



St Mark's C.E. Junior School

Reaching in, Reaching up, Reaching out

NEWSLETTER 4 (NL4)

Thursday 3rd November 2016

Important Dates for T2/3

November

Friday 4th Charity Day for Y6 including sponsored walk, coffee afternoon
Thursday 10th School Disco
Friday 18th MUFTI/Non-uniform day – In aid of Children in Need (£1 contribution)

December

Thursday 8th Y3 Christmas Performance
Friday 9th Friends of St Mark's Christmas Draw 3.30 pm in the school hall – everyone invited
Wednesday 14th Carol Service 7.00 pm at St Mark's Church – pls note this a change of venue
Friday 16th T2 Ends
EOTA (End of Term Assembly) – Certificates of Merit, Lion Awards etc

January

Tuesday 3rd School Closed – No children or staff in
Wednesday 4th T3 Starts
Thursday 6th Y6 Parents Information evening regarding SATs (National Curriculum tests) in May
What are they? How will they affect children? What are the reporting outcomes? Implications?
How does school support and challenge? How can parents help? And many more questions...

Messages from Norma

In my role as Parent Support Adviser I often come across families going through difficult times for lots of different reasons; illness, financial hardship, bereavement, separation. I also know our schools are very caring and meet lots of you who ask me if you can help in any way. I thought it might be a good idea to try and bring the two together by way of a central email register - a bit like DIY SOS or 52 Lives but on a smaller scale. Anyone who might be willing to help another family in a time of need by perhaps helping with the school run, preparing a family meal, walking the dog etc. would then have the opportunity to help if they can. Whenever a situation arises, I would send out an email to let everyone know what support is needed then anyone able to help could contact me. If you or a family you know might be in need of a helping hand just let me know and we'll see what we can do as a school community. If you would like to join the group please email me – n.hallett@st-marks.wilts.sch.uk and let's see if we can make this a success!

Don't forget Tea and Chat sessions are **every Friday from 9.00 – 10.00 am** in the Sycamore Room. Norma Hallett can be contacted via the shop, e-mail or by mobile on **07873 427658**.

SEND Tea & Chat

Being a parent of a child with Special Educational Need or Disability can be challenging at times but you are not alone and support is available. We hope to set up a group of parents who can meet on a regular basis to share ideas, tips and offer advice in a friendly environment. Come and join us for a drink and a chat on Wed 16th Nov 2016 from 9-10am in Hub 3. We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible.

The Shop has become a valued part of school life but can only operate with your help. We are currently looking for volunteers to join our fabulous team of helpers. This would involve helping for about 45 mins in the afternoon between 3 and 3.45pm (with the opportunity to pick up children when they come out of course!) Choose days to suit you, it doesn't have to be a regular commitment. It's a great way to get to know other parents and the schools. Speak to Norma if you'd like to give it a go!

Y6 Sponsored Event (Charity Day)

As part of Y6 topic work the children are keen to complete a sponsored walk around Salisbury – matching the distance that many Ethiopians walk daily to obtain water. The event will be happening on **Friday 4th November**. More details will be available soon.

Cake Sale Opportunity

Some of our former students are holding a cake sale to raise much needed funds to purchase new cheerleading uniforms. This will take place on **Friday 4th November** at The Barrington Centre In Bishopdown 3.30 – 5.00 pm. All are welcome.

Travel Plan Surveys

I am in the process of compiling a Travel Plan for the whole site – including the three schools and the Pre-School. This is one of the most effective ways of engaging other agencies to help us reduce traffic congestion around the immediate vicinity of the site and make travelling to school safer, less stressful and more enjoyable. In the coming weeks we will be issuing some necessary questionnaires to children, parents and staff to give relevant, up to date data of how children/staff currently travel to school and perhaps how they may wish to travel if the circumstances were more favourable e.g. safer to cycle. The surveys for parents will be sent out electronically by mid-November. There will be a two week window to complete (from 14-11-16 until 28-11-16). It is vital that parents take the opportunity to complete – it strengthens our case to make the 'school run' a little safer. Thank you in anticipation.

School Disco

The first school disco of the year will be held on **Thursday 10th November**. More details to follow.

