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Newsletter 1: Autumn Term 1

Dear parents and carers,

Welcome to the first of this year's newsletters. For those parents who are new to St. Andrew's, first of all welcome to the family and secondly, you will receive one of these newsletters each half term to help keep you informed with everything that is going on in our amazing school.

They can often be quite long, so I recommend you make a cuppa and put your feet up when the children are in bed!

A start to the year like no other

The start to this academic year has been strange, different and challenging to say the least, but I am so pleased to say that the staff, parents, governors and children of our school have worked together to make sure it has also been a safe, welcoming and happy start too. I think it is important for parents to know just how much hard work goes on behind the scenes to make sure everything is in place to ensure your child's health and safety every day. All staff have taken on extra duties to clean the school throughout the day, they are relentless in making sure bubbles are kept separate and hand washing and sanitising is ongoing throughout the day.

I'd like to thank parents for your patience and understanding throughout this time, especially regarding drop off and pick up times, which needed a few tweaks along the way but we got there in the end.

New developments

This September, we have started the year on a high and have returned to some fantastic new additions to the school building. Our brand-new classroom was built in just 9 weeks and Class 4 are all settled in and enjoying the new space. This project was fully funded by school funds and is testament to the hard work and vision from the staff and governors to allow single aged classes across the whole school.

At the same time as the new build, we also had brand new windows, doors and blinds fitted to the whole school. Previously, they were rotten and ugly, but with a lot of persistent complaining to the council, they finally agreed to fund the new fixtures. I think you will agree they look amazing.

We also had just enough pennies and time left to also refurb the Early Years area. Previously we had a Nursery and Reception unit but have been able to separate the two so we have a standalone Nursery class, with their own outdoor space. This means that Reception can have the whole early years class and outdoor space to themselves, which is brilliant especially as this year our Reception class is full to the brim: we even had families on the waiting list this year; this just shows how popular St Andrew's is becoming! Both classrooms have had some new natural wood flooring laid and the nursery has some new furniture, resources and an interactive whiteboard.

I am sure you will agree all of these developments contribute to providing a happy and safe environment for our children.



Healthy Hearts and Minds

Now, more than ever, we are having a real focus on making sure our children have healthy hearts and minds and have lots of things already in place and planned to support this. From September we introduced a daily 10-minute exercise session before playtime as well as Growth Mindset lessons to help children think positively about tackling new challenges in life with a positive attitude. Now that children are already dressed for PE, that extra time gained is used to increase the time children are being physically active in PE.

On October 9th we will be having a Mental Health Yellow Day, where we would like the children to dress in yellow t-shirts (PE t-shirts are ideal, please do not buy anything especially) and all children will take part in a range of activities to enhance mental wellbeing such as yoga, mindfulness art, listening to relaxing music and talking about their feelings and thoughts. They'll even be eating yellow food at lunch time!

Class Dojo

It has been great to see so many of our new parents logging onto Class Dojo, I hope you have enjoyed seeing your child learn at school and feel part of the wider school community too. This online tool is essential in making sure we communicate effectively with you but it is also very useful in engaging children in learning via their portfolio pages. If you have not already signed up I urge you to do so. Class 2 are the ONLY class in the school to 100% parents signed up – so big pat on the back to you! Let's see if we can achieve 100% in other classes too.

Just a reminder that, when sending a message to any member of staff, please be considerate about the timing and tone of your message. Our staff work incredibly hard when they are at school and need a well-deserved break when at home with their family. Ask yourself if the message is urgent and if it can wait till the next working day please. Also, consider if you are sending the message to the right person. I am still receiving messages from parents about admin issues such as school dinners, holiday forms, breakfast and after school clubs and payments when these should be addressed to Miss Howe in the office. Thank you.

Parent Governor Farewell and Thank you

Our parent governor, Mrs Carrick, has decided to step down due to work commitments. I would like to thank Mrs Carrick, on behalf of the staff and children, for the two years service she has given to our school. In particular, she has been instrumental within the recruitment of new staff to the school and helped us gain some great new members to the team. We wish her the very best.

This means we will have a vacancy for a new parent governor and will let you know when this process begins for those who may be interested.

School Photographs

We would normally have individual school photographs taken this term; however, we have postponed them until later in the year as we know that parents like to have younger siblings in the photos too. With current restrictions we would not be able to have parents and siblings in school. We will let you know when we have a new date.

Harvest and Christmas celebrations

Usually, we would have big celebrations at Harvest and Christmas time, but unfortunately, we won't be able to enjoy these special times with parents this year. We will of course make sure the children still celebrate in school but everyone's safety must come first.

Support for children and families

Our school is not just here to educate the children, we are here for the whole family too. There are many ways we can support families:

- Financial support with access to grants for uniform, household goods, food vouchers
- Support with relationships breakdowns between parents
- Early Help for families who need help with behaviour or routines and boundaries at home
- Support with lateness and attendance
- Access to support for domestic violence
- Referrals for a child's mental health issues such as CAMHs
- Help and advice about medical issues from the school nurse eg bed wetting, diet, sleep, nits
- Signposting to other services eg drug and alcohol use, bereavement, suicide etc

Someone once said, "Don't be ashamed of asking for help, it means you are human." Please don't hesitate to ask for help, we are here for you as well as your child.

I have attached some dates for your diary but as you can see it's not very full as we can't organise our usual events for parents.

Yours sincerely

Mrs N James

Headteacher

Dates for your diary

Remember these dates are also on the school website for you to go to at any time. It is also a good idea to screen shot this page so you have them to hand.

October

Friday 9th October – Hello Yellow day – wear yellow to support wellbeing charities - £1 donation

Tuesday 20th October – Class 4 Madhatters Tea Party

Tuesday 20th October – Bubble 1 Halloween Disco 4.15pm - 5.45pm

Wednesday 21st October – Bubble 2 Halloween Disco 4.15pm - 5.45pm

Thursday 22nd October – Bubble 3 Halloween Disco 4.15pm -5.45pm

Friday 23rd October – Be a Rockstar Day – dress up like a Rockstar and compete in TT Rockstar battles

Friday 23rd October – End of term

November

Monday 2nd November – School reopens

Thursday 5th November – Bonfire themed school dinner

December

Tuesday 15th December – Bubble 1 – Christmas Party

Wednesday 16th December – Bubble 2 – Christmas Party

Thursday 17th December – Bubble 3 –Christmas Party

Friday 18th December – Christmas dinner, Christmas jumper day

Friday 18th December – Last day of term

January

Monday 4th January – Staff Training Day

Tuesday 5th January – School reopens for children

For all of County Durham school holiday dates, go to <https://www.durham.gov.uk/schoolholidays> but remember this does not include individual school's INSET days.