

WOODHAM BURN PRIMARY SCHOOL

NEWSLETTER 13TH SEPTEMBER 2024

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Message from Mr Sparrow

Hello one and all. Allow me to welcome you back to a new school year. Whilst I wish to acknowledge that the school year began with great sadness, I wish to praise the staff and children in their support of one another. The children have come back to school brilliantly and I continue to be so proud of their attitude towards school and one another.

This week's newsletter will serve mainly as reminders and key dates for the term ahead. With regards to dates, following the parents feedback towards the end of last year, I will now make key dates a permanent addition to the newsletter so you don't need to try and 'hunt' back for the last time I shared dates with you.

Uniform

The school uniform is a red jumper or cardigan with a white shirt or T-shirt. Children can wear grey or black for their bottom half. I do not concern myself with the need for a school logos or certain suppliers as I wish for uniform to be as affordable as possible. Footwear is very relaxed in that children can wear shoes or trainers to avoid additional expense for all. All I ask is that the footwear is all black.

For hygiene reasons, we ask that children have a PE kit in school. This is a plain white T-shirt and plain black or blue shorts – this is by far the most affordable we can make PE kits. Your child can wear joggers/a jumper if PE is outside.

As ever, if you are struggling with school uniform, please get in touch.

Earrings

We have one of the most relaxed approaches to earrings of schools in Newton Aycliffe. Children are allowed to have a single set of ear piercings and can have a stud in. For reasons of safety, they need to be able to take them out for PE. If they are unable to take them out for the 6-week period, you need to provide your children with plasters or coverings to cover the stud.

We introduced earrings being allowed just over a year ago following parent feedback. We always look to listen to the wishes of families whilst still ensuring high standards of safety and presentation.

Long Hair

The curse of just about every primary school in the land is headlice. Once they set foot in a school it can take weeks or even months to eradicate them. One of the best ways to help prevent the spread of headlice is for long hair to be tied back. Please ensure your child's hair is tied back (male or female) if they have long hair.

Phones

It is the time of year where some children share that they need to bring a phone to school. I can't stress enough how strongly I believe this not to be the case, but I do ultimately leave that decision to you. If your child, who is in Years 5 or 6, needs to bring a phone to school, you must complete a permission form. The form outlines how it is to be used and stored when in school. Past experience tells us that most children try to tell their parents that everyone else in the class brings a phone and that simply isn't true; please only allow your child to bring their phone if there is a real need.

Key Dates – Autumn 1

20/9/24 – Jeans for Genes (wear jeans)
27/9/24 – Macmillan Coffee morning – parents/careers welcome
18/10/24 – Whole school panto – Peter Pan
12/11/24 – Potential reception starters 2025
14/10/24 – Halloween Disco
18/10/24 = Show racism the red card
22/10/24 – Parents evening
25/11/24 – Break-up for half-term

Key Dates – Autumn 2

4/11/24 – Return to school
6/11/24 – Photo day
12/12/24 – Whole school Glow Show (Christmas Jumpers)
17/12/24 – Christmas fair
18/12/24 – Christmas Dinner day (Christmas Jumpers)
19/12/24 – Disco/Party Day (Christmas Jumpers)
20/12/24 – Break for Christmas

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

ENCOURAGING OPEN CONVERSATIONS AT HOME

With tricky topics and occasional clashes of opinion, it can be challenging to maintain an environment where children feel able to talk candidly and honestly. However, encouraging such conversations helps to develop trust – making it easier to unpack even sensitive subjects as children get older. Here are our top tips for promoting open conversations at home.

1 CREATE A SAFE SPACE



Criticism, blaming or shaming can all prevent children from feeling emotionally safe – while showing affection, positive attention and an interest in what a child has to say builds their sense of security. These formative years are when children's opinions and values begin to take shape, so it's important to provide a non-judgmental environment in which to discuss them – especially if their opinions differ from your own.

2 CONSIDER OTHER OUTLETS



Some children may find it easier to talk while they're participating in another activity such as drawing, writing, walking or sport. If it's possible, taking part in these activities together presents you with an opportunity to communicate while doing something side by side. A child may feel less pressure that way and can be more inclined to open up of their own accord.

3 NORMALISE CHATS ABOUT FEELINGS



Incorporate mental health and emotional wellbeing into everyday conversations, using age-appropriate language and examples to help children understand their emotions. Ask questions like "How are you feeling today?", "What was the best and worst part of your day?", "If you could start today again, what would you do differently?" and "Is there anything you want to talk about?"

4 LISTEN ACTIVELY



When children express themselves, make it obvious that you're listening closely and giving them your full attention. Maintain eye contact and validate their feelings without immediately trying to solve the problem. It's not helpful to dismiss their issues as childish or 'teenage angst' – or to assume that they'll simply 'get over' whatever they're feeling. Children don't have your life experience; their resilience is still developing as they learn to push through difficulties and handle problems.

5 ASK OPEN QUESTIONS



Encourage children to share their thoughts by asking open questions about their feelings and experiences. Closed questions (such as "Did you enjoy school today?") are more likely to elicit a simple "yes" or "no" response. Instead, you could ask things like "Who did you spend time with at break?" or "Who did you sit with at lunchtime?"

6 RESPECT THEIR BOUNDARIES



If a child isn't ready to talk to about something yet, respect their boundaries: this reinforces that their feelings are important and worthy of consideration. Ideally, you're aiming to let them know you care without smothering them, so just make it clear that you're there for them whenever they're ready to chat. Gentle, regular check-ins can sometimes be the best form of progress.

7 LEAD BY EXAMPLE



Model open, honest and healthy communication in front of children and young people. Try to demonstrate kindness when talking about others and yourself, because if children hear adults being overly harsh, critical or judgmental, or see them having unrealistic expectations of themselves, it makes them more likely to adopt and repeat this behaviour themselves as they grow.

8 HAVE REGULAR CHECK-INS



Check in with children periodically to discuss how they're feeling and what's going on in their lives. This could be a weekly or monthly conversation, where the child has an opportunity to share whatever's on their mind. For parents and carers, getting away from the house and other distractions might be productive here: you could consider regular trips to a coffee shop or a café, or just a weekly walk.

9 PROVIDE RESOURCES



It's often beneficial to let children know about other support that's available to them if they're struggling to talk to you specifically. Encourage them to talk to school counsellors, trusted adults or even a therapist, if necessary – while normalising this route and dispelling the harmful stigma around asking for help. Older children could engage with resources such as Kooth or YoungMinds.

10 CELEBRATE EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION



It's beneficial to praise children for expressing their feelings honestly – emphasising how important it is to talk about their emotions and how proud you are of them for doing so. This can be especially pivotal for boys, who often experience more of a stigma around talking frankly about their feelings and their mental health – a barrier that can be overcome, with enough love and support.

Meet Our Expert

With 30 years' experience as a teacher, trainer, consultant and interim executive board member, Anna Bateman has a superb understanding of what works in pedagogy, school improvement and leadership. She has also advised the Department for Education on their mental health green paper.



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