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Dear Parents,

Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2017

### **Federation Newsletter - April Edition**

Welcome to the April edition of the monthly federation newsletter and I have to say that it only seems like five minutes ago since I last wrote to you! Having said this, we have had the long, hot Easter holidays to contend with as well as the extra Bank Holiday on Monday. Funnily enough, there is another Bank Holiday on the horizon but more on this later....

#### **SAT's in Year 6**

As April gently departs and May is now within reach, our thoughts must turn to the SAT's that take place in all schools nationally. This is always a difficult and demanding time for our Year 6 pupils but it is never less than impressive to see the way they apply themselves to the tasks in hand. As a staff, we like to take a considered, supportive and strategic approach as the children are prepared for what is ahead and we certainly subscribe to the school of thought that suggests excessive testing does not benefit them at all. With this in mind, we have tried to ensure normal teaching continues and that the children do not sit practice test upon practice test. Additionally, all of the pupils have benefited from 1:1 tuition for one hour per week since the end of January and we have found that this is a very good way of ensuring the individual needs of all pupils are met. Testing week this year begins on **Monday 8<sup>th</sup> May** and will soon conclude on **Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> May**. I hope you will all be listening out for the collective sigh of relief that will emanate from all schools up and down the country on this day! Finally, I would like to wish the children at both schools every success and I shall very much look forward to celebrating their results when they are published at the end of June!

#### **SAT's in Year 2**

In recent months, you have probably read stories about the government abolishing SAT's in Year 2 due to the excessive pressure that pupils are being put under. While I would subscribe to the view that putting children under pressure is not in the least bit beneficial, it pre-supposes that schools are passing this level of pressure onto the children. I do not feel this is a requirement for preparing children for the tests and ensure that our Year 2 children are not put under pressure in this way. With regards to the actual tests, they are conducted throughout the month of May and the children are already well-aware of what is involved. They are used to working in this way and in the many years I have been responsible for administering the tests, not once have they told me something I did not know already! Finally, SAT's in Year 2 serve only to support the process of ongoing Teacher Assessment and this is what we will report at the end of the year.

#### **Executive Head Teacher Recruitment**

It has been a little while since I last updated you about recruitment to the position of Executive Head Teacher and I wanted to ensure that you were all aware of the current position. As many of you will be aware, we did run an advertisement from the end of March to the middle of April and this attracted a number of positive responses from very experienced candidates. A short-listing meeting was held on **Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> April** and although governors were pleased with the responses received, it was felt that the candidates who had applied could not evidence all of the skills and competencies that are required for the role. As a result, the Governing Body have decided to re-advertise the vacancy and this will go

to press on **Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May**. The closing date for applications will be **Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> May** with interviews scheduled for the week beginning **Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> May**. While it is disappointing to note that we have been unable to appoint at the first time of asking, governors are absolutely right to hold on for the strongest applicant who can take on all of the requirements for the role of Executive Head Teacher.

### **Easter Fun at Whaplode CE Primary School**

As you will be aware, our schools work in partnership with a number of other schools locally and this helps to ensure increased opportunities for our pupils. It was with this in mind that all of our Early Years Foundation Stage pupils attended at Whaplode CE Primary School last week for a very special programme of Easter events. Luckily, the weather held up and the children thoroughly enjoyed finding out more about this important festival in a fun and engaging way. My thanks go to the children and staff from all of the schools involved and I shall very much look forward to increasing the number of collegiate opportunities for our youngest children throughout the summer term.

### **School Parking**

As a school, it is sometimes easy to use newsletters to highlight things that need to change or improve but I also feel that we sometimes forget to offer thanks as these objectives are achieved. With this in mind, I would like to thank you all for your consideration when parking at the beginning and end of the school day. Pleasingly, I have not had any negative feedback from local residents and this very much confirms an improving picture all round. So, on behalf of the children, residents and staff, thank you for your great efforts in this area!

### **Catch-Up Swimming Programme for Pupils in Year 6**

As a federation, we are strongly committed to sporting excellence and opportunity for all. As you will probably be aware, all of our pupils receive 2 years of swimming tuition in years 3 and 4 but we also offer the pupils in Year 6 an intensive catch-up programme once the SAT's have concluded. Our intention is to ensure that all of our children reach the national minimum requirement of 25 metres. For those that can do this, we teach a structured programme of life-saving skills, all of which can lead to a nationally recognised ASA award. The sessions will begin on **Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> May** and continue until the end of the current school year. I will publish a letter to parents on Thursday of next week and shall very much look forward to seeing the children rapidly develop their swimming skills as a result.

### **Sports Week 2017**

I am pleased to be able to report that our Sports Week this year will commence on **Monday 19<sup>th</sup> June** and daily thereafter. We are hoping to bring into our schools a number of new sports and also a few of the old favourites as well as the possibility of visits to local sporting venues. I am very aware how much our children enjoy their sport and it will be good to see them receiving daily and varied provision in this really important area of the curriculum. Look out for further details soon.

### **Diary Dates**

Tomorrow, I will be meeting with Mr. Bland and Miss Jacobs to agree all of the important diary dates for the summer term including leavers' assemblies, sports-days, leavers' trips, induction days and transition arrangements for the end of the year. I am very eager to ensure early publication of these dates so please look out for this on Thursday of next week.

### **And Finally....**

Please remember that the children are not due in school next Monday as it is the May Day Bank Holiday. I shall look forward to seeing you and your child at the normal times on **Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May**. On behalf of the children, staff and governors, I hope you all have a splendid time!

Yours sincerely,

**Mr. L. Whitney - Head Teacher**

Gedney Church End and Lutton St. Nicholas Federated Primary Schools