

Dear Parents and Carers,

Today marks the end of a very busy week at school with Open Evenings, the Full Governing Body meeting and recruitment, transition meetings and preparations for Easter all taking place, staff have certainly been at full speed and I am very grateful to them for managing to cope with the demands placed upon them. Thanks too to the vast, vast majority of parents and carers who manage to make time for appointments and are patient across the open evening programme. We very much appreciate your understanding and we know that you appreciate the teacher's taking as much time as they can to prepare and speak with Mam's and Dad's.

At times, queues do build up because invariably some parents / carers seem to lose track of time and can be in consultation with the teacher for 20 to 30 minutes in some instances. This is of course only in a few cases but inevitably after such a long session it is impossible for the teacher to catch up, nor do we want to short change people further down the line. As you will appreciate it very much adds to the stress of the evenings for the teacher and impacts upon your busy schedules too. I know that this is absolutely not an intention on anyone's part and there is no easy solution as we try to maintain quality and frequency of opportunity.

I may have to look at the organisation of the Summer Term meeting to see if there is any way that these logjams can be reduced. Staff are in attendance until very late on each of the two stipulated evenings and are more frequently than ever these days asked to reorganise additional sessions on other evenings throughout the week. Again, this is a lot to ask, especially so for staff with young families and everyone has other commitments that need to be factored in as we try to maintain some sort of work / life balance. You will all be aware that here at St Gregory's we have three open evening slots across the year and two reports - this is more than all but a few schools with many having fewer opportunities and those that do have three, often holding just the one night each term. St Bede's have two for example, Autumn and Spring, with an optional visit in the summer term alongside the end of year report. The HT informs me that hardly parents / carers do attend as they feel that they have sufficient information. St James have a secondary type system whereby parents and carers queue in the hall to meet the class teachers who are all together in one area; you will be aware of other schools who may things differently and of course we have several teachers who are part of our parent body and it may be that our current organisation is at least as good or better than others. It is trying to get a balance and I will give the matter some thought.

I know that you will all join with me to welcome our new Bishop, Bishop Robert Byrne who was formally welcomed to his new ministry on Monday and then met with representatives of all the school's across the Diocese on Tuesday, an occasion we attended and really enjoyed. The choirs, music and reading were excellent and the children took the opportunity to light a candle and say a prayer for Mrs Fenwick and her family who are having a very hard time at the moment. I know that we will all be keeping them in our prayers.

Father Weymes is back in school for our Easter Mass on Tuesday morning at 9.30 and as always, everyone is welcome to attend. I know that it's odd to be celebrating Easter when we are not even in Holy Week but we are at the mercy of the school holiday period. For the next two years we have agreed our holiday schedule with St Wilfrid's and the other Catholic Primaries across South Tyneside. The Easter schedule is not really to our liking as we do like to work Holy Week and mark the religious festival appropriately but as St Wilfrid's MAT has links with East Durham now, we have to be mindful of their needs. Ultimately we do not want to have a split holiday for siblings though there will inevitably be a few days here and there where we are a little different from time to time.

Our Y5 children are having a splendid time in Thurston up to today and the week has flown from their point of view (I know that some Mams and Dads are counting the hours until their offspring return!). I look forward to seeing them all back safe and sound too and I am sure that they will have a lot of tails to tell before sleeping like logs on Friday night! The weather has been such a bonus too and I hope it lasts for the weekend as a number of our children are at a scout camp then and a number of others are away to Wembley - safe journey to them all and hopefully it's a happy occasion.

Next week marks the last week of the Spring Term and thus our Y6 children have one more Summer with us before embarking on the next chapter in their learning journey. They have all been working so hard, often pre and post school and I am very proud of them all and know that they will give of their best in the tests in May and no one can ask for more than that. Well done to Mam's and Dad's too for getting children into school early and collecting late on Tuesday evenings after booster sessions - it would be great if we get a full house for these across the last few weeks before the tests themselves that begin May 13th, as this will make a difference. The week itself will fly past and we can move forward to all of the other events planned, Macbeth and the residential to Berwick/ Edinburgh being just two of the fun things on the horizon.

From this evening we will be setting out a table or two of KS2 Lost Property acquired since January and wanting to find its way back home - or even another home if it's useful to someone. Please have a look through and reclaim in the first instance or simply take and reuse rather than see the garments off to the recycling centre. We will look to do the same for KS1 garments too, so look out at the Infant entrance also.

Next Friday is the final day of term and I have been speaking with the staff and some of the children and it would be very worthwhile in this Easter season to hold a non-uniform day in support of CAFOD's appeal for the communities affected by Cyclone Adai. It is the worst natural disaster to hit the Southern Hemisphere and has brought absolute devastation to tens of thousands in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi. We will touch on this further at assembly on Monday. The children can wear their own clothes for a donation of no more than £1. This should enable us to collect over £200 and this will be sent immediately to CAFOD on Friday as the need is so urgent.

We break up for Easter at end of school on Friday April 5th and return to school immediately after the Bank Holiday on Tuesday April 23rd at 08.52 am.

Thank you again for your cooperation and support, which is much appreciated.

Have a peaceful and blessed Easter.

Best Wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely,

[K J Smithson](#)

Head Teacher