



Seek Ye First The
Kingdom of God

Welcome Back to School!

The children have settled in very well on their return to school. I would have to say a huge 'thank you' to the effort you have made, as parents, to make sure they are so smart and well presented with their uniforms. I do know that a few parents are still waiting for ties from our supplier, they should be there very soon.



I do think that our new starters in reception have settled incredibly well. This is obviously down to the hard work of our Nursery team and you, the parents.

We have a Welcome Mass on Wednesday 7th October at 10 am in St Patrick's Church. All are welcome. This is a wonderful opportunity to welcome our new starters to the parish family of St. Patrick's.

I know it was a very anxious time for our new starters, waiting to hear if they had a place in school. Again, this year it is very difficult, as the demand for places in the school cannot be met as the school has no places anywhere at the moment.

Our new teachers: Miss Ward, Mr Barber, Miss Degnan and Mr Sherrington have settled extremely well in to school and already it feels as if they have been here for years. Thank you for making them feel welcome, I know they are all more than happy to be here and they will bring much to the school.

We have our new School Business Manager, Mrs Crooks, in place and she is working with us so the office runs smoothly.

As I said in the last newsletter, we are having the whole of the office area refurbished and rebuilt with a new office being built at the rear of the school. This will mean that we will probably be without an office to work in from October until January. This won't disrupt the children or their learning in any way.

Academy

We are now an Academy! We converted on 1st September, and we are now part of **Our Lady of Light Catholic Academy Trust**: working together with Christ the King, St Therese and St Patrick's College. I did say to you that it would not feel any different and for parents and pupils, everything should feel the same just as it was. This is definitely the case. However, behind the scenes, and for myself and governors it is very different as we are working hard collectively to improve Catholic education for our children in Thornaby and Ingleby Barwick. I would like to thank our governors, and especially our Chair, Mr Gary Wilson, for their hard work in guiding the school through this process as the demands on their time has been considerable. It is important that we don't take the work of our governors for granted; they give much of their time to help and support the school.

Communication

It is important that we communicate well with you so you know how your children are doing and offering you support so you can help your children. The best way of course is to speak directly to the teacher. This is always best done at the end of the day if possible, as in the morning the teachers are preparing lessons and getting ready for the school day. If you have a message please just pass it on to the member of staff on the door. If there is something you need to discuss with your child's teacher just ask to meet them after school. We have tried hard to make sure you are always well informed and communication is clear. We have tried to introduce ways to help you get all the information you need. **To do this we need up to date contact details. Please inform us if you change mobile numbers or move as soon as possible please. We also need these to contact you in case of an emergency.**

To help us communicate well we have:

Marvellous Me – we use this to share the good news and to share the great things your children do in class. I know some parents have already chatted with me to say how wonderful it has been to get the occasional photo, video or piece of news to say how well their child is doing. This is being rolled out across the school this week. If you have any troubles registering with this, please let us know.

EPraise – this allows children to see their house points and reward points at home and to convert them into cash gifts for charity. It allows you as parents, to log on at home to see why your children are getting house points and to be able to talk to the children about their good work

Text messaging – This has proven to be very popular with parents where we can give you the occasional reminder. We also use this if a parent has not called in to say why their child is off school. This only works if we have your current mobile number of course!

Website – all news and information about the curriculum is kept on our website as are all newsletters etc. If your child loses their newsletter then you can simply go on here to read the newsletter, check the school meals menu etc.

Curriculum Sessions for Parents – as you may be aware, we have a new curriculum in place this year for all children in main school with new tests for children in Year 2 and Year 6. Basically, the demands and the expectations have risen for all children. We will be holding information sessions with parents to help you gain a better understanding of this and what it means for your children. Please remember that the curriculum and all the information you need is on your child's class page on the school website.

Attitude Trackers - these are sent home each half term to keep you informed as to the key areas of your child's attitude to learning.

Parent Meetings – we offer three meetings over the year to give you time with the teacher to discuss your child's progress. We are reviewing our reporting system with staff to see ways we can improve this to keep you well informed as to your child's progress.

