

Dear Parent / Carer,

The next few weeks will fly past! The half-term is only four weeks and a few days – not very much time in which we want to achieve a huge amount! As you know we are having our usual spring focus on reading, to tie in with World Book Day and our own *Book Week*. We place great importance on reading for pleasure and Miss Putt and the other teachers have planned some fantastic events for the next few weeks including a visit from the poet, author and storyteller, David Mason (<http://www.inspiretowrite.co.uk/>). David wowed the children in the summer term and we are so pleased he is back not only to work with them but also for an evening meeting for YOU! Knowing David, it will be hugely entertaining and interesting. Don't miss it. It is on Tuesday 12th March.

As you know, this year has been punctuated by visits from the Local Authority and the HMI inspection in November. We have been pleased that at each stage, the quality of the work we have accomplished has been recognised. As you know the HMI reported we had made "rapid and sustained" improvements and children make good progress from their starting points. Just before half-term there was a Local Authority and Governor "Improvement Board" meeting: again I am pleased to say that their view was that Firside is a "Good" school. We hope that a full inspection will take place before the end of term or early next term, when we can demonstrate our strengths in full.

Parents in School: We were delighted so many of you came to the *Parents to Lunch* days and also to the events organized by the different Year Groups such as the Year 5 Roman exhibition. The children are always very proud of what they have learned and achieved, and enjoy being able to show it off to an audience. Thank you for coming and being such an appreciative audience.

On Monday, you will receive your child's *mid-year report* and an invitation to the spring term progress review meetings. We hope you will be able to come and discuss your child's progress with their classteacher and discuss their next steps. Coming at the mid-year point, it is a good time for these discussions.

Staff update: We were all very pleased to welcome Mr Oakey, the caretaker, back to work just before half-term. He has been quick to catch up on all the jobs that have been piling up in the meantime and is making a real difference to the school!

Developing Reading Skills at Junior School

Most (but not all) children will be able to read fairly well by the time they leave Infant School. At Junior School, the challenge is for children to move on as readers; to become confident, competent and independent in their reading. They need to move beyond simply decoding text. They have to be able to interpret and interrogate texts – to read for meaning, for information and to understand points of view and opinion.

This requires a different approach from simply listening to children read. Teachers at Junior School therefore can be most effective when they model and highlight strategies (such as 'skimming' and 'scanning' for example); when they introduce, explain and use new vocabulary; and when they help children to make the link to other words and contexts. Teachers also need to introduce children to aspects such as fact, opinion and bias, inference and deduction for example when they are using text for research.

Teaching reading at Junior School therefore has a greater emphasis on group and shared-reading, when the teacher is probing and prompting for meaning and understanding, rather than simply helping children decode the words in front of them.

Of course many children will still need support in their development of reading. Their developing reading will be supported through structured phonic interventions, through paired-reading, as well as by regular reading with a supportive adult.

As well as all the reading in school, we hope that all parents can enjoy the wonderful world of books with their children at home. Sharing a good story is not only a brilliant way help to your child but is also such an enjoyable thing for children to do with you.

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Intervention Groups

At Firside, we tailor teaching to make sure that children are working in the best way to make all possible progress. Not only is work differentiated on a daily basis to meet the various ability groups in the class but we also organise "intervention groups". These are small group sessions carefully planned to help children overcome specific weaknesses or gaps they have come across in their lessons. The sessions are in addition to normal literacy and numeracy lessons, taking place outside these lessons, and normally taught by trained teaching assistants. They sometimes follow programmes such as 'Sound Discovery' or 'Numicon', but they are often programmes we have designed ourselves to meet specific areas of need.

A child's involvement in one of these groups is time-limited – they often run for just a half-term. They are designed to accelerate a child's progress and help them overcome a difficulty that has been identified and doesn't mean that your child has special educational needs. Because they are just part and parcel of how we support each child, we do not normally inform parents when your children are involved in one of these groups. However, teachers will talk to you about it during parent consultations and will want your views on how well it is helping your child to make progress.

e-Safety

<http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

We recently used the national 'Safer Internet Day' to refresh children's awareness of the need to stay safe and to be aware when using the internet. The internet has changed all of our lives, particularly our children's. For parents and carers this opens up a whole new world of things to be aware of. For many of us, this can all be a bit too much. You might be struggling to keep up with the things your child is doing online, you might wonder whether what they are doing is safe, and you might also be thinking 'how can I be as good a parent online as I am offline?' The 'thinkuknow' website aims to make online parenting simple. It's full of practical tips and straightforward guidance on topics such as...



Do visit the site – it's packed with helpful hints and tips.

Diary

March	Tue	5 th	Y5 to Norwich Castle – Roman Day
	Thur	7 th	Big Brew 2.30 to 3.30pm – Canteen School Disco 5.00 to 7.00pm
	Fri	8 th	Future Canaries: Soccer coaching event for all years
	Mon	11 th	4R & 4HR to visit Whitwell Mothers Day lunch (bookings closed now) Parent Progress meetings 3.30 – 6.00pm
	11 th /12 th		David Mason (Author) in school
	Wed	13 th	Parent Progress meetings 3.30 – 6.00pm
	Fri	15 th	4P to visit Whitwell
April	Wed	27 th	End of Spring Term at 3.15pm
	Mon	15 th	Start of Summer Term at 8.45am

Horse Meat

We are pleased to tell you that the meals service has carried out extensive checks and analyses, and states with confidence that there is no Horse DNA in any school meals.

Mini-breaks

There are two morning breaks for the children: the main break and a second mini-break. The mini-break is a very short comfort break allowing them to stretch their legs, a quick trip to the toilet, and to eat any fruit they may have brought in. It really is a very short break indeed and is only really a brain-break between lessons. Some children have started having biscuit bars and other snacks which are fine for the main break but not appropriate or necessary in the mini-break. This week we have reminded them that apart from fruit, any other snacks should be eaten during the main break. This is not a change – just a reminder of what we have always requested. Hopefully the newsletter item will help you at home and avoid any confusion.

"Future Canaries" soccer coaching – Friday 8th March

We have secured a whole day of football coaching with the Community Sports Foundation here on 8th March. A fun day of football for the whole school! Please remember to have your sports kit in school

Premises update

Playground markings: Work originally planned for the autumn term but postponed because of the weather has now been completed. As well as netball many other markings suggested by the children have been added and they are immediately enjoying them as we knew they would.

Repairs to entrance: The repairs to the parapet above the main entrance have been completed and crumbling brickwork replaced. We are just waiting for the scaffolding to be taken down.