



Bennet Canfield, Little Canfield, Dunmow, Essex, CM6 1YE

'Learning, achieving and enjoying together'

20th March 2019

Dear Parents, Carers and Guardians

Re:- Headteacher's Spring 2 Update

In this update, I will be covering the following items:-

1. **Internet Safety**
2. **Healthy eating**
3. **Debt collection**
4. **Adventure playground**
5. **School improvement**
6. **Other news**

1. **Internet Safety**

This half-term my school assemblies have focused on "internet safety" for both Key Stage 1 and 2. As I am sure you are all aware that despite the wonderful resource that the internet provides it also holds its hidden dangers. In my day it was very much about "Stranger Danger" that some of you may be familiar with? Sadly, today these strangers could be from anywhere in the world and with varying motives. Our year 1 and 2 children's assemblies have focussed on keeping personal information on-line safe and secure. www.hectorsworld.com has provided a series of 5 videos that I have shared and discussed with the children. Years 3, 4, 5, and 6 have also focussed on cyberbullying and computer security by interacting with the "Band Runner" game and related videos to be found at www.thinkuknow.co.uk. Do please feel free to ask your children to show you and talk you through these short videos to help deepen their understanding. Both these websites have useful sections for parents too.

2. **Healthy eating**

Many of you will have met, over our recent two parent consultation evenings, Miss Donna Newman our Catering Manager who was keen to promote school dinners, particularly to help boost and promote the service for our key stage 2 families. Recently she has revamped the menu from a 3 week to a 2 week cycle to ensure children get more of their favourites. All meals have to meet the statutory nutritional food standards to ensure the food served provides a healthy balanced diet. I am sure you are all aware that there are national concerns surrounding childhood obesity and diabetes that link to significant issues of cancer and heart related diseases that may develop in adult life. We are committed as a school to help educate and put into practice the best possible level of service. Thank you to those parents who have come into school to have a school meal with your child. If you too would like to enjoy a school dinner, please contact the school office who will liaise with Donna to make it happen.

For those families that have a packed lunch, please ensure that it has a healthy balance. Plenty of protein, vitamins and minerals to aid growth and development along with carbohydrates for energy, including fibre to add bulk to their meal. Fibre will break down in the body and act a bit like a scrubbing brush when carried in the blood to help scrape off those fatty deposits clinging to the walls of the various blood vessels. Please avoid food heavy in sugar, salt and saturated fats. Also remember we are a "nut free" school due to a small number of our children and staff having severe nut allergies. If you would like your child to start having school dinners, please contact the school office.

3. **Debt collection**

Unfortunately, we are having to send out an increasing number of letters to families who are in debit, particularly relating to school meals. School catering, although employed and run by the school, is a separate business to the educational budget that the school receives. The school does receive funding for free school meals for our

reception, year 1 and year 2 children, but none for key stage 2. The catering budget is a “not for profit” business and has to cover staff wages, food costs, energy cost as well as training and maintenance costs. It cannot afford to run as a deficit and be supported by the main school budget and take away from children’s educational provision. Thank you to all who make sure that your account remains in credit so that we are able to pay the weekly invoices. Debt letters do add to the already busy workload of the office. Should the office have to write more than once to remind any family about outstanding amounts, then families will now also face an additional £5.00 administration fee. Continued failure to clear debts I am afraid will be handed over to the local authority for collection. We do understand that at times families can face unforeseen financial difficulties. If this is the case, please contact us immediately so that we can look at suitable support such as a payment plan or helping you apply for free-school meals so that debts do not unnecessarily mount up.

4. Adventure Playground

As I am sure many of you are aware from our various “Class dojo” App messages, that the new Key Stage 2 adventure playground was recently opened by Mr Neil Cobbe, representing the Academy Trust and our local governing body. Unsurprisingly this has been a big hit with the children and been very well used by them. This has also created additional space on the main Key Stage 2 playground at break and lunchtimes allowing for safer games of football and basketball to be played during the latter period. As part of the summer term, I know Year 5 and 6



have planned to use the outdoor gym section to support their fitness lessons in the P.E. curriculum. If you would like a closer view, or indeed to test out the equipment please contact the school office and I will endeavour to show you around!

5. School improvement

We continue to focus on our own improvement, not just because of the Ofsted outcomes, but due to the desire to become better at what we do in developing a self-regulating school with the drive to achieve “Learning, Achieving and Enjoying together” along with our associated aims, values and expectations. (See our school website and the school ethos section for further details).

