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02 December 2022

Dear Parents/Carers

As we head into the festive period, there are number of pieces of information I wish to share, which I hope will be useful to help us traverse this busy and exciting time.

Christmas/Winter Fayre Experience/Party

The newly formulated FHS has been working hard to create a unique experience for the children. This is not a Christmas or Winter Fayre in the traditional sense, but will include crafts, games and refreshments for the children, as well as mulled wine, beer and refreshments for the grown-ups to buy. This will be taking place next Friday, 9th December as per the newsletter, from 3.15-5.30pm. All pledges of support will be warmly received. Next week, please bring in chocolate for the chocolate tombola!

FHS Book Purchase

We thank the FHS for funding the purchase of books for KS1. This will support us in delivering our new government-approved phonics scheme, 'Little Wandle'. Sadly though, two of these books have been returned to school ruined due to a water accident travelling to/from school. Please do ensure books are returned safely and in a timely manner – we are always happy to receive 'overdue' returns so that other pupils may benefit.

Pantomime

The annual pantomime visit to Cheltenham Everyman Theatre will take place on Monday 12th December. The performance starts at 2:00pm. We anticipate returning to school by 5:00pm. We will keep you posted via text if we are running late due to traffic.

Christmas Jumper Day

The last day of the term (Friday 16th December) is Christmas Jumper day! Children are invited to attend in Christmas attire (if they wish), which may include a seasonal jumper. Voluntary donations of £1 will go towards the charity, Save the Children. Please also be reminded that on the last day of term, Friday 16th December, school closes at 12:15pm. No After-school Club will operate on this day.

Christingle Service

For a number of reasons, we are moving our Christingle Service to Thursday 5th January, 6:00-7:00pm. This will fit in with our Epiphany Celebrations in the first week back of the new term. We very much welcome you to this special service. Year 5/6 have also been invited to a New Year Christingle Service held by the diocese, at Gloucester Cathedral. This will take place on Friday 20th January within the school day, and is free of charge.



Together we can...

Our strap line has changed! It is now, 'Together we can!', and replaces: 'A small school where big things happen!' Great things continue to happen at Horsley but the shift to 'Together we can' reflects more fittingly the philosophy of a vision of collaboration, of partnership working and the reality of who we profess to be as a community school, at the heart of the village. Going forward, you will see the it on school paperwork, the website and in other material we use to promote the good work of school. I hope it meets your approval.

Communication Update

The newsletter continues to be a key means of communicating. It is 'published' every other week, normally on a Friday. This is uploaded to the school website and, in addition, is sent via a text link. If you have yet to get into the habit of reading it, do please touch base with it. Please ensure that we have your latest mobile phone number so we can share details of pupils' learning, events and key info. A number of parents are saying that they were unaware of information, then to be told that the information was made available on the newsletter. Texting will continue to be used to provide you with reminders and updates. We will continue to send periodic letters (like this one). These will typically be sent via a text link. Flyers and notes (e.g. head bump notes) will arrive home via book backs.

Attendance and illness

The DfE, Ofsted and Local Authority (LA) are putting increased pressure on schools to ensure that children are in school, in a major drive to increase attendance following the pandemic. For some families, this will present challenges. If you are experiencing difficulties in getting your child to school, we are here to help as best we can. Also, as we head into the winter period, we need to be mindful of pre-pandemic ways of being. We should try to 'battle on' through minor sniffles and tickly coughs. If your child is ill, please keep your child at home. If your child experiences vomiting, please ensure they are off school for 48 hours after the last bout of sickness. If your child is tired, please send them into school; we will adjust learning accordingly. The value of resilience is one of our core 12 values, which underpin all that we do at Horsley. Thank you for your support in this regard.

INSETS

To help families manage busy lives, INSET dates are published very early on. The dates for the academic year 2022/23 are thus now available. Please see the latest newsletter. INSETs are always set next to holiday periods. I hope this helps you in organising holidays, flights and family visits, etc.

Nut-free Zone

Just a reminder, we are a nut-free zone. Whilst nuts are healthy, we cannot have children bringing nut-based products in school, as a snack or as part of their packed lunch. We are seeing an increasing number of nut allergies amongst children. For these children, bringing in nut products to school puts children's lives at risk. Again, thank you for your support.

Collection Arrangements

Our new arrangements for collection are generally working well. Please continue to arrange play dates outside of school time with your formally nominated adult. This is helping us to keep your child safe and make us more effective at managing end-of-day collections. Thank you for your understanding and support. Please also be aware that if you are unable to pick your child up on time, the After-school Club is available to support you. Children who are not collected within 15 minutes will be cared for by the After-school Club and a charge of £10 will be made, per pupil. I am aware that some families need after-school provision on Fridays. As such, next term a Board Games club will be running every Friday, 3:15-4:00pm, for a small charge. Further information about clubs will follow in due course.



Staffing Update

I thought I would use this as an opportunity to update you on staffing. Mrs Neale, sadly, will be leaving us at the end of the term to take up a post within walking distance from her home in Cheltenham. We thank you for her utter commitment to the children of Horsley, her enthusiasm and energy. She will be replaced by Mrs Vaughan, who will be working with Mrs Saddington as a job share. Mrs Vaughan brings a wealth of teaching and leadership experience across the full primary years. Finally, we welcome Mrs Hurst, who joins as a TA in KS1. She brings experience and a knowledge of working with pupils with additional needs.

Sadly, after 20 years of service, James is leaving Horsley to take up a promotion and wider leadership role. We have been very privileged to have James' skill set for such a long period of time. He will be much missed. Miss Kibble leaves her teaching role too, after a period of illness. She will no doubt be looking forward to spending more quality time with her young child, after returning from her maternity period. We wish them both good health. Mrs Everett has increased her hours, and will continue to work with Miss Ind-Smith and Mrs Bell in Foxes.

Teacher Strikes and School Closures

You will be aware, from media coverage, of talk of possible teacher strikes. I am awaiting further updates about this and I will keep you posted as information becomes available. If it is appropriate to close the school due to staffing, I will do so.

As we enter the winter period, if inclement weather, e.g. snow, prevents staff from arriving to teach and/or puts children's lives at risk, we will close the school. A text will be sent out, in the first instance, and school closure information will be made available at <https://closures.gloucestershire.gov.uk/>. For emergency school closures related to inclement weather we will ensure that there is support for on-line learning accordingly. This will not be 'live' on-line teaching, as such, but a timetable of self-directed tasks linked to the normal school day. In the interests of pupil well-being, it may (possibly) include a snow-related task, where relevant!!! However, closing the school is not undertaken lightly and my preference is always to always keep the school open, if it is safe to do so.

As always, if you would like to discuss any of the above, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours faithfully



Gary Price
Headteacher

