



"Where Every Child Matters"

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SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER 2017

Welcome Back!



I hope that everyone had a good summer and are looking forward to an exciting new school year. We would like to welcome Mrs Lynn Rampling to Sapphire Class and all of our New Reception children. We look forward to a long and happy association with you.

Free School Meals

As you know, all children in Thrift Class are now entitled to "Universal free school meals". This applies to HOT dinners only. Free school packed lunches will, however, still be provided for trips.

If you qualify for income-related free school meals (see below), it is important that you still apply for this even if your child is in class 1 and gets Universal Free Meals, as the school receives more than £1000 per qualifying child, to help towards their education. As you can imagine, this makes a huge difference to our budget and the provision we can make.



Your child may be able to get income-related free school meals if you get any of the following:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after Working Tax Credit stops
- Universal Credit

Please ask in the office for details and forms.



Harvest Festival

This will take place on Monday October 9th at Brancaster at 2.30pm. Refreshments will be served after the Service.

This year we would like to support the charity 'Baby Basics' again. Last year Reverend Susan put us in touch with a girl in Dersingham who works voluntarily for them. They collect and assemble a Moses basket with

essential baby care items for new mothers with no money. As we did last year, we could collect gifts of baby products to go to this charity. Any food items donated will be sent on to the Food Bank as usual.

Attendance

In general, we are very pleased with our attendance figures and would like to thank you for supporting us in this matter. However, some of you did take children out of school for holidays. I fully sympathise with you as I think family holidays are very important, and I know that, in many fields of work in this area, school holiday times are the busiest times of the year and you are not able to take time off. However, we do have regular register checks by County Officers and if we do not follow the guidance and refer families who meet the criteria below, then we will be penalised. The latest message from the Government is that, despite various court rulings recently, we should continue to enforce the following:



Referral criteria:

- 10 consecutive sessions of unauthorised absence where some or all of the absence may be attributed to an unauthorised holiday in term-time (for absences from 1 September 2017); or
- 15% unauthorised absence over a period of 6 school weeks for reasons other than unauthorised term time holiday.

Any pupil at Brancaster School, who meets either of these criteria, will be referred to the Local Authority for action to be considered.

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued it is a fine of £60 per parent per child, which must be paid in one payment in 21 days. If unpaid, a further invoice for £60 per parent per child is issued. Both individual invoices would then have to be paid making a total payment of £120 in 28 days. Failure to pay the total amount within the timescale will result in legal action being taken.

If you do not meet these criteria but attendance falls below certain levels, "amber" warning letters will be sent out explaining the situation and these may suggest certain action. The first letter will be sent when attendance falls below 95%, although we will endeavour to use our common sense and take circumstances into account. County will be informed if it falls below 90%.

The cluster attendance policy is available on our website - or you can ask at the office for a paper copy.

We would like to remind all parents that in the event of a child being absent, if we do not hear from the parents by 9.30am then we will phone the parent to find out if everything is o.k. If we are unable to contact the parent by lunchtime, we will try to make a home visit. If we still cannot make contact we will then ring the attendance team and also the Police on 101.

It is, therefore, very important that you keep us up to date with any changes in your contact details.

Social Media

Staff have recently received some updated training on this and are horrified at exactly what is out there, that children can access. O2 have designed some information especially for parents. Leaflets can be found in their stores, or the website link is

<https://www.o2.co.uk/help/nspcc?gclid=ds>. We are also hoping to run an internet safety information session for parents, so watch this space.

Please remember that children should be 13 or over to have a Facebook account and that all forms of social media need monitoring by adults. Sadly we have seen some horrendous examples of some very inappropriate messages both sent and received by our pupils and, in several cases, police have been involved.

Tesco's Grant

We have made a bid for a grant from Tesco's to support outdoor learning for all, enabling us to buy resources, train staff, offer extra activities and involve families and the community. We are able to receive up to £4000 - depending upon how many votes we get.

Tesco's at Heacham and Hunstanton are both participating. For any purchase, you will be given a token. Please put your token in our box as if we get the most tokens, we get the biggest amount! Please tell all your family and friends and help us win!

Senior Management Days



I will usually be available for appointments on Tuesday mornings, Thursday afternoons and Friday afternoons before/after certificate assembly. Sharon and Jackie in the office have my diary, so if you wish to see me, they can make arrangements for a time when I am free. If you need to see me at a different time or wish to speak to me urgently they can always contact me to organise this.

Keith Twaites (deputy) will be available on Thursdays, as well as some Wednesday afternoons. Again, the office will know his timetable and will be able to contact him if needed.

Catherine Golding is our Senior Teacher and is available on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Day to day matters can always be discussed with teachers. Although we do like to have an open door policy, please remember that staff are very busy preparing for the day in the mornings so please avoid coming in to talk at this time if possible. However, staff will, of course, always make themselves available for important and urgent matters.

Government Food Policy

Government regulations now state that children should have access to milk every day if they wish. We provide milk at lunchtimes for those children who would like it.

We also belong to the COOL milk scheme - Free milk is provided for school children under the age of 5 years. If any parent wishes their child to continue having milk beyond this age, they can pay for this. For details please contact Sharon in the school office.

The Government also states that, in addition to milk, children should **only** drink water.

