



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

'Learning, achieving and enjoying together'

28th January 2019

Dear Parents, Carers and Guardians,

Re: Head teacher's Spring Update

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

- 1. NSPCC events and non-uniform day**
- 2. School meals**
- 3. Heating**
- 4. Adventure Playground**
- 5. School Improvement Plan**
- 6. Other news**

1. NSPCC events and non-uniform day

On Monday 28th January, we were visited by representatives from the NSPCC, who ran assemblies for Key Stage 1 & 2 children promoting their 'Speak out, stay safe' campaign. You should have received a separate email from us with more detailed information last week. Year 5 & 6 children will have a separate 1-hour workshop in their classes with the NSPCC team, on either Thursday 14th February (Year 5) or Friday 15th February (Year 6), to look at the issues in more detail.

To support and raise funds for this worthwhile charity, we will be holding a non-uniform day. We would like a minimum donation of £1 please. There is no theme, and the children can come dressed however sensibly or creatively they wish. Please do bear in mind weather conditions on the day; no jewellery and no make-up ! Thank you.

2. School meals

I have recently been reviewing school meal provision. Unfortunately, we have found that too many children are not having a healthy, balanced diet on their plate. This is despite our catering team providing excellent meals, which meet the food standards required.

We have run a number of assemblies with the children about the importance of healthy eating, with a particular focus on fruit and vegetables, as this is an area that too many children neglect when making choices.

I have instructed the catering team to ensure that whichever meal option the children choose, they should get the full required portion of that meal, so that they at least have that healthy balanced meal on their plate, so that we have discharged our duty of care. It is down to the children to choose how much of it to eat.

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I have instructed the mid-day team to monitor, but to not force any child to eat anything they do not wish to. It is always a fine balance for the adults supervising, as some children want to simply get outside to play as soon as possible, without eating adequately to refuel their bodies.

I know there was a recent issue surrounding 'baked beans' which, by all accounts has been misreported by the 'Facebook crowd'. Thank you to those few people who emailed me directly, to which I hope this answers your well-made points. As part of the ongoing review of the menu planning, I have asked the catering team to look at, for certain meals, offering a choice of vegetables for example baked beans or peas, plus a self-help salad bar, so that children might choose to have peas and then can also have a salad option as well.

I would ask you and your child to look at the provided menu in advance and if they do not like any of the meal options in full, please send them in with a healthy packed lunch instead. Your account will obviously not be debited, and monies will be available for another day. At Takeley, you do not have to pay or sign up for a half term or term's worth of meals, as is the case in many other schools. Children and parents can make that decision on a day by day basis, so long as your account remains in credit.

Please do encourage your children to take the healthy option; please say to them to be adventurous with their food and to try something new, but also reinforce what I have now said to the whole school on at least three occasions – that they do not have to eat everything on their plate.

The catering team are going to be trialling a new feedback system called 'Your say!', so that all children who take a school meal can give some simple feedback about their experience. Year 6 children will be able to complete a more detailed feedback form called 'Secret Shopper' that will help the catering team better understand their views.

3. Heating

Thank you all for your patience and understanding during this cold period of weather. It was cold in school last week, as it was last year and the year before during these wintry periods. The issue has been due to what are called the 'Heat pumps' that draw heat from the ground to heat the underfloor heating water tanks, being highly inefficient.

This system, I have been informed, has only ever been able to get the water temperature to 30C, which was not sufficient to get the floor slabs up to a suitable temperature, particularly as two of the four heat pumps had failed. A new boiler has been installed to work alongside the two remaining heat pumps, to ensure at least 50C is achievable, allowing significant improvement in heating the school. It is with great thanks to Mr Jarvis, our Site Manager, Mr Wilton, our Linked Governor, and to Munro's, our contractor, for solving this long standing issue. Temperatures so far this week have enabled the school to operate at the expected levels.

4. Adventure Playground

Many of you who already use the 'Class Dojo' app will already know that we have been successful in getting the additional finance approved by the Academy Trust to build a new Key Stage 2 Adventure Playground and outdoor gym. This was part of our plans when I first met with parents at my 'Welcome' and 'Vision' meeting, back in October 2017.

I am very pleased to say that construction is planned to start on 11th February and should be completed in approximately 3 weeks, weather permitting. This should bring much needed additional space and structured play for the children, supporting the children's physical, personal and social development.

