

## Dear Parents and Carers,

We have had a very hectic start to the second half of term, exacerbated by problems following the redecoration of the dining area and some very unusual staff absence. Fortunately things are more on an even keel today and our full complement of staff, other than one member of the team who is still recovering from surgery, should be back in place by Monday at the latest.

It was disappointing to arrive on Monday morning and find that the kitchen was in such a state following works across half term, so much so that both our normal dining routine and menu were adversely affected despite the very best efforts of the cook and her team. For many of the children this will not have been viewed as a problem in any way but for others their dining experience on the day may have been satisfactory at best. Words have been exchanged with the contractors and further work is now scheduled for this Friday afternoon to see the shortcomings rectified. Please be assured that this was a one off situation and full communication has also taken place with the School Meals Service to highlight the difficulties that we had but also to generally up the ante as per our expectations of the service. Their response was very positive and senior management visited on Tuesday to assist our regular staff and suggested a number of minor improvements that should improve the overall experience. This is helpful and I am grateful to several parents who mentioned this to me - their views have been passed on to the service head, Elizabeth Luke, who is more than happy to meet with any parent or carer who has any concerns.

The new colour scheme and décor looks very attractive and will be even better once all of the snagging issues are sorted, hopefully on Friday of this week. Our After School Club will run as normal on Friday but from the Y2 classroom instead of the hall. Parents / Carers should come to the main entrance to collect their children instead of the rear door to the dining room. Staff will be on alert to answer the door.

We are in the middle of a Fair Trade themed week of activities across the school and had hoped to host a "Big Brew" event later this week but owing to some ordering difficulties we are now looking to reschedule two events for next Thursday and Friday afternoons (March 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> from 2.15 pm each day). We are purchasing a range of drinks and snacks for our Pastoral Care Team leaders to sell during the planned events, alongside any cakes or biscuits that you may care to make and donate for the charitable arm of Traidcraft, our Gateshead based Fair Trade Pioneers. Fair Trade tea and coffee and Fruit juice will also be on sale and we are hoping that we can get a good turn out from across the school community. Once again the school will be indebted for the support of SAPA who will be volunteering to assist the school in this venture - Your input is very much appreciated. (Please bring any cakes / biscuits from Wednesday evening in marked tins / containers with a brief description on ingredients. No nuts please - we know that there can be "traces" but this can be managed - thank you in anticipation. I do hope that you will join us or if not allow the children to bring a pound or two to join in the events).

The March 1<sup>st</sup> event coincides with our annual and very popular celebration of World Book Day. The children are allowed to come to school dressed as any character from a book. I know that this sometimes sees parents / carers nagged to purchase costumes and that major retailers tend to stock supplies for this very reason, but please do not follow this path - any home-made, simple representation will be absolutely fine. It's a fun day and a celebration of reading and books that everyone enjoys and though we love to see your creativity at work, we don't want you to break the bank. I think that Mrs McMullen is sending a separate letter with some additional information so look out for this.

Looking further ahead as part of the school's self-evaluation processes I have invited my colleagues on the South Tyneside School Improvement Team to visit our school on Thursday March 8<sup>th</sup>. It is very important that every school has some expert validation of policy and practice from time to time and the LA's Ofsted team are very useful in this respect. They will be tasked with viewing teaching and learning, particularly in Mathematics which as you know, is one of our target areas, as well as looking at other aspects of school life such as safeguarding and pupil behaviour / attitudes to learning. I am sure that we will find the experience very useful and assist us in future planning.

A reminder that our LEGO League Regional Champions will be travelling to Bristol on Friday to participate in the National Championships. We are really proud of them and know for sure that they will be wonderful representatives of our school and region. Our thanks are due to Mrs Thompson and Mr Baharie who are once again giving up the full weekend and we wish them all a safe trip and the very best of luck. Thanks too to all who have contributed to the costs of the trip - much appreciated.

I look forward to seeing you as the term progresses.

Best Wishes.

Yours sincerely,

K J Smithson

Head Teacher.