

Dear Parents and Carers,

As always this half-term has passed quickly and we find ourselves at the first break.

It has been a successful six weeks with a special mention for our youngest pupils, who have settled so quickly and it was great to have so many parents in this week to share in the fantastic learning, that they have already engaged with. We feel that open mornings are a fantastic way for those at home to see what happens each day with our youngest pupils and we hope to extend these further during the year.

However, we will also see a welcome return to Parent Teacher Conferences in person after the half-term break. Completing these over TEAMS was functional but this cannot beat meeting you in person to discuss how your child(ren) have settled into their new class and year group. This communication forms an essential element of the partnership between home and school, that ensures your child gets the best out of their education. We look forward to seeing you soon.

**The Legacy of COVID and School Attendance** With the dust settling slightly after two years of disruption, we are learning more and more about the way in which school closures have impacted the education of our pupils. Each year group has been affected in a slightly different way due to their age at the time. What is clear is that school closures and remote learning, regardless of how hard everybody tried, was no substitute for being in school and the legacy of this will take several years to address.

Therefore, as a school, we are clear that we need to ensure your child attends school every day, that they are well enough to do so. As I have explained before, even missing one day, can have an impact for the next few weeks as our curriculum is purposely designed to build upon prior learning and so it is like missing one episode in a TV series and then trying to understand the story line that refers to what happened. Yes there is a quick 'Previously...' recap, but this is often insufficient for a child to catch-up enough. Not only does this leave them potentially lost for the next few weeks, but research suggests, this can impact their overall success in school and the GCSE results that they end up with (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/absence-and-attainment-at-key-stages-2-and-4-2013-to-2014>).

Our concern is that in September alone, there have been 50 days of unauthorised holiday, 140 days of pupil illness and 13 days of medical appointments. Taken together this is equivalent to 59 weeks of school absence across the school in the first month alone. Of course, children will be ill and medical appointments are like gold dust; however, if this continues and the school does not use every measure to try and stop the unnecessary absence, there will be no addressing the legacy of the last two years and there will be children with gaps throughout their education that will leave them lost for years to come. We hope you can all understand therefore, why we take such a strong position on attendance.

**The Importance of Reading** Almost a year ago to the day, this newsletter contained an explanation of the importance of homework and in particular that of parents supporting the school in hearing their children read regularly. The school was aware that many parents were finding it a challenge to re-establish this routine. Traditionally, the school has always performed well in reading and in part, we know that this is due to the support that the children receive at home.

Having now completed a year of assessments that allow the school to compare the performance of our pupils with those across the nation, this only reinforces the importance of trying to encourage this habit again.

As a school, our pupils exceeded the national average in almost every area; however, reading was the subject where this gap was the smallest. Whilst the school is looking to review aspects of our teaching to try and address this, it is also clear that those who were struggling to read at home, were amongst those unable to reach the expected level for their age. Therefore, we would again ask if all parents could try to support the school in this area as much as possible.

**PTA** The PTA held its AGM last month with Linda Rawlings stepping down after many successful years as PTA Chair. With Linda's children having now left the school, the baton has been passed on and we are excited to welcome the new team. It was a pleasure to see so many new members at this initial meeting and hope to see many of our traditional events return—starting with the Christmas Fair. The next meeting is on **Wednesday 2nd** November at 7pm if you can join us.



**Curriculum** This year, there have been legal changes around what the children are taught within Relationship and Sex Education during their time at primary school. In terms of content, the school made this change about 3 years ago and therefore we do not see that there will be significant changes to our current curriculum. However, one major change is in a parent's ability to opt out of certain aspects of this learning. As a result, it is really important that we have the opportunity to consult with parents and take your views into account. This was planned for last summer but we will now be aiming to share this virtually in November through a series of TEAMS presentations with more details to follow shortly.

