



Bennet Canfield, Little Canfield, Dunmow, Essex, CM6 1YE

7th February 2018

Dear Parents, Carers and Guardians,

Re: Spring Half-Term Update

Another half-term at Takeley has flown by, so time for another update. The key themes that we continue to work on have included improving:

- a) Behaviour
- b) Accuracy and reliability of teacher assessment to support pupil progress
- c) Curriculum provision
- d) Quality of teaching and
- e) Financial planning

a) Behaviour

I am now very pleased to report that the children and our staff have done themselves proud to date, with behaviour across the school now being viewed as consistently 'good'. The revised Behaviour Policy and its implementation by all is now ensuring that the school is a calm and focused place for learning. Teachers and support staff can teach and our children are now better able to focus on learning, uninterrupted by poor behaviour. Well done to all!

Break, including lunchtimes, are also much more focused places, with the number of poor behaviour incidents now significantly reduced. The children are well supervised by our much larger lunchtime team, which now includes many of our experienced Learning Support Assistants (LSAs).

The playgrounds have been split into designated zones, especially for the junior children, so that they can make best use of the new equipment that arrived before Christmas; basketball posts x 2, football goals x 6, giant Connect-4, bar-football, giant polydron, giant dominoes amongst a host of other smaller items.

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b) Teacher assessment and pupil progress

Essex Target Tracker has been further developed to keep an up to date and ongoing record of each individual child's progress against the national curriculum. Pupil progress meetings, along with teacher moderation and standardisation meetings, are helping to develop an increasingly accurate and reliable picture about how each child is doing.

We are hoping to share a new mid-year report with you at the March parent consultation evenings. We are also going to do a soft launch of 'Target Tracker link' for our Reception classes, which will help to capture and share teacher observations and show where each child has made progress.

c) Curriculum provision

Teachers have been working hard on developing a consistent and focused approach to curriculum planning, to help ensure a more relevant and purposeful application of the statutory requirements of the national curriculum that embraces the revised school ethos of 'Learning, achieving and enjoying together'.

At the heart of our provision is an emphasis on a project-based approach so that, through a variety of curriculum subjects, the children learn specific skills to help develop knowledge and understanding that they are expected to then apply and use for a clear purpose to, or for, a real audience.

The children's project journey, over either a term or half-term, will move through three phases:

- a) Inspire and motivate
- b) Learning specific skills
- c) Applying and sharing

We hope this new process will help to fully engage and inspire all our children. The first projects across Key Stage 1 and 2 will roll out this summer term (although year 5 have been piloting a number of ideas already this year), with our long term summer plans available on the school website by the end of the spring term. This has been, and will continue to be, a major piece of work for at least the next 18 months, as not only do the detailed long term plans need developing, but each subject's unit of work requires a new medium term plan to help support the day to day teaching. We are aiming to publish examples of these medium term plans later this Spring Term on our website too.

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c) Quality of teaching

Teachers continue to work hard on improving their quality of teaching, particularly on:

- 1) Using assessment information to help build on what children already know and can do*
- 2) Providing marking and feedback that impacts on children improving their work*
- 3) Improve behaviour management by consistently applying the school's revised Behaviour Policy*

New 'drop-in' lesson observations by the Leadership team began this term, in either English or Mathematics, to enable us to focus on the impact and quality of teaching and pupil progress. To date, much 'good' teaching and some 'outstanding' teaching has been seen.

At our Pupil Progress Meetings with the teachers we have begun to look at how well children have progressed and who, and in what areas, children need to do better. Current teacher strategies have been evaluated with 'actions' set for each individual teacher to help enable children to make accelerated progress.

We are beginning to see a positive impact with children's overall attainment beginning to come in line with national expectations after many years of being below or well below. Well done to all!

d) Financial planning

As you may have heard in the press, there has been increasing pressure on finance in the public sector. Without going into any political rhetoric, it is crucial that here at Takeley we look at planning for the school's financial stability, to ensure the school can go from strength to strength in future years.

