



St Mary's C of E Primary School, Timsbury

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11th January 2019

Dear Families and Friends of St Mary's

It has been so lovely to see everyone at school again this week – Christmas certainly seems like a long time ago already. I'd like to give a special welcome to Mr Jonathan Woodford who joins our teaching team in Year 3 – we hope he settles in quickly.

THURSDAY 17th JANUARY CENSUS MEAL DAY

We would like to encourage everyone to try a school dinner on this day, even if they do not usually have one. This is at no cost to families in EYFS/KS1 or those registered as eligible for Free School Meals.

It is a good opportunity to try out the catering service food; and also helps with our school funding. **Our income for school meals is based on the numbers of EYFS/KS1 children who are booked in for a school meal on that day.**

Please could all children in Ducklings, Rabbits and Badgers be booked in for a school dinner on that day if possible? Even if they also bring a packed lunch! Your support with this is very welcome.

PLEASE ALSO CONSIDER REGISTERING FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS THIS WEEK IF YOU ARE ELIGIBLE – DETAILS AT END OF THIS LETTER. THANK YOU.

*** ATTENDANCE REMINDER ***

Attendance Policy

Parents can find a full version of our Attendance Policy on our school website; however it seems sensible to start the year with a few reminders; and to make it clear to all when penalty notices could be issued.

Absence Procedures and Lateness

If a child is absent the parent/carer must contact the school office before 9.20 a.m. on each day of absence. Class teachers record absent children by marking the register with an "N" code. If the school administrator is aware of the reason for absence, the code can be changed to reflect the relevant reason. If the reason is not known, the code will remain as "N" for a maximum of ten days, during which time we will send home a reminder slip to ask you about the absence. If, after ten days, you have not provided this reason this code will be changed to an "O" (Unauthorised Absence).

School doors open at 8.45am but the day officially starts at 8.55 a.m. and we expect our children to be in school before the bell rings. Registers are taken once in class and are all marked by 9a.m.

If a child arrives in school after 8.55am they will need to enter school via the main door. A late mark (L) will be recorded for these children up until 9.05am. **If a child arrives after 9.05am they will need to be signed in at the office by the adult bringing them to school** and we will record a U mark in the electronic register. This shows the child is on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that the child's parent/s could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

Holidays and Penalty Notices

Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time, including for family holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances such as a death or significant trauma in the family.

If parents or carers wish to make a request for authorisation of a term time absence because they feel it is an exceptional circumstance, they are asked to complete and submit a **Leave of Absence Request Form** in advance, stating the reason why they need to take their child out of school. **Even where exceptional circumstances do exist, the school may decide not to exercise its discretion to authorise leave.** Should any request for absence be refused the absence will be recorded as unauthorised in the school register. On returning from this absence, no matter what the length of that period of unauthorised leave, parents/carers will receive a standard notification letter outlining the circumstances under which they may be liable for a penalty notice. Families who persistently take their children out of school for reasons that have not been authorised will be referred to the CMES.

Penalty notices are always requested from the Local Authority

- when a child's attendance is below 95%
- where a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences (which is equivalent to 5 days).

In addition, parents should be aware that authorised officers have the discretion to issue a penalty notice for a first offence. This could be where the unauthorised absence was for an extended period and/or condoned by the parent. An example of this would be instances of unauthorised absence such as holidays taken during term time without the school's permission, where overall attendance is 95% or below for that academic year.

Monitoring Attendance – why did I get a letter about my child's attendance?

As Headteacher, I thoroughly monitor all absence and the reasons provided for these on a termly basis.

Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards this mark (<93%) is given priority and we will formally advise the child's parents/carers of this, via letter – **regardless of the reason for the absence.** This letter may just inform you of your child's current attendance percentage.

Alternatively it may explain that weekly monitoring will now occur; it may suggest a range of strategies to support you in ensuring good attendance; or it may invite you to attend a formal meeting to discuss the matter further and develop an attendance plan. The content of the letter (and the steps required) will vary depending on the reasons for the absence, the percentage attendance, and whether or not previous letters have been sent. (I do understand that children are sometimes too poorly to attend school, and take this into account when deciding which letter to send).

