

Dear Parents and Carers,

A very warm welcome to the new school year to you all after what has been a very good summer, one that we will look back on given the extended periods of sunshine we enjoyed. I do hope that you have been able to have some special time with your children though I do appreciate that the six weeks can be a long spell for many working families so it is good to be back to normal with an exciting term ahead of us.

School is truly up and running today with the children back and that busy hub bub of noise and energy sweeping around the classrooms, corridors and playground. It is very good to see them all, especially our new starters who have been so good and cheerful all day as they get to know their new teachers and classroom (which is looking very smart given that they have a new carpet and flooring throughout). We look forward to seeing them settle and enjoy their learning and play across their very special first year here with us at St Gregory's. We will all be working hard to enable all of our children and staff to do the same as we embark on the 18/19 academic year with all of the challenges and enjoyment it will bring. Thank you for sending them back looking so smartly turned out in their uniforms (I hope you have the names marked on! As we want them to hang on to every item for longer than the first week!).

We must look back to end of the summer term in order that I can thank everyone on behalf of the staff team for the many gifts, cards and messages of thanks they received. There were so many lovely messages and memories too and you can be assured that these mean a great deal. Thank you especially for those. Mrs Pickering was especially touched with her send off and I'm sure she will look back fondly on all of the happy times she had with the children here. I'm sure she will have something special planned for September this year!

Thanks to all who managed to complete one of the Reception or Y6 questionnaires, again we had lots of lovely comments but also some sensible suggestions that we will take note of. With reference to the Reception Induction period, it does seem like there is a feeling that this may be too long because of the pressures of childcare, amongst other reasons, but this is the main one. Given that the vast majority of pupils are in an education setting prior to their Reception year these days, it may be that the first week is set aside for part time attendance, rather than spread this across two as we do currently (some years back it was three weeks, so times are changing). We want to see the pupils have some extra special time with their new teachers and smaller groups enable this but we have to try to get the balance right and a shorter induction period is one that governors will consider later this term in good time for **2019**. Thank you again for your input.

As is usual on the first day of the new term I saw our recent Y6 pupils gathering together to walk to their new schools, looking immaculate in their new uniforms and we think of them and wish them well as they begin a new chapter in their lives. It's amazing how they stick together and I am sure that they will encourage and support each other in their new settings. News is also filtering back of the tremendous performance of past pupils at GCSE, A and Degree level from settings near and far - very well done, we are very proud of you all, though we all feel a little older when we see some of the names and realise that they are now 21! Mere youngsters of course but very capable, well-educated and able characters who will go on to make their marks in all sorts of professions, as well as being the kind and thoughtful people that we remember so well - we know that you will make a difference.

From a pupil well-being point of view this is usually the time when I ask that all medication held in school, including inhalers etc. is checked and updated as appropriate. Parents / carers are requested to check the "safe to use" date and bring new ones if necessary. Mrs Rochford will be available to meet with parents / carers to check and store replacement medication if appropriate. Some parents / carers have already made a good start with this.

A reminder that every KS1 child receives a free school dinner and we are hoping that everyone will take advantage of this, especially as lunchtimes together are such an important social occasion and a great opportunity for enjoying the company of their Pastoral Care partners. For Key Stage Two children the cost of a school meal remains the same at £2.10 per day or £10.50 per week payable each Monday morning or per month / term if this is what parents / carers prefer. Cheques made payable to "Borough of South Tyneside".

Parents / Carers who wish their child to take a packed lunch need to write requesting this each September, there can be a waiting list.

School milk is chargeable for the majority of pupils at £9.10 per term or £27.30 per year. There remains a difficulty for both the school and some of our families as the "entitlement" to Free School Milk still needs a form to be completed and these are available to collect from and return to the school office. Payment for the year is appreciated but whatever suits parents / carers best.

I would be very grateful if **ALL** families who are on Universal Credit (provided they have an annual net earned income not exceeding £7,400 (£616.67 per month), Income Support, Income Based Job Seeker's Allowance, Income Related and Employment and Support Allowance, Support under part V1 of the Immigration and Asylum Act or if the Household Income is less than £16,190 or you have the Guaranteed Element of State Pension Credit, Child Tax Credit, provide they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of £16,190, Working Tax Credit Run On - paid for four weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit, complete and return a form as soon as is practicable. Apologies for this sounding so complicated - it must be designed this way. Please call in if we can help. (I will see that a copy of the official advice form is in the notice board cabinet and on the website)

The importance of this cannot be overstated, not only because families are entitled but also because the school's income is indelibly linked to these "Pupil Premium" Monies. At the minute the school can receive from £20,000 up to £35,000 annually from this funding source to provide additional classroom support, resources etc. and we spend every penny, but if families do not apply then the government will simply hang on to the money and we will all lose out. Several of our support staff are funded via this revenue and with school budgets so tight, every little helps.

So whether your child takes school milk or not please complete the paperwork in order that we can secure the additional funding to which these children are entitled. Your cooperation is very much appreciated. Mrs Rochford will help with any queries - we know that we many people fall into the "just about managing" category identified by Theresa May.

With regard to PE and Sports it is essential that all of the children have their kit with them for both PE / Swimming in curriculum time and for after school club participation. Swimming will commence next week at Haven Point Pool across the Autumn Term - Y3 are first on the rota. Details from class teachers regarding PE sessions and curriculum coverage etc. are imminent and

some of our After School Clubs should commence from next week with others starting the week after. Also, Post School Care with "Bright Sparkz" is up and running already, providing an excellent service, as I'm sure many are aware.

Looking ahead please find a list of important dates for your attention:

- Monday September 17th sees all Reception Pupils starting full time. Pastoral Care Partners will be allocated to care for them, especially during lunchtimes
- Autumn Term Open Evenings Week: Monday October 15th - Thursday October 18th
- October Half Term: Monday 22nd - Friday 26th. Return to school Monday October 29th

(All Staff CPD sessions are Twilights this term - no additional days off for the children: CPD 2019 dates are: Friday May 24th and Monday June 3rd - this bookends Spring Half Term Week and may be an opportunity for a 10 / 11 day break rather than taking holidays in term time which will impact adversely on the children's attainment and progress)

- Nativity Performance: Tuesday December 18th at 2.30pm (This may be earlier the same day if we need to fit in a second performance, for example 1.30 and 3.30pm) TBC
- Christmas parties: KS1: Wednesday December 19th : Y3 / Y4: Thursday December 20th and Y5 / Y6: Friday December 21st
- School will close for the Christmas Holidays on Friday December 21st at the usual time and we return after the celebrations on Monday January 7th 2019.

We have yet to organise school Masses and Class Assemblies but details will be sent out as soon as we have had an opportunity to meet with Father Weymes.

I look forward to seeing and working with you all in the best interests of the children across this Autumn Term and the new school year.

Best Wishes.

Yours Sincerely,

K J Smithson.

Head Teacher.