



Dear Parents, Carers and Guardians,

Re: Parent Update

As we approach the end of our first term of this academic year I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all the support that you have given in yet another period of change for the school, and to share with you some of the things that have been happening here at Takeley.

December Diary Dates

Friday 1 Dec	PFA Christmas Bazaar; 3:40pm to 6:00pm
Tuesday 5 Dec	Aladdin Pantomime; EYFS & KS1 first showing in the morning and KS2 second showing in the afternoon <i>(with many thanks to the 'Friends of Takeley for funding this event)</i>
Wednesday 6 Dec	Deadline for Flu Vaccination forms
Monday 11 Dec	2pm Reception & Year 1 Nativity (Parents invited)
Tuesday 12 Dec	2pm Reception & Year 1 Nativity (Parents invited)
Wednesday 13 Dec	Whole School Flu Vaccination (am) Whole School Christmas Meal
Monday 18 Dec	Year 5 Car Show; 2pm (Parents invited)
Tuesday 19 Dec	KS2 Carol Concert; 2pm in the school <i>hall (Pupils only I am afraid. Next year we will look for a venue that may have space to accommodate the whole school and approximately 200 parents)</i>
Wednesday 20 Dec	Last day of school. 3.20pm finish

Reporting absences and illnesses

I know at times for parents it has been frustrating trying to get through to the school office to report absences in the mornings, as office opening times do not start until 8:30am and there are no opportunities to leave a message. This too, at busy times, is also a source of pressure on the office. We have very recently introduced a new system, with great thanks to Jo at the NHS, called 'Studybugs'. This provides you with a free app to your phone, tablet or computer that enables you to report any absence at any time. The school will receive an e-mail and notification in our 'Studybugs' portal so that we can then record absences within our office management system. If you have not had need or opportunity to download and register with this app it can be downloaded via a new link at the top of the front page of Takeley Primary School's website www.takeley-pri.essex.sch.uk. Thank you for those that have already used it, the office is certainly much quieter first thing in the morning.

Behaviour

Behaviour across the school is now largely significantly better than that I was shocked to witness from a minority of children in the first few weeks of term. Children are better able to focus on learning in lessons and teachers on teaching. The school I have been informed, by many, now feels a much calmer and focused place to be. This I know has come at some considerable effort by teachers in implementing the school's revised behaviour policy and from all of your positive support from home. Only by giving a consistent message, catching children being 'good' and holding children to account for their behaviour and helping them to understand that there are consequences to their actions in line with the British value; 'The rule of law' can we continue to improve in this area.

We do ask that parents are very cautious about discussing matters relating to possible complaints in front of the children or on social media as this can help undermine a lot of the good work that is going on. Please, in the first instance, contact your child's class teacher to discuss the matter. Similarly, we have had a number of children coming into school upset because they have seen or heard parents arguing, which does greatly undermine their confidence and security. I know this situation is never easy but do please consider the impact that this has on the children!

School Website Updates

Our website has steadily developed. You will immediately notice that the first page you meet is that of the 'Learning Partnership Trust' that provides links to the three schools within the academy.

Our key updates include;

'Home' page; Drop down banner providing a link to 'Studybugs' absence reporting tool.

'About us'; i. draft publication of our revised 'ethos' that the 'Pupil School Council' are currently commenting on. If you have a view on this please e-mail comments to admin@takeley-pri.essex.sch.uk ii. Our 'Staffroom' now has an up to date list of all our staff. iii. School Admissions has been updated to include a download for 2018- 19 and 2019-20.

'Our Curriculum'; has a major update on 'Growth Mind-set' that I hope clearly explains this concept through a variety of video clips (these seem to work better in Microsoft Edge or Internet Explorer than Google Chrome).

'Parents'; i. Some self-help links to www.familylives.org.uk and to 'MyMind' app, along with a flyer to 'Gingerbread' that helps to support 'single parents, equal families'. ii. Improved e-safety advise and useful links. iii. Meningitis alert letter.

'More – Statutory Information'; i. updated policies available here, particularly a good place to find information with regard to 'Child Protection'. ii. The 'School Development Plan' is here so that you can see what our priorities are and how we will go about achieving them. iii. Key Stage 2 Performance results for 2016 17 are now published. iv. SEND information Sept 2017 has been published; with thanks to Kath Hill the SENCo for the Academy Trust.

The **next step** for us is to begin to publish the school's actual curriculum, examples of children's work and photos of 'us' in action. Please do note, due to safeguarding, we are not able to post pictures of individual children, but may post those of groups of children in action.

Staffing

We have said a fond farewell to Rachel Bennet and soon to Laura Baxter in the school office and wish them well in their new future careers. We welcome Andrea Harvey to the office, who many of you may already have met. Mrs Kayleigh Perry, in Reception Maple Class, has now started maternity and we wish her well in becoming a mum for the first time. Miss Chrysa Tom has come into cover until the end of term with Mrs Sharon Martin joining us after the Christmas break. We also welcome Monika Schouten, Nicola Thake and hopefully after Christmas Fiona Hewson to help further strengthen our mid-day lunchtime team that will enable us to fully implement our draft Mid-Day Supervision policy and provide greater structure and support to lunchtime activities to further promote improved behaviour during that period of the day.

Performance Appraisal for teachers

All teachers, to support their professional development, have a plan that has set objectives related to 'Pupil Attainment and progress', 'Quality of Teaching' and 'Subject Leadership'. These have been completed following lesson observations, review and planning meetings. I am very pleased to say that, after a bit of a shaky start due to pupil behaviour and some bad habits, the overall quality of teaching seen is 'Good' with some clear aspects of 'Outstanding' practice. A new rigorous 'Performance Appraisal' system has been started that links teachers' performance closely to the teacher standards and the school's 'Pay Policy'. We have a super set of teachers, let's look after them please as we need a good period of stability.

Improving Assessment

Essex Target Tracker is now being used as the key tool to record pupils' achievements against the national curriculum. Mrs Russell has already run a number of staff meetings for our teachers. This will enable us to assess, evaluate and track children against the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum for each individual child. This powerful tool will later in this year allow us to compare how well we are doing against other schools nationally (Over 25% of Primary Schools in England use Target Tracker, this is the single most used tool across the country). We will also be using 'Target Tracker' for our end of academic year reports to parents this year.

A Developing Curriculum

Plans are beginning to be developed for a new 'Project' based approach for children's learning. Ms Dennis has led a number of staff meetings to guide and give time to teachers to develop detailed plans for the Summer term. Year 5 have already been trailing some of these approaches, with Mr Hitchin and Miss Wooton inviting some of their parents in later this term to see some of their 'Electric Car' outcomes which have been inspired by some of the work they have done with representatives from 'Ford Motor Cars'. Please keep a look out on the school's website for pictures and images of this project.

Finally, I would once again like to thank you for all your support in my first term. It has been a challenge, we have had to apply many 'Growth Mind-set' strategies to ourselves too, but a challenge that has been a good one and one that has been made all the more worthwhile by seeing children happy and smiling in school. We are not, yet, fully there but definitely heading in the right direction.

Wishing you all a Happy Christmas and New Year from us all at Takeley.

Yours sincerely

Mr Andy Cosslett (Headteacher)