As most of you know, we have always asked that children **ONLY** have water in their water bottles - partly for health reasons, but also for practical reasons (spilt water is so much easier to clear up and causes so much less damage than juice!).

If a child brings juice to school, we will keep their bottle safe until home time and will provide them with water instead. We have usually found that if a child is provided with water in school, they will drink it - even if they won't at home! I am sure that you will support us in this.

Regarding the Cool Milk Scheme, we have had some difficulties with delivery of the milk and also the Use By date has either already passed or is dated that day and as the milk doesn't get delivered until late afternoon it's quite often unusable. It has been discussed whether it's worth asking parents to donate and the school buys milk in for the children who wish to have it. It does make some sense as sometimes children want it but sometimes not. School would welcome your views on this idea.



PFA



As many of you know, we have a very active Parents and Friends Association. Shirley is our Chair, Hannah Fox our Treasurer and Lou Howell is our Secretary. Please talk to any of them if you would like any more information. All parents are automatically members of the association and we are always happy to welcome those of you who are interested onto our committee - or we often ask for practical help. A letter from the PFA will follow.

On **Friday 15th Sept 2.00pm** you are invited to attend a 'Meet and Greet session. Meet the long standees.... New parents to either class welcome to join the PFA for refreshments and a chat - an opportunity to ask those of us who have been there for the long haul any questions and meet some friendly faces you can chat to on drop off and pick up.

The Giving Machine Also, I would like to remind you all about signing up for the **Giving Machine**. During the last year, we had £250 (approx.) paid into the PFA fund by those already registered - just by buying your usual things on the different participating sites - of which there are far too many to mention here. If you would like more details, please talk to Shirley. If Shirley can't help, she will be able to point you in the right direction! It does not cost you anything more when buying but we get a donation (amount varies according to site).

Governors

The St Mary Federation has one Governing Body across all three schools. Together with the Headteacher and senior leaders, Governors set the future direction of the school and monitor and report on our progress and achievements. They make decisions on policies and finance. They also consider complaints and hear appeals from pupils and staff. Governors attend a variety of training courses run by Norfolk County Council or the Diocese to help them in their governing role.

A list of current Governors can be found on our website or you can ask in the office for a paper copy. James Fox (Faith and Eve's dad) is a Governor, as is Catherine Golding (Isaac's Mum and class teacher) and I am sure they would be happy for any parent to contact them. Mr John Ward is the chair of Governors and the named Governor for whistleblowing. Mrs Sally Beeston is the named Governor for safeguarding issues. Their contact details are on posters around the school.

We also run occasional "Meet the Governor" assemblies. Please feel free to speak to any of the Governors as appropriate.



Music Lessons

We had a bad experience last year with our music lessons but we do seem to have found a new tutor. Details will follow shortly.

Early Birds Club

Although we do not run an official club, we are, where necessary, able to accept children before school begins. They will be looked after by Sharon Spencer. The cost of this is £1.00 per child, per session.

Children, unless attending the Early Birds Club, should not arrive at school before **8.45am**.

PE Kit

P.E kit needs to be in school all week and just taken home at weekends to be washed. Children who take Brancaster team uniform must return it as soon as it's been laundered. Also borrowed general PE kit should also be washed and then returned to school.

Trip Consent/PCB forms

In line with the rest of the Federation, from this September, we will have just one general form to complete at the beginning of each year. This will be sent out with all the usual annual forms the second week back. Please make sure that you let the office know if any of the details on the original consent form change.

If you have any concerns, worries, problems, queries, information for us - or just want a chat, do pop in and see me

Sarah A F Bocking
Executive Head

Dates for the Diary

14th Sept 2.30pm: GENR8 assembly

15th Sept 2pm: PFA Greet and Meet Session

18th Sept 9.30 -11.30am: BeLong Exhibition, Houghton Hall (letter to follow)

18th Sept pm: Road Safety in for seatbelt safety (Thrift & Yr 4)

19th Sept 1.00pm: 'Open the Book' Assemblies begin

20th Sept: Library Van (tbc). Please return any books to school

22nd Sept: Jeans for Genes. Wear Jeans for £1 donation

25th Sept 9-11.30am: Level 1 Playground Cycling (Yr 4 upwards)

27th Sept 1-3pm: Sports for Champions at Docking School. Packed Lunch needed. Coach to take and return to Brancaster.

27th Sept 7.30pm: PFA meeting

29th Sept 10.00am-2.30pm: Quicksticks Hockey at Lynn Sport Yrs 4, 5 &6

9th Oct 2.30pm: Harvest Service in Church

9th October 7.30pm (tbc): PFA Quiz

10th Oct: KS2 Cathedral day

18th Oct: Parent Consultation Day (tbc)

19th Oct: Croydon Cup 4-6pm

19th Oct 3.15 -5.00pm (tbc): PFA disco

Thurs 19th Oct: Half Term Break

Mon 30th Oct: Return to school

Clubs

Tuesday: Gardening Club with Lou Howells

3.15-4.15pm £2.00 per session

Max of 10 pupils: Please sign in the office on a 1st come, 1st served basis

Thursday: Multi Sports

3.15-4.15pm £2.00 per session. Yr 1 and above

Gardening Club will finish at the half term break and Cookery will then start after the holidays on **Wednesdays**.