On a monthly basis, I also have to provide reports to Governors on attendance, and the number of children who are currently designated as persistent absentees. OFSTED and the LA expect to see rapid reduction in the number of persistent absentees at St Mary's – and unfortunately, mainly because of holidays taken in term time, this has not yet occurred. We really need your co-operation and help for this to happen, please.

Why is high attendance important to my child's education?

As a parent/carer you want the best for your children. Having a good education is an important factor in opening up more opportunities in adult life. Did you know that:

- a child who is absent a day of school per week misses an equivalent of two years of their school life
- 90% of young people with absence rates below 85% fail to achieve five or more good grades of GCSE and around one third achieve no GCSEs at all
- poor examination results limit young people's options and poor attendance suggests to colleges and employers that these students are unreliable

GCSEs may seem a long way off for you and your child but all absence at any stage leads to gaps in your child's learning. This in turn can:

- mean that they fall behind in work
- affect their motivation
- affect their enjoyment of learning
- lead to poor behaviour
- affect their desire to attend school regularly
- affect their confidence in school
- mean they miss out on the social life of school and extracurricular opportunities and experiences
- affect their ability to have or keep friendships.

In 2015, the DfE published some data about KS2 attainment (the level achieved in the Year 6 SATS) and attendance. This showed that the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stage, the lower the likely level of attainment at the end of KS2. We all want your child to achieve the highest standards they possible can; and so every day really does matter.

We know that the vast majority of parents understand the reasons for good attendance and support our policies. Thank you.

HEATING UPDATE

We still have a slight problem with our heating in EYFS/KS1, and are working on trying to find a solution. We have sourced some temporary heaters in these classrooms, but unfortunately when they were all plugged in and teachers had all the computers/lights on as well, our electricity circuit was overloaded and we then lost all power to these rooms. (Thank you to Rob LeHuray for a speedy response on Friday to assist – it was much appreciated!). Please can you ensure younger children wear an extra layer or two under their uniform, so that they are warm enough during the day. I will update you again when I have positive news to share. Thank you.

REMINDER: CHANGE TO FIRST AID PROCEDURES

In an effort to improve communication about minor bumps (and reduce paper wastage) we will no longer send home a letter for every **minor** injury/scrape that your child may have during their active playtimes. Your child will still have first aid (on the playground) and be given a notification sticker instead of a paper letter – hopefully this is more likely to remain attached to your child. Anything that requires more comprehensive first aid will still be managed at the designated First Aid Station. We will continue to notify you of **ANY** bumped head incidents by telephone and also direct you to a website where you can find advice on how to manage this.

Beannacht – A New Year Blessing ~ John O'Donohue ~

On the day when
The weight deadens
On your shoulders
And you stumble,
May the clay dance
To balance you.

And when your eyes
Freeze behind
The grey window
And the ghost of loss
Gets into you,
May a flock of colours,
Indigo, red, green
And azure blue,
Come to awaken in you
A meadow of delight.

When the canvas frays
In the currach of thought
And a stain of ocean
Blackens beneath you,
May there come across the waters
A path of yellow moonlight
To bring you safely home.

May the nourishment of the earth be yours,
May the clarity of light be yours,
May the fluency of the ocean be yours,
May the protection of the ancestors be yours.

And so may a slow
Wind work these words
Of love around you,
An invisible cloak
To mind your life.

New Year Thoughts

Every now and then, something happens in life that has the power to stop you in your tracks.

Just before the Christmas break, we learned of the untimely death of Sue East, Headteacher of St Andrew's in Bath. A passionate advocate for creative and inclusive education, Sue was an inspirational and supportive colleague; and she will be greatly missed.

As I reflected on this news during the Christmas break, I stumbled across this beautiful poem. I do not usually share such personal thoughts in our newsletter, but as I considered how uncertain the world can feel right now, I also thought of the many in our community who have their own battles to face and a challenging year ahead.

I hope that amongst all of the gloom there often seems to be in the world, we can draw strength from each other and still find tranquillity and joy in 2019.