5. School Improvement Plan

As you will be aware, the outcome of the OFSTED Inspection overall was 'requires improvement' with key advised actions summarised as;

- a) To improve the quality of leadership at all levels; having high expectation of all children, with Governors monitoring standards across the whole curriculum and all leaders making frequent checks and taking timely action when standards aren't high enough and
- b) To improve the quality of teaching, so children make good progress and attain highly, by meeting the needs of all children, including those with SEN and the most able, across the whole curriculum.

Much has been done to help move the school forward in these areas;

a) Developing curriculum plans, b) Training and c) Resourcing:

- a) **Developing curriculum plans;** the school now has long term curriculum plans across all year groups, in all subjects, for each term. These are available on the school website under Curriculum and then within the respective year groups. Each plan links directly into the high expectation of the 2014 Revised National Curriculum.

This is the first time that the school has had such plans. Developing a 'curriculum' or, indeed, any new initiative works through four phases :-

1. Focusing
2. Developing
3. Establishing
- and
4. Enhancing

Currently, by writing the plans a term in advance, and now, for the first time, putting them into practice means that we have progressed through the focusing and into the developing phase; a second year will see plans being established as they are embedded into practice, before being enhanced to further improve provision. With these plans we now have a significantly more coherent and progressive curriculum. This in turn allows teachers to set

suitable and high expectations in both supporting and challenging the needs of the children.

The key objectives are taught and assessed across the curriculum now, so that we are on track to being able to report to you how your child compares to 'age-related expectations', not just in Reading, Writing, Mathematics and Science, but in all national curriculum subject areas. This again will be a first for the school and likely that most schools nationally will have to have this focus too.

Subject leaders this term are being trained and set expectations to develop coherent subject plans that will help to audit the planned provisions in each year group, while over the year pulling together our medium/short term plans for their subject. They will also be undertaking both assessment and work scrutiny following a consistent whole school approach that should both recognise the subject's strengths but also quickly address any areas where standards are not high enough.

- b) **Training;** we saw significant training for teachers in how to accelerate progress within lessons, during the autumn term. Much of this was based on the most recent research by 'Clarke and Hattie', on effective use of feedback; McGill on 'live marking' and Bloom's 'Revised Taxonomy of the Cognitive Process'. We have also reviewed our approach to Carol Dweck's research on 'Growth Mind-set' by improving the consistency of our newly identified 'Learning Qualities', as identified to you via our use of the 'Class Dojo' app across the school.

Much of this, with thanks to Miss Dennis (Assistant Head and Curriculum leader), is captured in the school's first 'Curriculum Policy', which is in draft format waiting for discussion with teachers and governors, as is our 'Assessment Policy' drafted with thanks by Mrs Russell (Assistant Head and Assessment Leader).

Training is followed up by a new coaching protocol across the school, which was started prior to Christmas, whereby teaching staff work together to support each other, with the Leadership Team of Miss Dennis, Mrs Russell and I also dropping in regularly each week to provide 'live' feedback to teachers in action. Ms Godsafe and Mrs Griffiths follow a similar process for teachers and LSAs for children with SEND.

- c) **Resources;** it is with thanks to the Governors and the Academy Trust who have approved the investment of approximately £56,000.00 into improving resources across the curriculum, but particularly in EYFS Reception Classes and Reading. This is on top of the £50,000.00 recently invested in updating the ICT hardware across the school and the £42,000.00 in the new adventure playground. This is a much needed and significant investment. Sadly, since the school moved to its new site and increased its numbers from 150 children to approximately 400 children, it never really invested in increasing resources let alone funding the developments needed to fully implement a new National Curriculum that became a statutory requirement from September 2014.

These new resources will enable our new and developing curriculum to be resourced so that children can access the curriculum and be challenged and stimulated, where this was not previously possible.

We are on track for meeting our vision of **'Learning, achieving and enjoying together'**, particularly the key aim of; ***'to provide a school curriculum which is broad, balanced, coherent, and relevant, that reflects the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum so that the children progress and attain well from their starting points, being well-prepared for the next stage of their education.'*** This, in turn, will help us meet what OFSTED's soon to be revised view of what a 'good' school should be.

We still have an enormous way to go to get the school to where we wish it to be. Our steps are forward, and now heading in the right direction. We thank you all for your faith, understanding and support.

6. Other News

Very sadly, Nigel Pett, both the Governing Body and Academy Trust Clerk passed away earlier in January. Our thoughts are with Nigel's family at this time. Personally, I only knew Nigel for a very short time, but knew him to be a very astute man who always acted with honesty, integrity and care. His son was keen to share that his dad had enjoyed working with us; the feeling was mutual. Rest in peace.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Cosslett'.

Mr Andy Cosslett (Head teacher)