

Dear Parent / Carer,

Welcome back and a Happy New Year to everyone!

Following my decision to retire, the school governors have been putting much time and thought into planning my replacement. They fully intend that the leadership of the school will be secure and in good hands next September in order that all the improvements we have made will continue strongly. They are keen to keep you well-informed about the changes and you will receive a letter from the Chair of Governors early next week outlining the way forward for the school.

You may remember that at this time last year we wrote about strategies to help children become not only strong readers but also keen readers for pleasure! Many of you took part in our questionnaire which really helped us understand the children's reading habits outside school. We made a number of refinements to our strategies in school and this year we are in the process of setting up a new system called 'Accelerated Reader'. This will initially be introduced to Years 3 and 4 and then rolled out to Years 5 and 6. The programme links online learning and quizzes with real books in our library – it will really excite the children! It will take a little time to set up but it should be up and running by half-term. Of course nothing will replace the joy of reading for pleasure with someone at home and we would encourage you to continue this all the way through school.

As this term gets underway, we are starting a push on handwriting and spelling in line with the new national curriculum. As well as all the work in Literacy and Numeracy, there are exciting projects planned that cover other areas of the curriculum and give opportunities for children to apply their literacy and numeracy skills. Each Year group's newsletter entry will give a bit more detail but below is a summary of some of the exciting opportunities ahead:

	Projects on...	Visits to..	Other
Year 3	The world of Ancient Greece	Using the school grounds for work on <i>fossils & rocks, plants & seeds.</i>	Visit from Mad Science Invitation assembly for parents Book Café
Year 4	China Dragons!	Whitwell Hall – countryside in winter	Invitation assembly for parents Book Café
Year 5	Vikings and Norway Roman settlers	Theatre Royal (Horrible Histories) Castle Museum (Romans workshops)	NSPCC Visitor on keeping safe Book Café
Year 6	Space – the final frontier!	Visiting scientist	NSPCC Visitor on keeping safe Book Café

Safe Use of The Internet

All the children are taught in school about safe use of the internet. Our work in ICT lessons includes introducing them to *edmodo.com* which is a safe educational social platform on which children can learn how to interact safely online. We have been made aware that some children are using an online social website called Omegle, at home. We think that children are unwise to use this site. A quick search throws up the following quote about Omegle:

"Omegle is a free online-chat website that allows users to communicate with strangers without registering. The service randomly pairs users in one-on-one chat sessions where they chat anonymously using the handles "You" and "Stranger"."

We are very concerned about the unregulated and unmonitored nature of this website – and that the prime purpose seems to be to encourage communication with strangers! We have discussed it with children in assembly and wish to draw your attention to the potential dangers using Omegle and similar websites.

Year 3 News

Now the children have really settled in at Firside we are looking forward to a very productive term. Thank you for continuing to read with your child at home – reading 4 times a week will really help them progress (and earn team points in class!). If you initially expressed an interest in coming in to school to help children with reading but have still not managed to arrange this, please speak to your child's class teacher. We are still looking for volunteers!

This term our major project is Ancient Greece. We will be taking historical, geographical and artistic perspectives to allow an in-depth understanding of this fabulous period in history. We are intending to put on a special assembly based on this topic to which all parents will be invited on Friday 14th March 2014. More details will follow.

Our work in English will focus initially on poetry, moving later on to myths and legends. This fits in perfectly with our Ancient Greek topic, and after learning about the features of myth stories, we will be having a go at writing our own. Some of our homework will be linked to these topics. As ever, thank you for supporting your child so that they are able to complete these pieces of work by the Wednesday deadline.

This term, we have introduced a new two-week timetable in Year 3. This enables us to spend more time on core skills in Maths and Literacy, without affecting children's access to other subjects.

Now that the children are more comfortable with the methods we use for calculation, we will be introducing some new and challenging ideas to them. These will prepare the way for later developments in the key areas of arithmetic, geometry, data and measures and reasoning. You can support them at home by helping them to use Mathletics, consolidate 3x, 4x and 6x times tables, learn their halves and doubles and discuss and practise telling the time.

In Science, we will be learning about rocks & fossils, plants & seeds and carrying out investigations to develop more scientific skills. In ICT, we will introduce the children to email and the Internet which we hope will enable them to further extend their home learning. We will also allow the children to join the learning network Edmodo – a separate letter with details will follow. As part of our study, we will be discussing issues of e-safety, particularly with relevance to email, and thinking about how they can 'stay safe' in the 'virtual world'.

Parents and carers of all year 3 children are invited to our second book café on Tuesday 11th February at 2pm. Book cafes are a fun and informal way of sharing a book and a related activity with your child in school. Everyone is very welcome.

Diary

January	Mon/Tue 20 th /21 st	Y5 & 6 NSPCC workshops
	Thu 30 th	Y4 Road Safety presentations Y4 Book Cafes 2pm
February	Mon 3 rd	Two Y4 classes to visit Whitwell Hall
	Mon 10 th	Third Y4 class to visit Whitwell Hall
	Tue 11 th	Y3 Book Café 2pm
	Mon 17 th	Half-term week
	Mon 24 th	School re-opens
	Tue 25 th	Parent Consultation meetings
	Wed 26 th	Y5 visit to Theatre Royal Parent Consultation meetings
March	Thu 6 th	School Disco
	Wed 12 th	Y5 to Norwich Castle
	Thu 27 th	Y5 Book Café 2pm
	Mon 31 st	Y4 to Whitwell Hall residential week
April	Thurs 3 rd	Y6 Book Café 2 pm

After school clubs this term

Monday	Thursday	Friday
Martial arts (SESMA) (20 th Jan – 24 th Feb) (Yrs 5 & 6)	Street Dance (Kelly Lumsgrove) (Yrs 3,4,5&6)	Football (Community Sports Foundation) (Yr 3&4)

LOOK OUT FOR....Cookery (Yr5) and Mad Science clubs after half-term – We will inform you once details are confirmed

We wish everyone a Happy New Year and hope 2014 is a great year for you!