REMEMBER TO RETURN YOUR
PARENT CONSULATATION
EVENING SLIPS BY WEDNESDAY
16th JANUARY PLEASE. THANKS

DIARY DATES 2018-19

Wednesday 23 rd January	Vale House Kitchen – Workshop in Year 5 EYFS Trip to Bath
Friday 25 th January	Year 6 to Life Skills
Tuesday 29 th January	School Nurse – Height and Weight EYFS
Tuesday 29 th January	Parent Consultations
Thursday 31 st January	Parent Consultations
Thursday 7 th February	Badgers lead Collective Worship, 9am
Friday 15 th February	AWARDS 9.05am Last Day Term 3
Monday 25 th February	INSET DAY 3 - school closed to pupils
Tuesday 26 th February	Term 4 commences
Thursday 7 th March	WORLD BOOK DAY – Dressing Up!
Friday 15 th March	Year 5/6 Bath University Science Trip - TBC
Week Beginning 18 th March	Healthy Schools Week including Life Education Van Thursday 21 st and Friday 22 nd
Thursday 21 st March	Rabbits Lead Collective Worship 9am
Friday 22 nd March	Year 3, 4, 5 and 6 trip the Forum, Bath - Classical Music Experience
Thursday 4 th April	Year 4 and 5 led whole school Easter Celebration
Friday 5 th April	AWARDS 9.05am Last Day Term 4
Tuesday 23 rd April	Term 5 begins
Friday 24 th May	Term 5 ends
Monday 3 rd June	INSET Day 4 – school closed to pupils
Tuesday 4 th June	Term 6 starts
Week beginning 10 th June	Phonics Screening Check Week (Y1 and 2)
Friday 28 th June	INSET Day 5 – school closed to pupils
Tuesday 23 rd July	Last Day Term 6 – school closes at 2pm

TERM DATES 2018-2019

	INSET DAYS (School Closed to Pupils)	Start for pupils	Finish for pupils
Term 3		Monday 7 th January 2019	Friday 15 th February 2019
Term 4	Monday 25 th February	Tuesday 26 th February 2019	Friday 5 th April 2019
Term 5		Tuesday 23 rd April 2019	Friday 24 th May 2019
Term 6	Monday 3 rd June Friday 28 th June	Tuesday 4 th June 2019	Tuesday 23 rd July

INDICATIVE TERM DATES 2019-2020

*** 3 INSET days still to be set so there may be a slight variation from the B&NES DATES listed below ***

	INSET DAYS (School Closed to Pupils)	Start for pupils	Finish for pupils
Term 1	Monday 2nd September	Tuesday 3 rd September 2019	Friday 25 October
Term 2		Monday 4 November	Friday 20 December 2019
Term 3		Monday 6 January 2020	Friday 14 February 2020
Term 4		Monday 24 February 2020	Friday 3 April 2020
Term 5		Monday 20 April 2020	Friday 22 May 2020
Term 6	Monday 20 th July 2020	Monday 1 June 2020	Friday 17th July

IS YOUR CHILD ELIGIBLE FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS - EBB?

Please register your child (**including** those in Reception, year 1 and year 2) for free school meals if you are in receipt of qualifying benefits. Registration will attract additional funding for our school for Pupil Premium (£1,320 per Primary pupil for the financial year 2018-19).

You can register your entitlement for Free School Meals - Eligible by Benefit (EBB) if you have children who attend a school in Bath and North East Somerset, and you are in receipt of any of the qualifying benefits listed below.

Qualifying benefits for Free School Meals:

- Universal Credit (provided you have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400, as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods)
- Income Support
- Income Based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance
- Child Tax Credit, without any Working Tax Credit, and an annual household income (as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) that is not more than £16,190
- Run-on Working Tax Credit which is only paid for 4 weeks after you STOP qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Guaranteed Element of State Pension Credit
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

How to register – just call!

Call the Free School Meals helpline on 01225 394317 to make a telephone registration. We will need you to tell us your National Insurance Number or National Asylum Seeker Support Number when you call.

Please note that the Local Authority will check your eligibility to qualifying benefits on your behalf using the DFE online Free School Meal Eligibility Checking Service. Your National Insurance or National Asylum Seeker Support Number and Date of Birth must be accurate.

New Youth Project?

If you are a young person aged 11-16, you are invited to Timsbury YMCA Friday 18 January 7-8pm to share ideas and enthusiasm about starting something locally for young people.

Free refreshments.

I look forward to seeing you there:

Jane van Haaps

Timsbury Youth & Community Worker

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