries should be addressed to the Transport Development Officer,
Highland Council,
Glenurquhart Road,
Inverness,
IV3 5NX,
or public.transport@highland.gov.uk.

Whilst the information in this handbook is considered to be true and correct at the date of publication, changes in circumstances after the time of publication may impact on the accuracy of the information