



# Thomas Russell Infants' School

*'Our children blossom through nurture & challenge'*

Newsletter No. 1 - 11th September 2015

## WELCOME BACK TO SCHOOL

Welcome everyone to the new school year! We hope you have all had a wonderful summer break and are ready for the year ahead. It has been lovely this week to see all our big Year 2 and Year 1 children arriving at school happy and smiling. They have all worked very hard and settled back into school life beautifully. Year 2 children are rising to the challenge of being the oldest ones in school by taking on new responsibilities in class and across the school. Well done, everyone!

It is with pleasure and pride we welcome all our new Reception children and their families into school. They have had a great week, full of fun, play, smiles and laughter. Many have asked lots of questions and they are settling nicely into their routines. If parents have any concerns at all, please ask a member of staff who will be happy to help.

### School Uniform

Thank you to everyone for ensuring your children are wearing the correct uniform this week - they look very smart. We do not allow girls to wear hair bands and braids in rainbow colours - green, white, black and grey are the school colours. Girls wearing other coloured bands will be asked to remove them - thank you.

### Newsletter

Our newsletter will continue to be emailed to everyone on a Friday afternoon and will be available on the school website too. If anyone requires a paper copy, please ask at the school office. Reception parents will receive a paper copy initially.

### Dates for your Diary

**September 30th at 7.30pm** - Curriculum information meeting for all reception parents

**October 7th at 2.30pm** - Coffee afternoon for reception parents

**October 8th at 7.30pm** - Curriculum information meeting for all Y1 and Y2 parents

**October 22nd 1.30-5.00pm** - Parent/teacher consultation meetings

**October 23rd 9.15-10.00am** - Whole school Harvest assembly - one adult per child welcome

**October 23rd 3.15pm** - Break up for half Term

**November 2nd 1.30-5.00pm** Parent / teacher consultation meetings

### Beginning and end of day expectations

We work very hard during the school day to encourage and expect good behaviour and hope this continues at the end of the school day and the beginning of the next. Children are not permitted to use the equipment on the field before or after school and we ask you do not let children or their younger siblings do so, for their own safety. We also sometimes have children running around staff cars and climbing on the metal railings at the front of school - this is potentially dangerous and we expect parents to support us by keeping all children away from these areas - thank you.

A final safety reminder - all children cycling and scootering to school are asked to dismount at the school gates, ready to park in the shelter. This stops anyone from having their toes run over and helps create a calm entry into school. We greatly appreciate parents support in all these matters.

### Homework for Years 1 and 2

After considering feedback from parents on our annual questionnaires, we have made some changes to our homework practices. We aim to make homework as meaningful and enjoyable as possible and hope that the new homework books we have introduced for years 1 and 2 will encourage your child to take pride in the work they produce, and feel a sense of accomplishment.

Each child will be issued with two homework books - one for English based activities and one for Maths. These will be sent home on a Friday so that they receive English one week and Maths the next. They will have a week to complete each piece of homework; to be returned to school by the following Friday or earlier.

### Reception Homework

Reception will continue in a similar format with the use of the home / school diaries. Homework will sometimes be a whole class question or research activity, other times it will be personal to a child and support a specific area of learning with the purpose being 'fun and meaningful'. A balance of maths and literacy will be provided with other topic based elements throughout the year.

### Reading

Every child will have a reading record and we ask that you record any reading your child does with an adult at home please.

### **Why should I listen to my child read?**

Because, listening to stories will:

- Create enthusiastic readers;
- Increase your child's vocabulary;
- Enhance and accelerate language development and comprehension;
- Give children virtual experiences of situations and events that they have not experienced for themselves;
- Introduce them to many different characters and settings;
- Familiarise them with the flow, rhythm and patterns of the English language;
- Develop their sense of the world and their place within it;
- Help them to produce and structure their own stories.

Did you know that the skills we use to understand what we hear are the same as those we use to understand what we read?

The more stories that children hear, the better their comprehension will become.

### **Do try to:**

- Time-table a 15 minute read aloud session every day and stick to it!
- Choose a book that both you and the children will enjoy. Look on websites such as [www.clpe.co.uk](http://www.clpe.co.uk) and [www.lovereadings4schools.co.uk](http://www.lovereadings4schools.co.uk) for recommended titles for each year group;
- Use dramatic techniques and voices to engage your audience;
- Sow a light sprinkling of question seeds to make the children think and listen for clues.
- Have lots of Book Talk and FUN!

## School Improvement Plan 2015-2016

Each year the staff and Governors set challenging targets which we aim to achieve within the school year. These are primarily linked to learning and teaching as our core purpose and also include areas of leadership and management, safeguarding, behaviour etc. This year, we are focusing much of our staff training on maths, science, RE and PSHE (personal, social, health and emotional learning). Areas we focused on last year, including English, computing, and PE, all continue to be on our monitoring cycle. This September, all our Year 1 and Year 2 classes are following the New National Curriculum laid down by the Government. There are some interesting changes and in maths and English there are more challenging expectations for our children. The teachers have planned to make the learning fun, practical and hands-on by introducing exciting topics which will inspire the children. Please see your child's book bag tonight for the terms' topic web (Years 1 and 2) and also a list of dates for evening meetings for parents, where we will share with you what the children are learning and how we will be teaching them.

More detailed information about our school improvement work for this year will follow soon.

## **PARENT VOLUNTEERS**

With so much to fit into the modern school day, we always welcome any additional help from parents to either hear children read, support with display work, work with groups of children, practical help around the grounds, etc., etc. If you feel you could offer an hour or more a week then a short meeting will be held on **Wednesday 23rd October at 9.00am**. If you are interested in volunteering but cannot attend the meeting then please email or call in to the school office and the information will be forwarded to you.

## Pupil Premium Funding- is your child missing out?

Now that all infant-aged children receive free school meals automatically, many parents may be unaware that their child may still be eligible for extra funding - the 'Pupil Premium' - that will benefit both their child and the school. This funding, which currently stands at £1,320 a year per pupil, is available to children whose parents receive certain State benefits, such as Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support and Child Tax Credit. It is spent directly on the eligible child, either on resources or teaching time. The application process is very quick, easy and discreet - just go online to [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals) and complete the form.

If you don't have access to the internet, please ask at the school office for a paper copy. You should have an answer very quickly.

The extra funding allows school to provide resources and allocate teaching time that otherwise we couldn't afford. Please, even if you're not sure you're eligible, take a couple of minutes to fill in and submit the form - a successful application will directly benefit your child individually. Thank you!



### PTA News

Welcome to the new school year! There are lots of exciting things to look forward to this term but here are the first few dates for you diary:

**Thursday 17th Sept** - PTA social for a chance to meet other parents, 8pm at the Middle Bell.

**Tuesday 29th Sept** - first PTA planning meeting of the year, everyone welcome, 7.30pm at school.

**Friday 13th November** - wine tasting evening with our very own 'Most Influential wine buyer' Mike James - make sure you have a babysitter lined up!

And finally could all year 1 and year 2 children please remember to bring in their filled smartie tubes by Fri 25th September, thank you.

Please look out for the Diary of Events in your book bags tonight.

*Wishing you an enjoyable weekend.*

*Regards*

*Mrs L Farmer and Mrs S Burton*