



LANCHESTER E.P. (Cont.) PRIMARY SCHOOL



Friday 7th January 2022

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope your children are pleased to be back in school this week and have enjoyed being in some kind of routine again. I am sure they have all made the most of a lovely rest over the holiday period but all good things must come to an end!

It is not quite the positive return to school that we had all hoped for, but at least we have been able to come back to school! Unfortunately, as I stated in my email earlier this week, we are struggling with staff absences, just like many other organisations at the moment. We will ride out the storm as best we can though and just hope that things start to improve again soon.

We are trying to keep life in school as normal as possible but have decided for this half term not to hold any after school activity clubs, apart from the usual wrap around care provision and the Year 6 SATs Booster Sessions. This is for two reasons. The first is to ensure that different year groups are not in confined spaces together and the second is due to the fact that as we currently have a large number of staff who have tested positive for COVID-19, the priority is ensuring we have enough staff available to keep the school open during the 'normal' school day. I am sure you will understand the rationale behind this decision but we certainly aim to be back to business as usual after February half term.

We have also postponed the visit of our Erasmus+ partners who were due to visit us in the middle of the month. They will come instead at the beginning of April – hopefully!

Ventilation and Warm Clothing

We are attempting to keep all classrooms well-ventilated but this does mean that children might need to wear a vest under their t-shirt and sweatshirt. We are using the carbon dioxide monitors provided by the Department for Education to ensure the rooms are correctly ventilated and are trying to get just the right temperature. We do not want children to be cold or sitting in coats, but we do need to ensure the rooms are sufficiently ventilated. We are obviously currently experiencing a very cold spell outside which does mean that the classrooms might be slightly cooler. Please ensure that your child is appropriately dressed for the weather! Thank you!

Reverse Advent Calendar

Thank you all so much for your wonderful generosity with the reverse advent calendar at the end of last term. We were able to make up 10 different hampers for some of our families as well as give some very generous amounts of food to the local foodbank. You will have all helped to make a huge difference to some needy local families.

Christmas Fair and Raffle

The children thoroughly enjoyed the Christmas Fair afternoon during the last week of term – thank you so much for your great generosity. We raised an amazing £894.35 from the fair and another phenomenal £1,121.74 from the raffle and just wanted to express our heartfelt thanks to you all. Whatever we make, we just put straight back to benefitting your children as I am sure you know. They are never short of a treat or two from school!

Crazy Creatures

Year 1 were thrilled to welcome Crazy Creatures into school yesterday to kick-start their topic of Paws, Claws and Whiskers this half term. It was wonderful to hear the squeals of delight coming from the classrooms and the incessant chatter about the creatures they had held and seen.

Captain Chemistry

We are pleased to be welcoming Captain Chemistry back in school next week. On Monday, he will be working with our Year 3 classes and on Tuesday with Year 4. The children always thoroughly enjoy these sessions and just get so much out of them.

Year 6 Booster – Monday & Wednesday after School until 4.15pm

Those children who were invited to attend our Year 6 Booster classes after school last half term have once again been invited to attend this half term – you will be sent an email about this separately if this includes your child and there will be a link to an online form which must be completed. The booster classes will run until Wednesday 9th February 2022.

Swimming

It is the turn of Year 3 to go swimming this term and Mr Stephenson's class will be the first Year 3 class to swim with Mrs Sant's/Mrs Coyle's class going after half term. They will be swimming each Thursday morning, leaving school at 9.00am to go to the Louisa Centre. Children will need a swimming costume, towel and a swimming hat – if your child does not have a swimming hat please send in £3.00 in an envelope in their swimming bag and they will be able to purchase one at the Louisa Centre – schools have been advised that all children need to have a swimming hat at the moment.

Deadline for Applications for School for September 2022

All Nursery Parents – please do not forget the deadline of 15th January 2022 for applying for a school place for all Reception class new school starters. Missing this deadline hinders your chances of gaining your first choice school and we do expect to be over-subscribed this year.

European Celebration Day – Thursday 20th January 2022

Even though we have had to postpone the visit of our European Partners later this month, we are still going to go ahead with our European Celebration Day on Thursday 20th January 2022. On this day, we are asking all classes to come to school dressed in the colours of their chosen country for the day. All classes will be taking part in some cultural activities of their country, learning more about their climate, landmarks and food as well as their language. We are also putting on a special dinner that day, which will be open to pupils who are usually on packed lunch as well. Please see the special menu attached with a link to the online form to book your child's meal – please note, you will also need to fill this in if your child usually has a school dinner. Please make sure you respond to the form by **Tuesday 11th January** with your child's choices.

