

Wickham Common

Primary School

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Tuesday 29th November 2022

Dear Parents & Carers of children in Year 1

I trust that this letter finds you all well and looking forward to the festive season and all the special times ahead. If you came along to last week's Christmas Night Market or on Saturday to The Christmas Fair, I am certain that you and your children will have had a lovely time. Perhaps you visited Santa or The Magic Show amongst the very many exciting attractions available on the day? Such events are not only fund raisers used to enrich the curriculum for EVERY child in school, they are also a chance to showcase our beautiful school and invite our community in ... I do hope that you were able to enjoy that opportunity.

Last Friday afternoon, school had to be prepared for the 'invasion' of visitors, children's identities and school property had to be protected and therefore each lower school class did spend about 45 minutes watching a movie in the small hall while their classroom was being prepared, such are the realities of school life. The children really enjoyed it and after a hard week's work they deserved it.

As many of you will be aware our lovely Mrs Gill is rather unwell at the moment, initially we thought she would be away from school for a few days and her class 1 Cherry were covered by a couple of supply teachers (both known to school and very much trusted) together with of course the fantastic Mrs Sliwka and Ms Graves supporting. Unfortunately, it turns out that Mrs Gill will be off school for a little longer than first anticipated and as such we have put in our very own cover teacher Mrs Brereton, with whom the children are already very familiar. If you haven't met her please do speak to her at the end of the day – she has been working at this school for a number of years and is part of our team and well known to all children. Mrs Brereton is a super sportswoman, very knowledgeable and is also a fully trained Scientist (she runs the Science after school club). Mrs Brereton will remain with 1 Cherry until Mrs Gill returns. We are hopeful that will be before Christmas but we will have to wait and see.

I know that some children have struggled with the staffing changes and I can only apologise for this, sadly staff do occasionally become unwell and have a right to their privacy, I cannot do anything really to stop this but I know that you will understand this.



The one, single thing you can do to support your child's learning is to read with them. Read Write Inc books are now coming home weekly and you should read these with your children several times a week, focussing on speed sounds and words. Each book has tips and useful ideas for helping the children read. Every day your children bring home their Reading Record and also school reading books. Please take these out of your child's book bag EVERY evening and have a look, then hear your child read, support them by sounding out letters and sounds, use the pictures as clues to make sense of the story. Talk to your child about what has happened in the book, make predictions about what might happen next. Maybe, together with your child draw and colour some key scenes/moments from the story, cut it up and help them to put it back in order. Here are some links to help you to support your child learning to read. Ours is a partnership of three – your child, the school and YOU. The triangle is a strong and stable metaphor but it needs everybody to do their part to be strong and successful. Below are some useful links. Please help us to help your child achieve their full potential.

<https://www.ruthmiskin.com/parents/>

<https://home.oxfordowl.co.uk/reading/reading-schemes-oxford-levels/read-write-inc-phonics-guide/>

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/reading-owl/find-a-book/read-write-inc-phonics-1/phonics-pure-sounds-video>

I have been informed that the Year 1 Microsoft Teams account has been struggling to marry up with Arbor - our registration system, and that many of you have been unable to access messages from the Year 1 team or indeed the children's Home Learning. I apologise for this inconvenience and have asked the teachers to photocopy several weeks' worth of Year 1 Home Learning which will be sent home today or tomorrow in hard copy paper form – you DO NOT have to do it all but it is there if you want to. It is vital that you support the home learning process by working with your child, this is embedding learning at home that has been initially learnt in school. It also involves parents in their child's education.

When parents move up into Year 1 and no longer receive the weekly email from Mrs Critten, they do often worry they are missing out on communications from school. This is NOT the case. I email all parents every Friday and the PTA email all every Tuesday and in an ideal world that would be it – no blocking of your 'in-boxes'. Other messages pertinent to the year group will go onto Teams and you will need to look at Teams daily for info please.

Please see the attached Microsoft Teams guidance to help you get the most from Teams. If you really cannot manage please do make an appointment to come into the school office and have a lesson. Everybody needs to know how to access Teams because (apart



from EYFS) this is the school's medium of communication. We are essentially 'paperless'.

In the meantime our Year 1 team remain strong and steady. We have Mrs Turner in 1 Horse Chestnut on a Monday/Tuesday/Thursday & Friday (a retired Head Teacher and lower school specialist) and Mrs Rodger (our Computing Leader and a very experienced lower school specialist) on a Wednesday – they are supported by the brilliant Mrs Hancock who has now returned to Year 1.

Year 1 Horse Chestnut class are taught as described above. This is an experienced, reliable and gifted team of professionals who are ensuring your children get the very best Year 1 experience possible. Miss Rayward who is starting as a full time teacher in 1 Horse Chestnut in January has been in school a couple of times, has met the children and is in fact in school again today. This is all part of the handover process which is thorough and robust. As parents you will not meet Miss Rayward until January.

Mrs Critten continues to be the Phase Leader for Early Years and Year 1 and as such is fully aware of everything that is happening in Year 1 and is highly supportive and offers advice and guidance where needed on a daily basis.

I would now like to share with you what the Year 1 plans will be in the coming weeks.

Tomorrow we will be celebrating the patron saint of Scotland St Andrew and Mrs Turner (who doesn't sound Scottish but definitely is) will be leading the whole school in a special assembly along with a piper in full regalia – but this is a secret so don't tell your children!

Rehearsals for The Lower School Nativity have begun in earnest today and the staging will go up in the main hall tomorrow, no doubt you have been hearing songs sung at home in the last few weeks. Year 1 do the 'acting' and as such will be wearing full costumes and their teachers will be in touch very soon (maybe even today!) regarding any help they may need with this.

The children will be learning all about Advent and the Christmas story. They will of course continue to have Phonics, Reading and Maths lessons every day. Individual readers will continue to be heard and small groups of readers will work with the teacher on their reading skills. PE and Computing will also continue to be taught.

There are also some very special, very naughty 'Elves' coming to visit in Early Years and Year 1 but Sssshhhh this is a BIG secret please do not tell you children – their daily antics will be source of great hilarity and interest no doubt!



We also have lots of Christmas events so keep an eye on the Dairy Dates I send out regularly (see newsletters).

I trust that this detailed letter has brought you some reassurance and answered some of the questions I have received from individual parents, I will not respond individually. If there are any remaining queries please do not hesitate to email the school office and I will answer them as best and as soon as I can.

These next few weeks will be magical for the children and the adults, I look forward to seeing you all next week on Thursday 8th December when the children of Lower School will be performing their Nativity to the Year 1 parents. Don't forget if you offer to support with the PTA refreshments you can come in early and reserve your seat. In order to qualify for this you must be here by 1:15pm on the day. The performance actually starts at 2pm and I will likely open the doors around 1:45pm – just time to grab a drink and a cake and settle down for the performance.

Seasons Greetings



Mrs Deborah Allis

