

Dear Parents / Carers,

The children enjoyed a visit from Rachael from the WEEE Recycling Scheme on Monday - it is clear that they are very concerned about our local environment and the wider responsibility of protecting our planet from pollution. Some of the children were really knowledgeable about recycling and contributed a great deal to the discussion.

We have a new recycling container for batteries of all sizes (other than car batteries!) located near the main entrance. Please feel free to make use of this facility. We are looking to use the school as a collection point for a one off drop off point for any small items of electrical equipment that you want to dispose of - these can be old play stations, hair dryers, tongs, toasters etc. We will have a special bin ready to collect all of these items and these will be collected prior to half term. Again, this may be something that meets a need and we can guarantee that the items will be recycled safely. Please bring these unwanted items to the main entrance and we will look to store them prior to collection. There is a prize for the school that collects the most but I think it's enough to work with families to dispose of waste items sensibly and reinforce that environmental message.

Looking ahead, we will again be looking to celebrate the gifts of the harvest and to see these shared with others less fortunate than ourselves. We are planning our annual sponsored walk and fun afternoon for Wednesday October 17th from 1.45pm. We will walk our usual route to the park in Pastoral Care groups and return to the yard for some play activities for the remainder of the afternoon. Hopefully the weather will be kind. There will also be a Harvest assembly at 11.30 on the same day but this is only for Y5 parents / carers and the children across the school.

We have Pat Folland from CAFOD visiting next week to hold a special assembly for the school highlighting the work of CAFOD in supporting the poor across the world. We usually charge £1 as a donation towards our walk and games afternoon and this is used to support CAFOD with our collection of tins and foodstuffs donated to The Key, centre for the homeless in South Shields. Any tins / foodstuffs you can spare will be very much appreciated and we can collect these from next week.

On another note we have some further news to share - something I have not been looking forward to sharing either! Miss Carrahar will be retiring at the end of the term and I don't need to tell you that we will miss her so much for all that she does for our school. You can't put a value on the 33 years' service she has given to St Gregory's and we will be looking to celebrate her great contribution prior to the Christmas break.

Recruitment is underway for an experienced Y5 teacher to commence in January and governors have set out an itinerary for the appointment of a new Deputy Head Teacher with an initial meeting in November. Any senior appointment in a Catholic school requires Diocesan, Local Authority and HR representation as well as the full Governing Body, so it's sensible to plan well ahead. I will keep you informed as the term progresses.

In the meantime everything will continue as normal with regard to our primary teaching and learning focus. Unfortunately, we may yet have further complications with the planned works that need to go ahead to replace sections of flooring at the Infant end of the school. At the minute tenders are out and we await details of cost and timescale. The worry is that the works may lead to a period of disruption for the school as the contractors are of the opinion that there is too much to do in the nine days we have available over half term. Some sections of the job must be done with the premises empty. Other areas of work, the relaying of floors etc. could be managed with some disruption but with all classes working as normal. We have coped with this type of thing before but the governors will listen very carefully to the advice we receive from the contractors before any firm plan can be put in place as the health and safety of the school community is paramount. Negotiations are ongoing and as you can imagine are adding to what is an especially busy term to date - these things are sent to try us!

Again, I will be in touch as soon as I have some further information.

Finally this week we have to wish Miss Beth Harrison every success in her new job at Westoe Nursery. Beth came to us as an apprentice and has worked hard to be an excellent classroom assistant - she goes with all of our good wishes. On a happier note from Monday next, we are pleased to welcome Miss Price back as a very suitable replacement - she is really looking forward to being back at our school and will support pupil learning in Y2.

It won't be long until Open Evenings and with the Harvest celebrations imminent and Mass on Tuesday October the 9th, I look forward to seeing everyone across the next few weeks.

Have a good weekend.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

K J Smithson

Head Teacher.