



7<sup>th</sup> November 2022

Dear Parents

I had a request from a governor to go back to the 'old style' newsletters as used to go out pre covid. We now post many things on the class Facebook pages or Tapestry for Pipit Class so not all parents, (or governors), are aware of what is happening in school. As we've implemented major changes over the weekend, I thought that this would be a good opportunity to resurrect the newsletter which will also be available on our website, with all the dates featured.

Firstly, before the changes, I'll start with school news. Well done to the Y5/6 football team who successfully played Newbrough Primary last week.



The children experienced a lot of different physical and wellbeing activities last week; amongst the many activities were yoga, line dancing, netball, gymnastics, soft play, football, healthy cooking on the fire pits, cross country, (some even wanted to do another lap!) and ball games. Thank you to the Fire Service who also came in on Thursday and ran fire safety workshops and brought the engine which caused great excitement!

Our school was in the National Modeshift Stars final in London, representing the North East of England. Unfortunately, we didn't win but were highly commended for all our work on promoting active and sustainable travel to school. The children are completing their travel trackers each week to earn their badges and we now have a WoW ambassadors' group to promote active travel.

Parents who have been to school last week may have noticed that some of the previously very uneven paths have been resurfaced as has a section of the potholed bus park; this will hopefully be a safer entrance for those families who walk, scoot and cycle to school.

We encourage all children to bring a water bottle to school; please do not put juice or fizzy drinks in the water bottles.

Just a reminder that for PE lessons and sporting activities, children who have long hair should tie this back and children who have their ears pierced must remove their earrings; other than non – smart watches, jewellery is not allowed in school.

## Attendance and Punctuality

Last half term the punctuality of children arriving at school greatly improved. The entrance gate is closed as soon as the children have come into school and any late arrivals recorded. It is important that all children arrive promptly to ensure a calm start to the day. When children arrive late, they can be anxious about going into class when the other children have started their lesson and it can cause disruption for teachers if they have to stop teaching or speaking to the class to reassure or 'catch up' a child who is late.

The Education Welfare Officer, (EWO) is coming into school every half term for an attendance meeting to monitor any pupils' attendance which has fallen below the expected levels. As stated in our Attendance Policy, the expectation is for all pupils to achieve at least 97% attendance unless there is an exceptional circumstance, such as a major illness.

## Lunchtime Clubs

We now have a range of lunchtime clubs on offer this half term including History Club, (Y5/6), Art Club, (Y4,5,6), Mindfulness colouring, (Y1,2,3), Singing, (Y3,4,5,6), Netball, (Y4,5,6) and Gymnastics after school for Y4,5,6. The Y6 children will shortly be trained as Sport Peer leaders and will run clubs for Y1 and Y2.

We have a number of older children who have offered to run various clubs for the younger children which we will look to facilitate in the Spring and Summer terms. It's always lovely to see our older children volunteering their services for the younger ones and taking responsibility for planning and organising their activity and gives them a great opportunity to develop valuable life skills.



### Welly Swap

To save parents buying a new pair of wellies for school use, we have some spare wellies which can be swapped for a pair which no longer fit your child. If you would like to do this, please see Karen after school or send a message in to the office.

## PTFA

The PTFA really need new members to keep it going. Thank you to all the parents, (and friends) who came to the PTFA AGM meeting in school a few weeks ago. Even if you don't want to join the committee, volunteers to help organise and run school social events would be greatly appreciated. The PTFA Halloween Disco was a great success thanks to the parents who helped to get it all set up and helped out on the night.

**Today, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> November at 6.30pm** the PTFA have an online meeting, (any parents who would like to attend can contact Mrs Clarke in the school office for information about joining the meeting), to discuss Christmas events for this half term.

### Events coming up this half term:

**Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> November** – Curlew / Kestrel Classes Kielder Brag Art workshop.

**Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November** – NDAS, (Northumberland Domestic Abuse Service), a series of 4 weekly workshops on healthy friendships for Skylark and Lapwing Classes.

**Monday 21<sup>st</sup> November** – Performance Poetry Workshop Curlew Class

**Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> November 3pm** – Christingle celebration at St Cuthbert's Church

**Wk beg Monday 28<sup>th</sup> November** – Y5/Y6 Bikeability Training

**Wk beg Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December** – PTFA Elf Shop, (more details to follow but children can shop for a Christmas present for a member of their family which the elves will help them to wrap and label).

