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Newsletter 4
Spring Term 2

Dear parents and carers,

This half term's newsletter starts with some celebrations and congratulations.

Miss. Booth welcomed little Freddie Jack into the world on 29th February (a leap year baby.) Both mother and baby are doing really well, and we can't wait to have a cuddle.

Mrs Foggan and Mr Soppitt were married during the half term holiday and are expecting baby number two in August. It's going to take some time getting used to having a Mrs Soppitt in school!

Mrs Hezmalthalch was proposed to in the half term holiday too - and she said yes!

I am sure you will all join me in congratulating our staff. It's been a really lovely time for us all.

More great news

I have had confirmation that the school will be getting brand new windows and doors throughout. The windows will be high spec, tinted and anti-glare and all the rotten paint work and unsightly panels will be replaced with shiny new ones. We are also getting brand new blinds throughout as well. This will all be paid for by Durham County Council and will not affect the school budget. Due to there being asbestos in the window panels, the work will commence during the summer holidays, which means that, unfortunately, the school will have to close for this time, so we won't be able to run our usual holiday club. We have, however, applied for a grant to run an Easter holiday club and I will keep you informed about this.

Anti-Bullying Work

Many of you are aware of the recent tragic events where a young person from our community has lost their life. Our hearts and sympathies go out to the family involved.



When events like this happen, it naturally heightens everyone's awareness about sensitive issues such as bullying and mental health - even though these are merely rumours linked to this case at the moment. We understand parents' anxieties around these issues. Understandably, parents want to protect their children from harm as no family wants to go through what this youngster's family are going through right now.

It is important that parents remain calm and take a step back to assess a situation when it arises and not jump immediately to conclusions that their child is being bullied or is suffering from mental health issues. Parents can often mistake "falling out" with bullying. It is perfectly normal for children to fall out. Children are not born with the ability to solve social problems and get along with each other, all of the time and they are not going to come home extremely happy every day of the year. They are going to have days where things didn't go so well; some children will shrug it off and others will come home upset about it - we are all different.

It is our job as adults, to support them in coping with these fall outs and help them find ways to come to solutions. As a parent myself, I know it hurts like mad when your child comes home upset from something that has happened or been said to them, at school by another child. But we must try and equip our children with the skills to cope with these situations, so they become resilient. Too often I hear, "I'm taking them out of school," without trying to work things out or giving the staff the opportunity to remedy the situation. Moving schools does not teach children that life is sometimes difficult, and we have to try hard sometimes to sort our problems out; running away from a problem does not help our children deal with the situation the next time it happens.

That being said, I am not one of those Headteachers who say, "We never have bullying in our school." I know children can be cruel to each other, and I know that some children can make other children's days at school very miserable. We take all allegations of bullying seriously and follow procedures from our Anti-Bullying policy to ensure they are investigated thoroughly. In the first instance, parents must express their concerns to the class teacher or Mr Orwin and then, if the problem is not rectified, parents should contact the Headteacher or Deputy Head. Parents must be mindful that they often only have one side of the story and it is our role to collect evidence from all parties and witnesses, where possible. Just because a parent says their child is being bullied, doesn't mean that this is the case.

In school, we are developing ways to promote anti-bullying and good mental health:

We have an Action group of Anti-Bullying crusaders, who work as a team to support other pupils in times of need. They have undergone an intensive training programme which has taught them about how to identify different types of bullying and how to help pupils who think they are experiencing problems.

Our new Personal, Social, Health and Emotional curriculum fully supports good mental health and anti-bullying. We have purchased an interactive programme called "I Decision," and the children really seem to be enjoying it.

We have introduced more Golden Time activities that will promote good mental health, such as wellness colouring and more outdoor activities.

Mr Orwin has attended a Mental Health First Aid course recently, as well as an Anna Freud Mental Health course, along with Mrs James and Mrs Soppitt.

We run friendship interventions for groups of children who may find it difficult to explore new friendships and we use programmes like, "Talk about," and "Lego Therapy," which promote good communication skills for those children who may struggle to interact confidently with others.

Mr Orwin, our learning mentor is on hand daily to talk to children about any anxieties they may be having and also uses restorative techniques to support children who may be falling out with each other.

