

October Newsletter

Settling into School

It is hard to believe that we have been back at school for five weeks. The children have all made a fantastic start to the school year and it is brilliant to see them all engaged in their learning. We pride ourselves on providing good teaching that engages the children all the time – we just ask that you continue to support school by reminding your children to ensure home work is completed and handed in on time and they remember to follow our simple school rules.

In school we often talk about ‘always children’. These are the children who are always working hard, always polite and helpful and always behaving well and setting a good example. They are also the children who are collecting the most stamps in their stamp chart. I am sure that keeping really clear and open links between home and school will ensure your child will be an ‘always child’.

Assemblies

Many thanks to everyone who has managed to join us at Friday’s Celebration assemblies. They are a real highlight of the week for us and it is lovely to be able to celebrate everything that is great about school together. I know that there had been some questions asked about why we are not giving out leaves and apples this year. Due to the increase in the amount of children we now have in school, we are limited to numbers in the hall and the length of each assembly had become an issue, especially in KS1. By just choosing one ‘pride’ each week, the teachers can really focus on the fabulous learning and great choices that children have made.

To help us manage expectations of the children in assembly, we would be grateful if you could keep conversations to a minimum and ensure phones are switched off. A new timetable for next half term will be published just before the holidays.

Dinner Times

So far this year, the kitchen has been serving over 200 hot dinners every day. It is amazing how confident the younger children have become in organising themselves and sitting down and eating all their dinner (including the vegetables!) with huge smiles on their faces. I really look forward to roast dinner day on Thursday when I get the opportunity to sit and eat with the children. Not only do I have a delicious dinner, I also get to hear about what the children have been learning in class. A big thank you must go to all the kitchen staff for ensuring that we have so many clean plates every day.

So far we have about 80% of our KS1 children having a dinner. If you would like your child to have a school dinner, then please see your child’s teacher or call in at the office. It would be great to see if we could get everyone in KS1 eating a hot dinner; after all, they are free. All being well, we will be having a sample tasting event like last year during our parents’ evenings later this month.

If you would like your child to change from packed lunch to dinner, we ask that you give us two weeks’ notice. If your child is KS2 and they would like a dinner, they must be paid for in advance.

We work very hard at school to ensure all children have a positive experience at lunch time. This begins with providing them with an environment where they feel happy and safe and where there is lots of help and support. Both the Lunchtime Support Assistants and the Year 5 and 6 Buddies do a really good job at encouraging the children to eat all their dinner, including their vegetables, as well as using a knife and fork. We would be very grateful if you could reiterate this message at home.

Getting children to eat something they have not seen before (or that is green!) is a challenge and one that I have been through with my own children, who both had school dinners from Year 1. They are now good eaters and eat all vegetables.

School Development Plan Overview

Every year in school we work on all aspects of professional development to ensure outcomes for children remain high. This year we will be working on the following:

- Reviewing our Teaching and Learning policy
- Further developing our Science Curriculum
- Implementing new reading and writing strategies across the school
- Implementing a new online assessment tracking system

Like in previous years, our development plan is very challenging but I know, with the hard work of the staff, that the new strategies will be implemented and outcomes for all children should continue to rise.

FAB

If you have any spare time, please come along for a coffee and a biscuit and support our 'Friends of Allerton Bywater' parents' group. All money raised goes to enhancing the experiences we provide our children. The meetings are every other Friday, in school, at 9:00am. Babies and toddlers are more than welcome. Do please come along, meet some new friends and make a difference to what school can provide for all the children.

Home-School Agreement forms

We recently sent out our Home-School Agreement forms. These forms are important as they set out everyone's expectations for the year ahead and also provide parental approval for local walks, food tasting and use of photographs etc. Please make sure you sign them and return them to school by Friday 19th October.

Staffing Update

Miss Woodhouse, who works in the Early Years, is leaving us this Friday to go on maternity leave. We are all very excited about meeting her new baby over the coming weeks. To cover her maternity, we are having a slight move around of some of the Teaching Assistants: I am pleased to say that we have appointed Mrs Pashley as part of this move around, who will be working initially in KS1.

Harvest Donations

As the days are shortening and becoming colder, I have seen lots of combine harvesters collecting crops for winter. With this in mind, we are getting ready for our trip to church next week for our Harvest Service. Over the years, the donations we have received have helped our local food banks provide much needed supplies to those in need. If you have any spare tins, packets or jars of food, we would be very grateful for them. Please hand them in at the office or to your child's class teacher.

Open Door Policy

Just a quick reminder to let you know that if anyone has any worries, issues or concerns regarding school, please do not hesitate to contact us at any time. Having a face-to-face conversation is nearly always the best way to ensure concerns are fully addressed and we will always endeavour to work with people to solve whatever issues or worries they may have.

Dropping and collecting children

Every day, at the front of school, we have many people who stop on the yellow lines. This is not permitted and, if you are seen doing so by the police, a PCSO or a Parking Patrol Officer, you will get a ticket. The lines are there to keep everyone safe, ensure the school's neighbours do not get blocked into their drives and to prevent accidents. Michelle, our crossing patrol lady, does a great job every day and I ask that you help her continue to keep the road outside school and the surrounding streets as safe as possible for everyone and park where it is safe and legal to do so.

I have also been speaking with Leeds City Council to investigate the possibility of having a second crossing on Park Lane so families from The Millennium can cross the road safely. If anybody else has some time to do the same, this would really add weight behind the request. I will keep you informed of any updates.

New things: school website and 'mile-a-day' track

Over the coming weeks, our current website will be being turned off and a new one uploaded. Until then, you will be able to access all the necessary information that you need about school using the usual site. We have recently had a photographer in to capture some of the amazing learning that goes on every day in school for the new website. We will keep you updated of the launch day.

I think our new track should really be called the 'ten miles a day' track, due to its popularity. The children love walking, talking, playing and of course running around it, from the start of play to the end. This exercise is really good for them and ensures that they are getting the necessary exercise for their age.

Summer Holiday Books

The summer holiday diaries that were handed in were amazing: full of photographs, pictures, postcards and more describing the great experiences that the children had whilst on holiday. Because the standard was so high, this year it has been impossible to choose a winner however everyone who spent the time making a Summer book will revive some extra rewards in school.

A Message from the Head Teacher: The Importance of Reading

Educational researchers have found that there is a strong correlation between reading and academic success. In other words, a student who is a good reader is more likely to do well in school and pass exams than a student who is a weak reader. Good readers can understand the individual sentences and the organisational structure of a piece of writing. They can comprehend ideas, follow arguments and detect implications. They know most of the words in the text already, but can also determine the meaning of many of the unfamiliar words from the context. Failing this, they can use their dictionary effectively to do so. In summary, good readers can extract from the writing what is important for the particular task they are doing - and quickly.

Researchers have also found a strong link between reading and vocabulary knowledge. In other words, children who are good readers often have a good vocabulary. This is not surprising, since the best way to acquire a good vocabulary is to read lots, and if you read lots you are likely to be (or become) a good reader!

So if you want your child to be successful at school, it is a good idea to encourage him or her to read. Any reading will help your child develop the reading competence that is essential for academic achievement and it is also great fun and a great way to relax. We actively encourage the children to read at home each night. If they do, and have their planner signed, they will become a 'Reading Champion'. Last year, the most we had in one week was 161 children across school – last week, we were at 127. Let's see if collectively we can beat last year's best!

If there is anything in this newsletter that you would like to discuss further, please do not hesitate to contact school.

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