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Dear Parents and carers,

Welcome to our second half term of the year. In this newsletter we'll be looking back at some of the activities from the first half term and also looking ahead to everything that is coming up before we break up for the Christmas holidays.

Firstly, it's been lovely to see how well all the children have settled in to their new year groups and – in some cases – new classes. The transition between year groups isn't always easy but I've been delighted by the way everyone has stepped up to face new challenges as they move further through the school.

We have, of course, been working hard on the core elements of our curriculum but we always like to celebrate the wider opportunities that children can benefit from through school. For me, these were some of the highlights:

- The start of our own, in house family support coffee mornings.
- The growing popularity of breakfast club under the watchful eye of Miss Whittaker.
- Welcoming our first 'mystery readers' to school – the children loved listening to books from their surprise guests (we're carrying on with this so let Sara know if you'd like to sign up).
- Our book look and stay and play events – not new but it was great to see so many parents coming along to these.
- Black History Month: children learnt about different individuals as part of this year's reclaiming narratives theme and presented their work to the whole school.
- DDAT 10 year anniversary day: one child from every school within our academy trust attended to work together on a project and all children were involved in a recorded performance.
- Bikeability for Year 6 – 100% pass rate this year, congratulations to all.
- Our football team, who, after a year of defeats have started to turn things around with two wins and a draw placing them mid-table; their determination embodies our school vision to 'aim high and believe, grow and succeed'.

There are loads of other events I could mention: Harvest service in Church, sports trips for class 1, the launch of our lunchtime and after school clubs, PTA school discos... I'm sure I've missed something out so apologies in advance and huge thanks to everyone who has been involved.

Remembrance Day

Children from Darley Churchtown joined the annual Remembrance Day parade from the Broadwalk to the memorial in Whitworth Park on Sunday and took part in the service that followed by reading the names of the fallen. We also held a two minute silence in school, which was respectfully observed by all children, and will be thinking more about Remembrance Day in our collective worship this week.



Attendance

One of our key priorities for this year as a school is to improve attendance. Good attendance underpins everything that we offer and is vital for children to achieve their aims. We offer support for families with this, regular updates and rewards for children to celebrate when they have been able to achieve high levels of attendance. The good news is that we have seen a significant improvement in attendance compared with last year. During the first half term of the year, our overall attendance figure was 94.6%, compared with 92.2% for the whole of 2023-24.

There is, of course, still plenty of room for improvement and we would like to see that figure improve further as the year goes on but, for now, a huge thank you to all parents and carers for getting children to school on time. If there is anything we can do to help with this then please feel free to get in touch by talking to a member of staff or emailing info@darleychurchtown.derbyshire.sch.uk.

Looking ahead

There's no such thing as a quiet half term in the school year but if there was then it would certainly not be the half term leading up to Christmas. Curriculum newsletters have been sent out for each class and the regular Friday updates from the office will continue but here are a few highlights we are looking forward to over the next couple of months.

Friendship week

From 11th to 15th November we will be thinking about the role of friendship in school. This coincides with the national Anti-bullying week and also with Children in Need on Friday 15th. We'll be inviting children to take part in a sponsored ramble around the local area to raise money for children's charities.

Clubs

We are continuing to offer after school sports clubs on a Tuesday (for children classes 2 and 3) and Thursday (for children in class 1). In addition, we will also be launching a netball club after school on a Monday, which is being run by coaches from the Rural Derbyshire School Sports Partnership. RDSSP will also be in school all day on Mondays this half term, running PE sessions with each class and a lunchtime football club.

As the festive season approaches, Mrs Preston will also be dusting off the handbells and putting together a group to perform in the carol service in Church on the penultimate day of term. Children in key stage 2 who have expressed an interest in this have been given letters with more information.

Christmas

I know it's early but it's always good to have plenty of notice so here are the plans for Christmas:

- Tuesday 10th December: Pantomime trip for all children, generously funded by the PTA but please return consent forms if you haven't already done so.
- Thursday 12th December: Christmas jumper day and Christmas craft afternoon – come and join us for our annual celebration of glue, paint and glitter.
- Friday 13th December: Non-uniform day for Christmas hamper donations.
- Tuesday 17th December: PTA Christmas bingo.
- Thursday 19th December: Christmas dinner day and Carol Concert (at St Helen's Church, 2.30pm).

Values

Our value for this half term is truthfulness. We will be thinking about this through our daily Collective Worship, drawing on stories from the Bible, such as Jacob and Esau, and also more modern stories, such as The Boy who Cried Wolf. As we draw nearer Christmas, we will also be revisiting the Christmas story and thinking about the significance of Advent. We have a Church service on 28th November at 10.30 to consider this and parents are welcome to join us for this event.

For more information on any of the above please keep an eye on the school website, Facebook page and messages on Parent Pay. As ever, if there's anything you'd like to discuss then please speak to a member of staff or contact the school office to set up a meeting.

Best wishes,

Tom Lloyd

Head of School