



HARTLEY PRIMARY ACADEMY
NEWSLETTER 3 - NOVEMBER



Academic Year – 2013-2014

Dear Parents/Carers

The days are getting colder and shorter. It is almost dark by the time you are collecting your children at the end of the day – certainly by the end of clubs we are struggling to see you across the playground! Autumn has certainly arrived after what turned out to be a wonderful summer! Of course at this time of the year the PTA are extremely busy coordinating efforts for the **PTA Christmas Fair!** Please come along and support the school on Saturday 30th November. As always, much work and long months of planning have gone into ensuring this event is as successful as previous years. Members of the PTA are also involved in providing refreshments for prospective parents (and tots) during our Open Day season. We are extremely grateful to them!

Children in Need

Thank you so very much for your generosity. The Onesie day was a great success and I have to say, they were very warm and cosy and remarkably easy for Year 3's to change in and out of when they went swimming! We raised **£715.89!**



Visits and Visitors

Year 4 children visited Hall Place recently as part of their Quest topic on The Tudors. They enjoyed meeting 'Tudor' characters and learning about a range of elements of Tudor life. Year 3 began their swimming course at Cygnets, Northfleet last week. The children in both year groups behaved impeccably. Parents will be aware that the dates for swimming have changed from the original dates – letters have already gone out to everyone affected. We were entertained with 'Beauty and the Beast' – a very lively performance of a traditional tale by M&M Theatre Productions which the children enjoyed immensely. Year 5 have taken part in a 'Lego Challenge' day, the Freshwater Theatre joined us to support the Quest learning in Year 2, finding out about Florence Nightingale and Year 1 enjoyed a visit from the 'Magical Toy Museum'. Our Year 6 children took part in an 'Anti-Bullying' initiative and coming soon, our Year 4's will be enjoying a 'Knex' challenge.

Christmas Productions

Please put these dates in your diaries!

Foundation Stage – performance to parents on Wednesday 11th December at 9.30am

Year 1 and Year 2 – performance to parents on Tuesday 10th December at 1.45pm

Year 3 and Year 4 – performances to parents on Tuesday 17th December at 1.45pm and 7.00pm

– tickets only for KS2 performances due to anticipated demand...

After School Clubs

Our last week of clubs will be Monday 2nd December.

A Big Thank You to Parent Visitors

A number of our parents have come into school to share their knowledge and expertise on a range of topics (health, diet, teeth etc.) across our year groups. We are extremely grateful to parents who take the time to come into class and provide an 'expert's view' on particular subjects. Thank you.

Academy News

We informed you recently that Frank Green, currently CEO of the Leigh Academy Trust has been appointed to the position of Commissioner for Education. His successor will be announced shortly.

Our website is being redeveloped and we know the current site is looking a little 'tired'. The new-look website will be live very soon and Mrs Lambourne and Mrs Orchard will be working to ensure it continues to be an up to date source of information and news. Projects between the various academies continue to develop. We are currently involved in projects relating to Food Technology and Dance at Milestone and maintaining our links in Maths and Science with Longfield Academy. Behind the scenes our staff are developing their professional skills further with joint training and school visits. We still maintain links with local Primary schools – not part of the Trust – working on collaborative projects to enhance teaching and learning.

Children's Achievements

Lots of our children are involved in activities outside school and many of them achieve in these to a high level. We would like to share with you the very exciting news that Sky Bebbington in Year 6 has become Women's Artistic Gymnastics All Round British Champion for her age group – gaining first place in a number of disciplines. Sky is now part of the GB national squad! This is a fantastic achievement – and a real testament to dedication and aspiration. Children are involved in such a range of activities – sporting, musical and theatrical. Children do share their successes in Assemblies and we also celebrate their talent as part of the rolling display in the Entrance Hall. This is maintained most efficiently and independently by Rebecca Downey and Olivia Whall in Year 6.

Winter Approaches.....

Every winter brings the possibility of snow and ice. Extreme bad weather can cause widespread problems as we know from recent years! Our aim is to ensure the school remains open as far as possible. However, as you are aware, gritting Round Ash Way and other minor roads is not a Highways department priority – obviously main roads and emergency facilities must come first.

This year, parents can go online to check if the school is closed, obtain information about road gritting and other KCC closures (www.kent.gov.uk/winter). You can also tune in or visit the sites of KMFM, BBC Radio Kent and Heart FM for updates and closures. We will continue to use Home Connect as we did last year and many parents felt this worked well. If you have not yet signed up for Home Connect and you would like to, please let the School Office have your email address. KCC suggests parents might like to sign up for text message alerts on www.kentclosures.co.uk. Please be aware there is a charge of 20p plus the standard network charge. KCC also recommends parents should visit the BBC or direct.gov.uk websites for home learning resources to support children's learning while the school is closed!

Parents' Information Meetings

Mrs Lambourne has heard from a number of parents that they would appreciate another Maths workshop for parents. We will try to arrange this in the new year.

Monday Pop-Ins

The purpose of the Monday Pop-In session is to enable parents who are following up a concern with the teacher to have a **brief update** – not longer than 5 minutes. We have scheduled Staff Meetings on Monday which begin at 3.50pm.