Again, the best way is simply to speak to us if you ever have any questions or queries. Please could I ask you to either make an appointment or to ask to enter the school in order to see a teacher. In the interest of Safeguarding, we cannot have adults wandering around the school without authorisation for obvious reasons.

Reading to the Elderly

Some of Mr Kendal's class visited Mandale House, a residential care home, this week to read to some of the residents. As part of Roald Dahl week, the children read stories to the residents and spent time chatting with them. **They were accredited to their parents and to the school.** It is important that our children are taught to give something back to the community. We seem to live in a world where people often demand things, but never seem to expect to give something back. We believe firmly that our children should be taught to be active members of their communities, giving back and not simply taking.

Battle of Britain Service

On Sunday a large group of pupils and parents chose to give part of their Sunday to remember the many servicemen and women who gave their lives so bravely during this conflict. It was a moving service, impeccably observed by the children. A big thank you to the many parents who chose to give of their time, with their children, to remember this important event.

Sports Clubs

We have already begun our after school sports clubs, working with Middlesbrough Football Club; and our Gymnastics Club with Mr Robinson is well under way.

Education Visits

You may have seen on the news that schools have 'demanded' money for school visits etc. I am proud that at St. Patrick's we work very differently than this. We never demand money or try to put pressure on parents financially. However, I am sure you are aware that visits do cost money, and they are important for children. I would like to keep to the approach where we simply ask for a small donation towards the cost.

We are very lucky that we have the staff that we do, who want to organise and arrange education visits. We currently offer residential visits for:

- Year 4 week visit to Carlton Outdoor Education Centre
- Year 5 week visit for skiing in Aviemore
- Year 6 week visit to Noordwijk in Holland

All of these visits are subsidised to make them affordable for parents.

A letter will be coming home shortly for Year 6 children wishing to go to Holland.

Little Leprechauns After School Club

I am working with the Business Manger to review Little Leprechauns. I am aware that demand for places is very high and many parents are on the waiting list. We are looking at ways to expand it to offer more places to parents for their children. One of the reasons it is so popular is the cost in comparison to other providers. To put it plainly, the cost is far too low and is unsustainable, especially if we expand it. I cannot use the school budget, which should be spent to benefit all children with their education, to subsidise after school care. I do know other providers charge between £12 and £15 a night for after school care. Obviously the £3, that we charge, is too low to sustain and the price hasn't changed for 12 years! I will keep you informed as to the changes as soon as I have the final details.

Breakfast Club

Again paying 40p a day to have breakfast and supervision is not sustainable. This will have to be reviewed. I know other schools charge £3.50 a session. I am sure that you must know, we won't be charging anywhere near this amount, but we do have to find a more reasonable charge to pay for the breakfast, the ladies that provide it, and the supervision. I do know that some parents weren't happy that it changed from 20p last year. It is simply not possible to do this for these amounts, as I am sure you appreciate.

The purpose of Breakfast Club and Leprechauns is to offer support to working parents, or parents at college etc, to enable them to do these things. I would have to ask you to trust me that we will always work to keep costs affordable to parents as I know myself paying lunch money every week, paying for trips and child care can soon mount up. Education should not be a financial burden on parents.

Sorry to finish this letter by talking about money, but I do want to keep you informed as to any changes as early as possible.

Buildings Work

Again a busy summer for the school with the Computer Suite being completely refurbished. Please call in to take a look!

We do have plans to continue to improve the building to make sure it continues to provide outstanding education. Soon we are planning to:

- Resurface and improve the hall floor
- Modernise the hall
- Re-lay the whole of the nursery floor
- Improve and modernise the entrance to nursery
- Extend the play surface from nursery so that it flows into the main school yard
- Refurbish the Peace Room so the children have a quality place for reflection and prayer
- Change the seating in the Family Room
- Rebuild the main office area

Lots to do!

God bless

Mr M Ryan