



December 18<sup>th</sup> 2020

### End of term

As we approach the end of 2020, it is fair to say that this term has reminded us all of the importance of children being at school and the benefits that this brings. Our children seem to have thrived and made excellent progress, closing gaps that may have emerged over lockdown. I mention our curriculum and the quality of education we offer regularly on the newsletter and the knowledge and skills the children are learning in each subject is wonderful to see. I hope you enjoy receiving some of the creations the children have made in Design and Technology, for example, which have been sent home in many classes.

The way the whole school community has responded to the changes to our normal routines has helped ensure that we all stay as safe as possible. Our arrangements and timings will remain **the same** for January. I have included some information from the Department for Education and Local Authority in the section below around the Christmas period.

The social aspect of school life is equally as important for children. Learning to play, chat, cooperate and share are such vital life skills and improve mental health and wellbeing. The working atmosphere within classes is lovely to see and observing the children enjoying their playtimes is equally rewarding.

As a school, we are always seeking to improve and I believe that we are continuing to go in the right direction. Using Microsoft TEAMS for assemblies and staff training has brought staff new skills and we hope to train our children/families in the use of this, where appropriate. In the new year we will be launching a new communication tool for parents and purchasing some new ICT equipment for classes, as we seek new ways to engage with the school community. There is a lot to look forward to in 2021.

### COVID guidance over Christmas from the Department for Education/Local Authority

If your child develops symptoms up to and including December 20th which result in a positive test up to 24th December), you must inform the school at [montalbo@durhamlearning.net](mailto:montalbo@durhamlearning.net). If your child develops coronavirus symptoms from Monday 21st December onwards, they must be tested and, if positive, follow the advice of Test and Trace. **You do not need to inform the school of any symptoms which occur after this date.**

### Christmas gift from Mrs Simpson

Thank you very much to one of our parents, Mrs Simpson, for providing reindeer food for all of our children to sprinkle on Christmas Eve!

### Vimeo addresses and passwords

I am grateful to our staff for their efforts in creating the Nursery Carol Service, Reception's Nativity, the Whole School Carol Concert and shortened 12 Days! A special thank you to Miss Richardson for her technical expertise in editing and uploading these. Details of how to login and view these are attached to this newsletter.

### A message from St Mary's

'St. Mary's Parish Church is open this Saturday (19th December) from 11.00am – 2.00pm for parents, carers and children to bring a (homemade) decoration to hang on one of our Christmas trees (unfortunately we won't be able to return your decorations)

Revd Sarah and Revd Harding will be in church to welcome you and to say a prayer of blessing for you and your family at the Christmas Crib.

Please don't forget to look out for the Online Crib service from the Parish Church which has been recorded with the Castle Players. It will appear on the church FaceBook page at 4.00pm on Christmas Eve. Featuring puppets, the Players, the church choir and musicians, the service lasts about 25 minutes: why not make it a date with the family near and far?'

### Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE)

This year schools have been asked to incorporate RSE into their curriculum. The expected statutory start date for this continues to be pushed back due to COVID 19 and it is expected that the teaching of RSE should start in Summer 2021. Much of the RSE curriculum fits into schools Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) or the Science Curriculum.

Mrs Leonard leads on PSHE and RSE in school and has accessed training from the Local Authority and the PHSE Association as school has made preparations to implement RSE. We have tried to ensure that the correct information will be given to children in an age appropriate and sensitive way. Schools are asked to share proposals with parents and a link to the draft policy can be found [here](#). Activities outlined and adapted by school from the PHSE Association can be found [here](#). If parents wish to make any comments about the draft policy/planning please could they email [montalbo@durhamlearning.net](mailto:montalbo@durhamlearning.net) by January in order that governors and I can look at these together. Thank you.

### Microsoft TEAMS

Microsoft TEAMS is one of the programs schools can use to support homelearning. We have been fortunate that we have not needed to undertake any remote teaching. However, we have decided to send home your child's username and password in order to try it out (they are attached to this newsletter)

Guides to access TEAMS on a PC/Laptop can be found [here](#). Guides for accessing TEAMS on Android devices can be found [here](#). Guides on IOS devices can be found [here](#). Guides for children/parents to use TEAMS can be found [here](#).

Our Y6 children have been using this to complete homework on over the past few weeks and have found it easy to use. However, we recognise that younger children may need some support. Each class teacher from Reception to Y6 has put a small quiz on their TEAMS class page (see previous paragraph on how to access this). It would be useful for us to see which children manage to access the quiz and complete it over the Christmas break. TEAMS is a great tool and we may look to use it in the future, even in non-COVID times.

### Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

We hope that you and your families have a restful, lovely Christmas break and wish you all a Happy New Year. There are optimistic signs for next year, but we need to remain as careful and as safe as possible over the holiday period. We look forward to seeing the children again on **Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021**.

### Attendance for w.b. 14.12.20 until 17.12.20

Reception	98.3%	Class 3	96.7%
Class 1	84.1%	Class 4	***100%***
Class 2	97.4%	Class 5	97.1%
		Class 6	93.6%
<b>School overall attendance is: 93.6%</b>			

**Attendance for the term – 97.2%**

### Dates for the Diary

December 21 <sup>st</sup> -Jan 1 <sup>st</sup>	Christmas Holidays
January 4 <sup>th</sup>	Teacher Training Day
January 5 <sup>th</sup>	Children return to school

Mr C Minikin, Head Teacher