Parents Consultations

The dates for these meetings are published in advance. Thank you to the majority of parents for securing appointments and for attending. It is something that children look forward to and these information evenings are essential. However an increasing number of parents are requesting to have consultations with their child's teacher at different times which is putting a lot of additional strain on teacher time. After school, teachers have meetings, run clubs and work collaboratively with colleagues - in addition to putting up displays, marking and preparing resources and lessons.

Behaviour Towards School Staff

We believe in openness and communication. It works well for our children, their wellbeing and learning. However, what is a very minor and rare occurrence is beginning to increase which is rudeness and aggression towards the front-line team in the office and to our teachers, particularly if they are informing parents about behaviour issues. Our teachers are entitled to the same consideration as any public service employee. The statement included here is typical of that found in GP surgeries and other public offices:

Violence Statement

Rude & aggressive behaviour towards staff will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Such behaviour will include shouting, swearing, & rude & intimidating gestures.

Please be advised that parents who behave in this manner will be asked to leave the premises.

I have had already this term a number of teachers who are requesting Senior Leadership support when meeting certain parents. This is not an acceptable situation. Please treat all staff with the respect they deserve and bear in mind that they are experienced professionals in whatever capacity they are employed in school. The behaviour of a very small minority may, in time, affect the openness of our relationships with all parents and this would not be in the best interests of our children.

Pupil Attendance

Further to several enquiries from parents - where a class is not open due to staff strike action, a pupil's attendance record will not be affected. Parents will be penalised however if a class is open and the child does not attend school.

Pupil Roll

We are very close to being completely full in most year groups across the school. In some year groups we now have a waiting list.

Parent Questionnaire

Thank you to parents who returned their completed questionnaires which were issued at the Parents' Consultation Evenings. We have summarised the views of parents and the majority of comments are supportive. Where there are issues, these mainly focus on communication and travel around the site. Hopefully once the new website is launched the former will improve. With regard to the latter, the school is in a wonderful rural setting – but I can't help thinking that the architects made some serious errors when designing the access routes! The path to the lower playground is very narrow, but widening it would be beyond the finances we have available with the trees on one side and the Early Years outdoor learning area on the other. We try to maintain

the woodland path as well as we can but in the winter it becomes a more difficult job. The grounds maintenance company we currently employ has been experiencing staffing difficulties and we are considering how best to combat this. The outdoor areas, particularly at this time of the year, require a creative eye and the depth of T.L.C. that sadly, we cannot call upon. Of course many schools do not encourage parents beyond the school gates thus negating such problems. This is not our chosen policy.

Thinking Families

Whilst we are continuing to develop Thinking Skills across the school with the 'Visual Mapping' and the 'Stairs to Success' - developing into 'Habits of Mind', Thinking Families has paused temporarily to accommodate Christmas rehearsals, swimming and other learning activities. We will resume Thinking Families in January but meanwhile we are still focusing on provoking thinking and discussion in our Early Work sessions at some point every week. The children have responded with enthusiasm to Thinking Families and can recognise the development in their ability to discuss and question within a 'family' culture.

Musical Mayhem

You might have read a small article in the news about Ofsted's concern with music teaching in schools. We have been lucky at Hartley to have been able to call on the expertise of staff with considerable musical knowledge – our Teachers and Teaching Assistants. We have introduced whole-class Ukelele teaching – thanks to Mrs Collings and a digital tuition initiative. This is a new project launched by 'Soundhub' an organisation funded by the government to develop music in schools. To share this and other musical talents in the school Miss Czapiewski has organised a concert which is taking place on **Thursday 21st November (starting at 7pm)**. We have not had such an event for a very long time and we are really looking forward to it!

P.A.L.S. Pets As Learning Support

It is widely recognised by professionals and external agencies in our local district that Mrs Adams is a highly respected practitioner in her role as SENCO.

Taking her skills further she has been embarking on an action research project linked with animals. In recent weeks she has been running the PALS project, where children have the opportunity to work alongside working dogs and other animals in order to develop their confidence and skills within reading (the children's reading skills – not the animals!).



This is proving to be both popular and successful. Should you happen to see Susie and Barry (the dogs) or Rex (the Bearded Dragon) and Colin (the Corn Snake) in school – they are doing an amazing job!

Please be assured that parents of the children involved are fully consulted and that the animals are housed and handled with absolute safety. We do not have a menagerie of animals roaming randomly around the school!!

P.E. Funding

You may be aware that the DfE has provided schools with additional funding specifically for P.E. Mrs Platt has engaged the services of an external provider to teach P.E. in rotation to all year groups which provides training at the same time for teachers.

'First News'

A very generous donation has been made to the school by one of our families. This is specifically for a subscription to a publication for children called 'First News'. The school receives copies of this children's newspaper on a regular basis and this is a wonderful addition to the resources we have for reading. There is a wealth of on-line material which the subscription also buys which is an excellent source of additional up-to-date, topical and age-appropriate material. We are very grateful – and because this resource is such a valuable one, we have committed to continuing the subscription annually.

And finally, we are continuing to host **Open Mornings** on Thursday 21st November and Tuesday 26th November – if you know of any prospective parents for September 2014 admissions, please ask them to call the School Office (01474 702742) to book a space!

Year 6 act as Tour Guides and Hosts for these visits and I must congratulate them on their confidence and amazing politeness. Our visitors remarked upon it – as did many parents about the hosts for Parents' Consultation Evenings.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Hollingworth
Principal