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26<sup>TH</sup> May 2016

Dear Parents,

As tomorrow is a "staff" Inset day, a training day for teachers, school will finish today for pupils. Hasn't this half term flown!! Please enjoy it and I hope the weather will shine on you all. This is a short newsletter to remind you to visit the school website to see future events and past events as well as termly updates on classes.

**Splash:** The school's provision to support families. As you may know this facility is "extremely cheap" and does not make a profit as it is using our site to help our families with a safe, enjoyable "play" club. PLEASE NOTE payment **must** be made at the beginning of the day as unfortunately we do have debts that parents are reluctant to settle. I can assure you the Governors legally are not allowed to carry debt so this could jeopardise us running this facility.

**Holy Communion and Confirmation Celebrations:** It was a privilege to attend your family masses in Church and the children and you, of course, looked great and so happy. The school celebrations were also a huge success that we all really enjoyed. My sadness is that with all the preparation and fuss about this occasion that some of our children haven't been back to Church. I would urge you to take your children to Church weekly, if not, at least regularly. As a priest friend of our schools was often heard to say "The children's faith is caught (by parent example) not taught!!" Wise words indeed.

**Residential:** We have had a number of queries regarding residential and voluntary contributions from our parents recently. It may be best if I clarify the Governors view on this. When organising a school residential we ask for "voluntary contributions" to help cover the costs of the trip. If we do not receive the voluntary contributions the trip will not go ahead. If money is owed in another area the governors are responsible for e.g. Field of Dreams Nursery, Breakfast Club, After School Club (this list is not exhaustive) or "optional extras" eg music lessons, this may also impact on attendance of the trip. The Governors are also committed to ensuring our children receive the best education they can and as such will review levels of attendance for any residential/trip. We have taken the National Standard of 95% as a minimum expectation for attending a residential. The children are of course, expected to be in school as normal if they don't attend. For those parent/guardians who have indicated they would like their child to take part in the ski trip please contact the school office to ensure their child's attendance is satisfactory and there are no monies owed which may affect their attendance of the ski trip.

**Attendance and Punctuality:** Please do not be fooled by national news, whatever has happened which probably WILL mean a change in the Law by Parliament to clarify “regular” attendance. As schools we have been told by the Department for Education that the minimum attendance should be 95% (except in exceptional medical conditions). Also the Educational Welfare Service has been told to ENSURE children have a RIGHT TO GO TO SCHOOL.

Please make sure that you only keep your children off when they are genuinely too ill to attend. If your child is going to be off it is your responsibility to contact school and inform us of the reason for absence. It is the published policy of the school to ask for medical evidence for each absence especially any absence that is for 4 or more days. This evidence can be a prescription, sight of a prescribed medicine bottle, proof of attendance at a walk-in centre or a stamped appointment card from a doctor’s surgery. We are not asking you to obtain doctors notes or letters from doctors unless the absence is lengthy. We have been advised by the Education Welfare Officer that we should be robust in challenging frequent absence.

We hosted our Chinese School Partners early this term, when they saw one display they were puzzled. They asked what it was about. They were told it was about Attendance and Punctuality. They didn’t understand and kept asking questions UNTIL several of them realised what it was about and said simply “Why don’t the parents send their children into school? It is a parent’s gift to try to improve their child’s life opportunities.” I take it that in their schools (there were 12 represented) they don’t have such a problem.

**Athletics Competition begins soon after Half Term:**

We enter and have an excellent reputation for doing well in these competitions and often are pointed out by teachers from other schools “They are the school to beat!!”

St Sebastian’s first competition is 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> June

St Cuthbert’s first competition is 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> June

Children from St Sebastian’s who are in the squad will receive a letter today and if they are picked for the team they will receive another letter on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> June to confirm this. Unfortunately, as some children are on holiday when we return they will miss out on being considered for the team.

**Warm welcome back from maternity Mrs Bellis-Knox:**

Our Executive Deputy Headteacher across the Federation and Head of School at St Cuthbert’s Mrs Bellis-Knox returns tomorrow. I am sure she will have mixed feelings about not being with her new son all day but has told Angela Brough she is really looking forward to coming back to school and working with colleagues, children and parents.

**START BACK: 8.50AM on yard 6<sup>th</sup> June 2016.**