

Friday 5th May 2023

May Newsletter



Dear Parents and Carers,

Happy Coronation weekend! Every month seems to get quicker and quicker but with our Monday inset and the extra bank holiday, this half term seems to be particularly swift.

As a result, the formal testing season is suddenly upon us: from Monday, the Year 6 have their end of primary assessments; Year 2 will take us up to half term with their 'quizzes' and then Year 1 and Year 4 will have their Phonics and Multiplication checks respectively in June.

I appreciate that testing is a controversial topic and as a school, we do take these really seriously as we always want the children to be prepared to do their best. Regardless of what age they start, formal testing will be a routine part of their whole education, not to mention the array of dance exams, musical concerts, football trials and other situations in which so many of our children feel a little bit of nerves around their performance. Ultimately, the more they experience these situations, the less stressful they are and therefore, we also put a huge amount of thought into how we can make these positive experiences that ultimately result in a sense of achievement for all.

However, this is without doubt, one of the busiest part of the school year and so the children do inevitably become increasingly tired; we therefore hope the children can have a restful few days before this begins.

Parent Survey

Thank you so much to the 99 families who completed our annual parent survey: with so many responses, this provides excellent feedback on the way in which our work is being viewed by the community it serves.

Shortly, we will email all parents a full breakdown of each point and the school's response, where actions are needed. However, with an average of 97% positive responses to each of the question, we are really pleased that the hard work of the staff and pupils is being recognised.

Whilst every question is extremely important, perhaps the response that we are most proud of is that **100% of our parents would recommend the school to another parent**. As we serve hundreds of families, we are never going to make everybody happy all of the time, but to have this level of support for our work is more motivating than it is possible to explain. Moreover, we know that this positive word of mouth extends beyond an annual survey as I hear this constantly from new parents when showing them the school.

Of course, we are not perfect and never will be; however every day, we are looking to improve what we offer your children and it is hugely motivating to know that this is valued—so thank you once again.

Industrial Actions / School Finances

To date, the teacher strike action has not impacted the school greatly and with the last two dates in particular, we were grateful to have all staff available. This was in the main because with assessment periods just around the corner, all staff wished to be in school to ensure that the children's preparation was not impacted.

However, over the next few months, it would seem likely that more, if not all, unions will chose to join the strike action and in doing so, I think it is almost certain that there will be some school closures in the coming months and for as long as this action continues.

As I have stated from the start, I am extremely supportive of the staff's right to strike as I know that we will lose quality staff if nothing changes and this will have an impact upon your child's education. We have teachers who are considering leaving because they need a job that pays the bills and with my Teaching Assistants earning around minimum wage, it is only a matter of time before some of our most essential staff decide to choose a different path.

Moreover, with this and next year's pay increases largely unfunded, this has led to an unplanned shortfall of approximately £150,000 in the school budget during a time in which costs are soaring. The school has to run a balanced budget each year and therefore, inevitably this means cuts to provision and potentially staff: we are sad to say that ICS Sports Coaches will no longer be used from September; the heating will be on even less than this year and massively reducing school trips and sport participation is seeming inevitable.

Therefore, whilst we understand that any school closure will be highly disruptive; we can only apologise for this and hope that parents understand why this may be necessary.

Staffing

As some parents are now aware, Mrs Penston will not now return until after her maternity leave and so we wish her the best with the rest of her pregnancy—Mrs Turner and Mr Grimsby will be teaching Willow class. We would also like to congratulate Mr Lindley upon his recent marriage; sticking with the recent Year 3/4 tradition, he will changing name, taking his wife's surname and therefore, Mr Kirk is now leading Rowan class.



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