Cyber Bullying

In addition to the above, we have also had an influx of incidents involving children, particularly boys, who are not following the guidance taught to them about safe and correct online communication. The conduct of some of these pupils has not been pleasant to hear. We, at school, try our best to educate children about cyber bullying however, it is ultimately the parent's responsibility to monitor and control their child's online conduct. Although we try our best to sort these issues out in school, it is very difficult and time consuming to do so when the incident hasn't happened on the school premises - there is only so much we can do in these cases and again, it is a parent's role to support children in resolving these issues, that are happening in the home, in an appropriate way.

Parking Wars - the next chapter!

I will be sending a letter out soon with information about recent developments regarding the ongoing issue we have with parking outside of school. I hope you all saw the article in Northern Echo, where the Rights Respecting Action Group took action and demonstrated their frustrations by lying on the yellow lines. Hopefully, the voice of our children will get through to the minority of parents who still think it is ok to park illegally and put the children's safety at risk.

Easter celebrations

This year we are trying something new for our families. Instead of our usual Easter Bonnet making session, we are going to host a sponsored Easter Egg Hunt for families to enjoy together. We will still be having our annual Easter Service at St. Andrew's church and we look forward to seeing a full house as usual. More information to follow about these events. Please see diary dates attached.

Pupil Tests

The time is nearly upon us where we begin to prepare our children for the statutory tests.

Reception children will be assessed for their "Good Level of Development" or GLD, during May and June

Year One will be tested on Phonics in June

Year 2 will sit their end of Key Stage One reading, writing and maths tests in May and June

Year 4 will take the first Times Table checking test in May

Year 6 will sit their end of Key Stage Two SAT tests in May

You will find specific dates for these assessments on the diary dates page. Please can we ask that parents do not book holidays for these dates or dates leading up to the tests, so we can fully prepare the children. Attendance should be a priority for these children. Missing one day can cause gaps in pupils' learning.

Medicines in school

Please can I remind parents that children should not be bringing their own medicines to school. Medicines MUST be handed over to staff in the office where parents or carers will be asked to sign a consent form.

World Book Day

Thank you to parents and carers who helped bring World Book day to life with a huge variety of costumes. Sammy, our reading dog had a very busy day reading with children. The staff and children had a fantastic day promoting a love of reading - there's nothing better than a good book!

*****Coronavirus Update*****

We are all very aware of the daily developments regarding the Coronavirus Outbreaks and possible school closures. As soon as we know of any decisions relating to school closures, we will inform families immediately. Teachers are currently preparing packs of work for children and we will provide some online links also. In the event of school closures, we will communicate with you primarily via Class Dojo, so if you are not already signed up, we will resend login codes and would actively encourage you to do so, so you do not miss out on communications from class teachers.

Yours sincerely

Mrs James

Headteacher

Diary Dates

Here are some dates for your diary that we have this term so far.

March

- 9th & 10th Parents Evening - After-school clubs will be cancelled this night
13th Sports Relief Day
17th *After-School Clubs cancelled due to whole staff training after school*
20th Mother's Day Lunch - 11:30am - must now of been pre-booked
23rd Mother's Day Lunch - 11:30am - must now of been pre-booked
24th Class 5 to Safety Carousel at the Work Place

April

- 2nd Family Easter egg Hunt
3rd Easter service at St Andrew's Church 1:15pm- All Parents Welcome.
3rd Last Day of Term - school closes at 2pm No after-school club

Easter Holidays: Monday 6th April - 17th April

School reopens: Monday 20th April

May

- 8th School closed - May Bank Holiday
11th-14th Year 6 SATS Week
18th Overnight Camping Experience - Year 4, 5 & 6
22nd Dog's Trust Visit in school

Summer Half Term: Monday 25th May - 29th May

School reopens: Monday 1st June

June

8th-12th Year 1 Phonics Screenings

8th - 26th Year 4 Multiplication Tests

9th Year 6 leaver's service at Durham Cathedral - 1:30pm start

18th Summer Disco - 4:00- 5:30pm

22nd-25th Year 5 Curriculum Week

26th PD Day - School Closed