Here are the countries that each year group will be learning about:

Early Years – United Kingdom

Year 1 – Spain

Year 2 – France

Year 3 – Italy

Year 4 – Greece

Year 5 – Germany

Year 6 – Belgium

Punctuality and Locking of Field Gate

I realise this week has caused some issues in a morning for us all needing to de-ice cars causing a few families to be late. However, it is important to remember that our flexible drop off time is from 8.30am to 8.45am. We have been quite flexible with the timing of locking the field gate, but this has impacted upon teaching time and therefore it is essential that we close and lock the gates promptly at 8.45am from next week. Therefore, you **MUST NOT** just let your child leave the car without checking the gate is still open and an adult is present. Please make every effort to arrive at school between the flexible drop off time of 8.30 – 8.45am.

Late Attendance Marks

Please note that after some feedback from parents regarding the attendance certificates sent out at the end of last term, we have re-enforced standardisation across our classes so that all pupils who enter the school via the School Office after the gates are shut will be marked as an L. This has been changed for the whole of the academic year. Our Attendance Officer will be back in school from next week and will be monitoring late marks as well as absences. Thank you.

Residential Visits

Over the last two years, we have obviously had to make some changes to residential visits. Our PGL trip for Years 5 & 6 last year saw us take almost 80 children away for the week with 12 staff. In a world where everything was normal, we would have been taking the children to our partner school in Brittany, France this summer, but that is just too risky to plan for this year.

Our pupil numbers have continued to increase significantly over the last few years and as we are now a two-form entry school, we feel that the time has come to take single year groups away on residentials to keep numbers more

manageable. This means that this year we will be taking Year 5 and Year 6 away separately and to different locations. I realise this is different to my communication last term, but it is just not feasible anymore to take such large numbers away all together.

Letters will go out to all Year 6 parents and carers next week as they will have the opportunity to visit Northern Ireland, stay in a wonderful centre from where we will be able to visit the Giant's Causeway, the beaches of Portstewart, go to the Titanic Museum, Science Museum and Zoo in Belfast whilst also enjoying an activity day and aqua park in The Jungle, Magherafelt, Londonderry. Mr McLoughlin and myself will be visiting the area to carry out our final risk assessments at the beginning of February and we will hold a parents' meeting over Zoom on Wednesday 9th February at 6pm. Non-refundable deposits will need to be paid by 1st March to secure a place on this trip.

We are still trying to finalise the Year 5 residential and we will be in touch with Year 5 parents as soon as we have the confirmed arrangements.

Year 4 have their overnight residential to Seahouses at the end of March and letters will go out about that very soon and Year 3 have their overnight residential to Birdswald the same week. Again, letters will go out in the foreseeable future about that too!

These are exciting times for all our children. Whilst all these residential take a lot of planning and organisation, we do feel they are an absolutely invaluable experience for our children! Parents' meetings will be organised for the Year 3, 4 & 5 residential for later this month too. Please watch out for the email!

Organisation for Spring Term

We are using some of our additional funding to further support children in reducing the teacher:pupil ratio in different classes this term (staffing and absences permitting!). In Year 2, 3 & 6, Mrs Riddell, Mrs Coyle and Mr Knighton will be teaching every morning to create three classes for Maths and English lessons. In Year 1, 4 & 5, additional interventions will be in place for groups of children throughout the day. Mr McLoughlin will also be teaching Mr Knighton's Year 6 afternoon class for some sessions. All we need now is a further extension to give us a few more classrooms and life would be almost perfect!

Early Years News

It has been lovely to see all our children back in school after the Christmas break. We are looking forward to welcoming new children to Nursery over the course of the next week.

As you know, we try to plan learning experiences in EYFS based upon the children's interests and fascinations. It is always useful to know what your child is especially interested in and enjoying at home. If you would like to upload photos or videos on to Evidence Me, we are always delighted to see them and the children love to share them in school with their friends. If you need any help in uploading to Evidence Me, please speak to your child's teacher or read the guide here <https://help.evidence.me/evidence-me-help-for-parents/>

Positive Thinking

If you want 2022 to be your year:

Don't sit on the couch and wait for it.

Go out. Make a change. Smile more. Be excited.

Do new things. Throw away what you've been cluttering.

Unfollow negative people on social media.

Go to bed early. Wake up early. Be fierce.

Don't gossip. Show more gratitude.

Do things that challenge you. Be brave.

As usual, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or the school office. We are here to help you all!

Yours sincerely,
Jane Davis
Head Teacher