

Dear parents/carers,

Happy new year! It's great to see everyone back into the swing of the new term and, talking to the children, it sounds like everyone has had a fabulous Christmas and New Year.

With every turn of the year, comes new aspirations and possibilities for the future and this year is no different for the staff, pupils and families of St Andrew's Primary School. As always, we have lots planned and to look forward to.

### **Behaviour and Attendance Reward**

As you all know, we have high expectations of behaviour and attendance and celebrate the very best of these at the end of each term with an end of term treat. Last term, the treat to Bamboozles saw XXX pupils being rewarded for their excellent attitude in and out of school.

This term, the children have decided that their end of term treat will be to go to the Cinema! All children, who reach the minimum required green days of 47 out of 55 possible days, will be invited. This means there are 8 days grace for minor slips in behaviour and room for genuine illnesses. Please be aware that acts of extreme negative behaviour that result in exclusion, during the term, may mean that a child will not attend the treat, and this will be at the head teacher's discretion.

**The treat will be on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> April and parents will be informed if their child is attending, by letter, on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> March.**

### **Staff changes and updates**

It was with great sadness that we say farewell to one of our longest standing members of staff, Mrs Brunskill, at the end of this month. Mrs Brunskill has been a much-loved Teaching Assistant, at St. Andrew's Primary School, for 14 years and has supported pupils and staff to a high standard throughout. She has made a very brave and admirable decision to become a foster parent and I'm sure you will agree that any child who is placed in her care will be a very lucky child indeed. I hope you join me in wishing Mrs Brunskill the very best of luck in her new role.

Mrs Bousfield, who currently works in Early Years, will replace Mrs Brunskill, covering PPA in the afternoons and remaining in EYFS in the mornings for the time being.

We also welcome Mrs Murrie in Class 4/5, who has been appointed as Mrs Foggin's maternity cover. Mrs Foggin will be starting her maternity leave towards the end of March.

We also welcome Miss Jayne, who has taken on the new cleaner's role, she also remains the lunchtime supervisor as well as delivering SEN programmes with Mrs McGrath on afternoons.

Our current cook, Mrs Duff, is moving to a larger school and so Taylor Shaw are recruiting a new cook. If you or anyone you know would be interested in the job, please contact the school office for more details.

### **Parent Governor Vacancy**

We are still looking for a new parent governor to fill our latest vacancy. If you are interested and would like to talk to our Chair of Governors about what the role entails, please contact the school office and we can arrange a meeting at your convenience.

### **School Vision Working Party**

Last term, I asked for volunteers to help develop our new School Vision. Unfortunately, no-one came forward. I would like to reach out again to parents, to find one or two who would like to have an input on how we develop and embed our vision into our school day. This term I have organised for the meeting to be on the same night as the Valentine Disco (February 14<sup>th</sup> 4pm til 5.30pm) so that parents will have childcare during the meeting. If you would like to get involved with staff and governors to help move our school forward, please get in touch.

### **School Car Park**

Can I politely ask parents NOT to pull into the school car-park at any time of the day. Our car-park is very small and is needed for staff and visitors and we prefer to keep traffic coming in and out to a minimum for safety reasons. I especially ask that parents do NOT park in the disabled parking space as we have a disabled governor, disabled pupils and visitors who are legally entitled to that space.

You will have received a letter from the local Community Police Officer and seen a heightened visible presence of both Traffic Enforcement and Police officers, outside the school. They have both made it quite clear that they will not hesitate to issue tickets if they find parents parking irresponsibly.

### **Uniform**

The staff and children are very proud of their uniform and appearance, however we have noticed some children are slipping in this area, so I would like to remind parents about what is and is not acceptable.

- All children must wear completely black shoes. Too many children are wearing trainers with white branding and soles. This is not part of our school uniform.
- We are noticing that more and more older girls are wearing leggings. These are not part of our school uniform. Girls may wear smart school trousers or tights to keep legs warm but not leggings.
- Some children are wearing hooded, zip up sweatshirts, although they are in blue, these are not school uniform. Our uniform policy is that children wear a blue sweatshirt/jumper or cardigan not a hoody.

All of the above is to ensure that our school maintains the high standards that we expect, and I ask that parents do all that they can to support this ethos. If parents cannot do so because of financial restraints, please contact me and I will see if we can help with bursaries and grants that we may have available.

### **After-School Interventions**

I wanted to take the opportunity to thank all parents who have supported the school in accepting places for after- school interventions. We offer these places after school because we are passionate about not removing pupils from subjects they love to boost their literacy and maths skills. What if a child was a talented artist but was always taken out of their art lesson to do extra spelling or arithmetic boosters? We don't believe that is right. This term we offered 131 places and 103 places were taken up, which is testament to the continued support we have from parents and carers.

I would also like to thank our dedicated staff who take these sessions to ensure your child gets the best deal in education that they possibly can.

### **Attendance**

Attendance in our school is a constant battle and this term I would like to point out to parents how important it is to ring school on the first day of absence and every day after that.

Each morning, Mr Orwin, our attendance officer, looks at the day's absences, sends a text to parents, who have not notified the school of absence, and when he does not receive a reply, he calls the parents direct, sometimes ringing up to 5 numbers for one child before he gets an answer! On some days this can take him until 10.30am to complete. You can see that, over a week, this is a huge amount of time which could be better used working with and supporting our pupils in the classroom.

We ask that parents contact school to inform us of absence for two reasons:

1. **To notify of reason of absence.** We need to know if there are lots of children off school with the same illness, like vomiting or chicken pox, so we can take extra steps to minimise risk of spread to others.
2. **To know a child is safe at home.** There have been cases in this country where children have not turned up at school but parents think they have and schools think they're off school sick but actually a child has had an accident, played truant or worse still, have been abducted, We take safeguarding our pupils very seriously and we will not rest until we know a child is safe at home, even if we have to make a home visit or contact police for a welfare check.

**Please note: simply calling school to notify us of reason for absence does not automatically authorise an absence. If the head teacher is not confident that the information provided is factual or medical evidence is not provided, in cases where pupils are persistent absentees, then an unauthorised mark will be given.**

#### Safeguarding

May I remind parents that our policy on collecting pupils from school is that we will NOT allow unknown friends or relatives to take a child unless the parents have informed us. It has been helpful when parents have provided a password or even shown a staff member a photo of the person collecting, to ensure the children are handed over safely.

#### SATS dates

In the summer term, children in year 1, Year 2 and Year 6 will take statutory tests which are set by the Department of Education. It is very important that children in these year groups attend school during this time and I ask that parents do not book holidays during term time. See Diary Dates for specific dates for each year group.

#### Extreme Weather

In cases of extreme weather, like we had last year, parents will be notified by text if the school is closed, as soon as we know. We will also post a message on Class Dojo and the Durham County Council website lists all school closures daily.

Please keep the attached diary dates somewhere safe to refer to but if you do lose it, you can always access the school calendar to check dates, which has the same events listed.

I hope to see many of you at upcoming events throughout 2019!

Mrs N James  
Head teacher