Lost Property

We have a large collection of unclaimed 'lost property' that was salvaged from the storage bins (Y5/North corridor lobby). All named items are returned to the owners, eventually. If parents are aware of, and want to rifle through the collection to locate something, they should visit the office as soon as possible before items have to be disposed of.

Some polite reminders

– thank you in anticipation

- Tying long hair back – children with shoulder length hair need to tie it back. Please provide suitable means to do this as we are running out of elastic bands.
- Trainers – if your child is wearing trainers to school because, for whatever reason, suitable shoes have not been obtainable please provide a note to the teacher and endeavour to get shoes as soon as is practicable.
- Coats – as the weather turns colder and wetter please ensure that children have a coat in school
- Boots – these are not, and never have been, part of school uniform. Children should have shoes.
- The Adventure Playground is out of bounds before and after school. Children of any age are not allowed to play on it, or the field playing football. Parents must ensure they supervise their children and keep them in the agreed areas i.e. playground

ASK – Important Changes for January 2017

Please note that from January 2017 the after school klub (ASK) will be run by an external organisation – called Simply out of School (www.simplyoutofschool.co.uk). Parents will need to register separately with them as they will take over the entire operation. More information can be obtained via: Emma **01656 372910** or email emma@simplyoutofschool.co.uk

There will be some inevitable changes from January 2017 for the ASK (SimplyoutofSchool):

- Our prices have been very competitive for one year but are unsustainable – there will be pricing changes
- They will offer discounts (something we were never able to do)
- Payment is made in advance as for many activities e.g. dance lessons, swimming etc
- They'll be a wider range of activities for the children – important as getting outside will be harder in the winter
- Bookings, payments, queries, changes etc will all be handled via SooS – it will no longer involve the school offices
- Available places will be more carefully 'policed' – we have had lots of flexibility for last minute changes, late additions etc this may also affect charges e.g. children are taken home when they are booked in and the change wasn't communicated to the team – this can prevent others booking on.

The excellent staff running the club and the wonderful back up from both school offices have been amazing and vital for the success and longevity of ASK. I know all parents appreciate what we are trying to do and offer daily and have been very happy with the service provided. I am grateful for everyone's patience, support and confidence in us running such a large and complicated venture for a year (approx 130 children weekly). However, the operation is just too big for us to continue on its existing basis and therefore we need professional operators, who run such clubs as their main job, to step in and secure its long term future. The alternative was to sadly close. I look forward to working alongside SooS to build upon the strong foundations already in place and create something dependable and reassuring for all. Many thanks.

Contacting ASK if parents are running late to collect...

If parents need to contact ASK because they are held in traffic or an emergency has occurred they can do so by telephoning **01722 333497** and then, as soon as you hear an answerphone message, extension **206**. This will ring through directly to the Sycamore Room where Harry, Jemma, Amy or Damian will be able to take the call.

Back Gate

The back gate, at the bottom of the field, has been a convenient a popular route for families and children walking alone to enter and exit the site. Some of you will be aware that the convenience of opening leaves the site more vulnerable – especially as the gate is not visible from the school/playground and cannot be electronically/safely controlled as with other doors to the school building. This makes the site more vulnerable for unwanted or unauthorised visitors or for children to exit the site during school hours. After extensive discussions with a cross section of parents, staff, governors, headteachers and directors I have agreed to the following as a trial for the remainder of T2:

- The gate will continue to be open in the morning – but will be closed by Cyril at **9.00 am daily** instead of the usual 9.15 am. Many parents will not be able to exit the site via the same route and will need to respectfully exit via the side gate (Bishopdown Road) and walk round on the path over the downs to the steps.
- The gate will continue to be open in the afternoon – but it will be **open from 3.00 pm** and be **closed at 3.45 pm**. The ASK and sports clubs are more vulnerable with an open gate and will affect the OfSTED registration for the after school klub (ASK) especially as much younger children access the outside space. Stricter adherence to safeguarding rules are inevitable.

These changes will come into effect on **Monday 7th November 2016** – for the remainder of the term. We will review how it is working, or not, before any permanent decisions are made.

The alternative is simply not to have a gate. These sorts of decisions are never taken lightly or without careful advice but keeping children safe is the main priority. I will be in touch later in the term seeking feedback. Thank you in anticipation.