I am currently working with our Governors and the Trust to develop a 5 year budget plan that meets the real needs of the school, and to ensure that this is affordable and avoids the school falling into any deficit.

Some of the key areas we are factoring in include :

- 1) Developing a robust middle leadership structure to ensure succession planning and avoid the very high level of leadership turn-over in recent years; I am the school's fourth Headteacher in five years!
- 2) Investment in new ICT infrastructure, as the current system is now 5 years old and not able to meet the needs of the curriculum.

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- 3) Substantial investment in curriculum resources, which have come under increasingly heavy pressure over the last few years.
- 4) Developing the outside, particularly for our Early Years children and for the Key Stage 2 playgrounds, which are too small and have contributed to the behavioural issues seen over the Autumn term.

In other news...

...many of our children attended the annual “Young Voices” event at the O2 in London. A long and tiring day, but a fantastic opportunity to sing on a national stage with other children from all over the country! **A big well done** to the children and all the parents who supported the event. A huge thank you to Mrs Chamberlain, Miss Platten, Mrs Russell and Mrs Beauchamp for organising, managing and escorting the children and making the event such a success.

Our swimming team were runners-up in the District Swimming Gala this half-term, with many children picking up first place certificates. A big thank you to Mrs Russell for organising the team.

Good luck to our school hockey team who compete in the district competition on Friday 9th February - with thanks to Mr Sykes for organising.

Year 5 braved the cold elements on Tuesday 6th February with their trip to Thorndon Park and their World War 2 experience day to help bring together their history work, under the creative guidance of Mr Hitchin and Miss Wotton.

Our Key Stage 1, along with Roseacres’ children, enjoyed their Multiskills training day, organised by Mr Nick Wildersmith, from the Sports Partnership, and Mr Sykes. The event also helped to develop our Year 5 and Year 6 children’s sports leadership skills as they were taught how to organise, manage and run one of a variety of sports skills activities.

After half-term we will be sending out a polite parking reminder, asking parents to please follow the parking restrictions and to park courteously and safely to avoid upsetting our neighbours. We will again be requesting the Highways Parking Enforcement team to come and do their job and issue parking fines to all illegally parked cars. You have been warned! I would also be grateful if, as parents, you have a complaint about parking that you please contact the Essex Highways Department

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directly on 0345 603 7631, or Uttlesford District Council on 01799 510510, as this will also add substantial weight to our complaints.

A **BIG** thank you from Mrs Carter, our Office Manager, to all of you who have been using 'StudyBugs' to report absences. This has significantly reduced the office workload first thing in the morning and we hope has made life much easier for yourselves in being able to report absences and illness 24/7 and not having to wait until 8:30am when the office is open. A link to 'StudyBugs' is available from the school website or directly at <https://studybugs.com>. This service is free and includes an app that can be downloaded to your phone.

To all those who use social media we do ask you to use it respectfully. If you have a valid complaint, please come and talk to us face to face. All staff are working incredibly hard to improve things here at Takeley. You can see clearly where are priorities have been from this update. Where parents have inappropriately used language that may cause justifiable offence to any individual member of staff this will be reported to the police who are increasingly taking action to support the teaching profession. On a more positive note Miss Dennis is looking at setting up a safe and moderated social media site for use by Junior School children called 'Go Bubble', to help teach children all the positive aspects of social media. I would remind you that 'Facebook', 'Instagram', 'Whatsapp' etc require children to be 13 years of age or older. These sites and apps are not moderated and there is a relatively high risk of children being subjected to online bullying, sexting and other inappropriate behaviours that all too regularly make the news. Is your child safe online? Do they use social media responsibly?

Finally, a reminder that our mid-year parent consultation evening will be after the half-term break on Wednesday 14th and Thursday 15th March. Letters will go out at the end of February and we look forward to seeing you all there. We look forward to seeing all children back safely in school on Monday 19 February.

Thank you all for your continued support as we look to go from strength to strength.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Andy Cosslett (Head teacher)

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