

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are pleased to get back to normal after what I hope has been a happy Christmas and New Year period for everyone. It is very nice to be able to spend some time with family and friends and I do hope that this was the case for you all despite the stresses and strains the festive season can bring. The children seem very pleased to be back with their friends and the school has been a hubbub of chatter and laughter since first thing this morning and I have heard no end of tales about the bumper crop of presents they have received - it sounds like it's been an expensive time! Talking of gifts, may I say a big thank you on behalf of all of the staff for the lovely cards and presents we received during the last week of term. Your generosity and kindness was amazing and very much appreciated by staff at all levels. There were so many touching messages too and these really do mean a lot. Miss Carrahar asked me particularly to thank you all on her behalf - she really felt that her send-off was very special and something that she will always remember. We wish her well as she starts this new phase in her life.

A special welcome then to Mrs Nicola Squares who is joining us to teach in Y5 and is already proving to be a popular choice with the children. We all hope that she has a very enjoyable and productive time here at St Gregory's.

It is noticeable that many of the children have returned to school in new hats coats and shoes and I am hoping that they manage to hang on to all of these items as the term progresses. It would be a big help if all uniform items, old and new, were marked with the child's name and class. We already have a mountain of unclaimed items from the autumn term so it would be good if the lost property box is not quite as overflowing as the term progresses.

With regard to our September intake please note that the closing date for applications for September 2019 is Tuesday 15th January at 4.30pm sharp. Please make sure that you apply in good time if you have an eligible child and spread the word if you can to friends and relatives as every year we have families who miss out because they forgot about the deadline. Key to admission to a Catholic school is a Baptismal or Christening certificate if not RC. Occasionally we have complete forms submitted that indicate that a baptism is imminent or a date has been set, or planned for later in the year but if the ceremony has not taken place prior to the admissions deadline then the child has to be placed in a lower category. We have had siblings missing out because of this in the past so please try to get everything organised and the forms submitted by the deadline.

If anyone is unsure about the process or who has any questions, please contact Mrs Rochford and she will be happy to help. The governors will look to have the main admissions meeting in or around mid-February. This will be for September admission to our Reception class and also for any in year pupil transfers. All applicants will find out if they have been successful or not in April.

A reminder that milk money is due for all parents / carers who pay termly: (£9.10).

Dinner money remains the same at £2.10 per day or £10.50 per week.

The new term is not quite as truncated as it was last year with Easter much later in the calendar but there is still a lot to fit in and a great deal to look forward to, not least the Y5 trip to Thurston (Monday March 25th - Friday March 29th). Separate forms have already been sent out about this exciting and much loved residential. We are very lucky to have the Thurston Outdoor Centre as part of South Tyneside Local Authority as many other authorities have sold off their properties in the past decade. It is a wonderful place and provides a very special learning and fun experience for all of the children.

Looking further ahead out Y6 children have their trip to Berwick / Edinburgh to look forward to in June (24th - 26th) and expressions of interest have been really good so far. We will be having an information visit soon with Mr Foster from "Explore4 All" in the next week or two - Y6 will receive a letter shortly.

You may want to make a note of the following dates across the Spring Term:

Excellence and Enjoyment Themed Weeks / Activities:

- Week 1: January 7th - 11th KS1: Where We Live (KS2 : Each class takes their own approach)
- Week 2: February 25th - March 1st: Drama / Creative Arts
- Monday 10th - 15th March - Science Week
- Creativity / Pupils Choice Day: March 29th

Other dates:

- January 15th and January 22nd - School Nurse visit for Y5/Y6 girls (15th) and boys (22nd)
- January 24th - Y5 - Show Racism the Red Card Day
- Tuesday 5th February - Internet Safety Day
- Tuesday 5th - Y2 Skipping Competition
- Thursday February 14th - Deputy Head Teacher Interviews (all day)

The HALF TERM break for children will commence at close of school on Friday February 18th and last until school resumes at the usual time on Monday February 25th.

- March 4th and 5th - Heart Test Sessions for KS2 (part of Science Week preparations)
- March 7th - Road Safety Walk Y2
- March 11-15th and March 18th - 22nd - Link Governor Weeks
- Monday March 25th to Friday 29th - Y5 Thurston Residential (*Open Evening Delayed until the week after for Y5)

Monday March 25th - Thursday March 28th - OPEN EVENINGS ALL OTHER CLASSES (individual appointment times nearer the date). **Please note that there will be NO after school clubs this week other than Karate on the Friday.**

EASTER HOLIDAYS: From close of school on Friday April 5th until Tuesday Morning April 23rd at the usual time.

Parish Based First Communion Programme will continue as per the previously published dates. Please liaise with Father Weymes or Mrs Fenwick if you have any queries.

We anticipate at least one Mass for Lent and another nearer the end of term as part of our Easter celebrations: Father Weymes will confirm as soon as possible.

Notifications regarding After School Clubs will be sent out in the course of the week with a view to starting next week.

I do hope that a big effort can be made to improve school attendance this calendar year after a distinct dip across 2018 that can be entirely marked down to holidays taken in school time. Governors have indicated that they will follow in the footsteps of other schools across South Tyneside and adhere to Local Authority Policy if there is no improvement. All school indicators are very positive, especially so in terms of pupil attainment and progress but these too are diminished if pupils take too much time off school and vital learning opportunities are lost. I do hope that we can regain this lost ground across 2019.

I look forward to seeing you as the term progresses.

Best Wishes.

Yours Sincerely,

K J Smithson

Head Teacher.