**Friday 9<sup>th</sup> December** - Pyjama day – donation of chocolate or a bottle for the PTFA Christmas tombola.

**Friday 9<sup>th</sup> November** – PTFA Film Night

**Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> December & Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> December 1.45pm**– Whole school Nativity Performance.

**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> December** – Christmas Dinner & Christmas Jumper Day, (Donations for Great North Air Ambulance Service and Daft as a Brush); possibly a very special visitor but it will depend on flying conditions from the North Pole!

**Monday 19<sup>th</sup> December** – Pipit Christmas party

**Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> December** – Y2/Y3 Christmas party

**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> December** – Y5/Y6 Christmas party and Y4 Christmas Party, (separate parties).

**Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> December** – Theatre Company – Sleeping Beauty

**Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> December** – Y1 Christmas party

**Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> December** – finish for Christmas

Spring Term starts on **Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> January**

### **Changes!**

Now to finish with the changes we have been planning and implementing this half term. Just for some background information; post covid we started to realise how much of an impact the lockdowns had had on some children's development of social skills, ability to concentrate, tolerance of each other and how mental health and wellbeing had been adversely affected with anxiety, social and behavioural issues significantly increased. Then there are the academic 'gaps' and issues to address. We knew that we could not hope to tackle the extra academic support necessary if the children were not emotionally ready to be at school with their peers.

Last year, all staff were trained in the Friends Resilience Programme which was implemented across school to support friendship and social issues. We invited the Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour Support Service to work in school with staff to audit our provision and make any recommendations. We also started to look at the research and work being undertaken around Therapeutic Classrooms and started working with Shahana Knight who is a leading practitioner in the field of childhood trauma and therapeutic classrooms. We also undertook some pupil feedback on what they liked / didn't like about their classrooms and how they would like them to look – their ideas were very much in line with the therapeutic classroom approach which was reassuring.

The following is an extract from research undertaken on adverse childhood experiences:

*“Adverse childhood experiences come with long-term consequences that cannot be ignored. The brain itself is affected by trauma and often develops maladaptive coping strategies in order to help the child protect itself during times of threat. Parts of the brain that we need children to access at school, such as problem-solving, memory and reasoning are programmed to shut down when a child feels stress or fear as a protective mechanism to help them to cope, almost like a trigger. However, this is detrimental to their ability to participate at school. Another long-term consequence of trauma is prolonged stress and having increased levels of stress hormones mean that children struggle with:*

- *Mood swings.*
- *Lack of concentration.*
- *Forgetfulness.*
- *Poor decision-making.*

- *Poor problem-solving skills.*
- *Hyperactive behaviours (often confused with ADHD).*

*When a child is stressed or anxious these maladaptive coping mechanisms are triggered and as a result teachers are dealing with more behavioural issues in class, struggling with the effects of trauma (often without knowing it)."*

We've put a lot of work into looking at and improving our school environment and it's still a work in progress but we are seeing a very positive impact on the children due to the changes we have already made in school. We are also part of the Behaviour Hubs programme and much of the work we are doing around improving punctuality and attendance is directly related to our work on the environment.

Many parents did take the opportunity to visit the Barn Owl Classroom during parents' evenings. Shahana came up from Manchester for a weekend in September and helped us to makeover the room into a therapeutic style nurture room which the children absolutely love and is in constant use.

Barn Owl Classroom before



Barn Owl Classroom after



Which brings me to the changes this weekend. On Thursday last week, Curlew and Kestrel pupils emptied their classrooms for the carpets to be cleaned on Thursday night. What we didn't tell them is that their classrooms were about to get a makeover, (I'm sure some guessed as we had already told them we were planning it!)

Curlew Classroom before



Curlew Classroom after



Kestrel Classroom before



Kestrel Classroom after



As you'll see the classrooms do not look or feel like the traditional classroom layout. We have flexible seating, at normal dining tables and high bar style tables with comfortable

seating. Some children prefer to stand when working so the high tables are perfect for this and some prefer to sit on the floor for certain activities – we have lap tables which they can use for this.

We've now transformed all the upstairs classrooms and although many things have already been done by staff, we would love to roll something similar out in Pipit, Skylark and Lapwing and make their classrooms more comfortable and relaxing. Obviously, this is a major change in the way we set up classrooms and we will evaluate the impact it is having.

We will soon be inviting parents to come in to see the new Curlew and Kestrel Classrooms.

Mrs A Hawkins  
Headteacher

Just an update from when I wrote this newsletter: Curlew and Kestrel have now spent the morning working in their new look classrooms and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Curlew Class have written a few comments below.