Our peer and leadership coaching for teachers across the school has established and starting to show children’s **accelerated progress** within lessons. Additional intervention groups in all year groups are established during assembly time for targeted children who may struggle to meet the required standard by the end of the year. Year 2 and Year 5 have also been running afternoon “booster” style support groups once a week since Christmas. Year 6 and now Year 4 have also started to run after-school tuition sessions to further support children. As a result, we are beginning to see mid-year standards improve.

Curriculum long term planning for each year group has now reached its second round of development with teachers reviewing our summer term plans, which actually were our first set of plans developed, and looking at how we can link in what we have learnt from our previous use of www.learningchallengecurriculum.co.uk to help us provide a better level of challenge and give greater opportunity for deeper thinking within our wider curriculum subjects.

Subject leaders have begun to develop their own subject long term plans and begun to check this against the statutory national curriculum. Work scrutiny as also planned for all subjects over the early summer term to recognise the improvements and to look at further next steps.

Mrs Godsafe and Mrs Gritffiths have been hard at work monitoring and coaching teachers and LSAs to ensure **SEND provision** enables those children to make good progress because they have access to a suitably differentiated curriculum.

Our **EYFS** reception classes have seen a re-vamp of both the outside and inside classrooms with new resources, storage and designated learning areas established to both support and challenge their higher order thinking skills. New reading books have arrived to improve children’s choice and breadth of reading. With many thanks to Mrs Martin and Miss Chivers for all their creativity and hard work in bringing this about. We are now exploring the

costs for the installation of playground sails to provide cover for the outdoor classroom giving protection from the sun and the rain, along with artificial grass to enable use of the current grassed area all year round.

6. Other news...

After the Easter break, **Miss Wotton** will be taking maternity leave and we welcome Ms Hookway who will be teaching Cherry class. We wish Miss Wotton all the very best in becoming a first time Mum. Ms Hookway joins us with many years' experience teaching in both the UK and supporting the development of international schools abroad too.

Finally, a word of caution. Many of you may have heard on the news and media about the real term **budget cuts** that education, is facing nationally. As head teachers we have made our views heard to both Essex local authority and to the Government. The Government in the new national funding formula stated a minimum funding level equivalent to £3,500 per pupil with scope for the local authority to increase by 0.5% or decrease by -1.5%. Unfortunately, I received our funding statement last week from the local authority equivalent to £3,382 per child, that's -3.4%. This equates to a loss of nearly £47,000 per year, or more than one teacher or multiple support staff! Advice we have been given is to encourage parents to write individually to their local MP to express their concerns directly as this funding level will have a direct impact over time on our, and all schools', staffing levels. We are lucky in so much that we currently have a reasonably healthy carry forward anticipated this academic year end, however we cannot sustain such cuts in the long term. I have recently received a letter of congratulations on our improving Key Stage 2 results from Kemi Badenoch MP as a member of Parliament for Saffron Walden. Communication with Kemi is either via letter to the House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA or e-mail by kemi.badenoch.mp@parliament.uk. Thank you in anticipation to those that do write.

Some good news to finish with! Takeley have become one of the first primary schools in the UK to pick up the '**Risk-Avert**' award; now displayed in the school office reception area. Risk-Avert helps young people to; i. build resilience ii. improve their emotional health and well-being iii. make better decisions and positively manage risk and iv. become more connected to school. It is great thanks to Miss Dennis and last year's Y6 children who took part in the programme that included a series of PSHE lessons based on the above themes and a variety of evaluations to provide evidence of the impact of this learning. We aim to continue this as part of our Y6 curriculum this year and into later years. If you would like to know more please visit www.risk-avert.org

Easter is around the corner and both children and teachers will need and deserve their break after another busy term. Thank you to all the parents and children who attended our two parent consultation evenings and for all the positive feedback received. Towards the end of the summer term we intend to hold an informal **open evening** to invite you in to look around the school and at a wide range of children's work from across the curriculum. This will also give chance to visit your child's class and current class teacher but also meet their new teacher in their classrooms.

Once again thank you all for your support. Have a great Easter break when it arrives. www.sport-star.co.uk are on site again from Monday 8th through to Thursday 18th April should you wish to use their service. Children return to school for the summer term on Wednesday 24th April.

Best wishes



Mr Andy Cosslett (Headteacher)