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Tuesday 23rd May 2017

Dear All,

Well done, to all our intrepid competitors on Saturday morning at the Mini-marathon. I would also like to thank all the teachers who gave up their Saturday morning to ensure that the runners were organised and ready to run! Everyone did extremely well, but extra congratulations must go to the U9 girls' team who won the Small Schools race for the second year in a row. Two shiny shields will now be on display near the water fountain; 2016 and 2017!

Please be aware that we finish school on Thursday of this week. Smiley Face Assembly will take place on Thursday afternoon before pick-up at 14:20.

Dates for your Diary

(Please remember the school calendar is on the school website.)

TERM 5

W/C Monday 22.05.17: No after-school clubs. (Except Early Birds and Night Owls)

Thursday 25.05.17: Break for holiday.

Friday 26.05.17: Teacher Training Day.

TERM 6

Monday 05.06.17: All back to school.

Friday 14.07.17 July: Mr Walker Recorder assembly (at Smiley Face assembly 09:00ish. Robin and Woodpecker Class performing, but all welcome).

2017/2018

Teacher Training Days 2017/2018	Date
Teacher Development Day 1	Friday 01.09.17
Teacher Development Day 2	Monday 04.09.17
Teacher Development Day 3	Monday 30.10.17
Teacher Development Day 4	Tuesday 31.10.17
Teacher Development Day 5	Friday 25.05.18

Home learning: Questionnaire to Parents (feedback)

Thank you to those of you who returned the recent questionnaire and shared your thoughts about the learning we ask children to do at home. As usual, a very mixed range of opinions were expressed. Opinion seems broadly in agreement that the learning of number facts, times- tables and spellings as well as reading is a good idea. The thoughts on the termly topic work are more mixed. I would like to share some of my thoughts with you in response to the questionnaires and also from my lesson observations and observations of the pupils in school.

1. The learning of times tables and number facts has improved across the school. I see the pupils using their Planet Booklets in class and have observed their motivation and knowledge increase. I hear the children talking to each other about them and I know the pupils can see the value in learning number facts to help speed up their problem solving.
2. The expectations of spelling have been raised in line with the 'End of Year Expectations' for each year group. These are challenging but most children are enjoying the challenge. As a school/ home we need to work together to ensure the children understand the meaning of these words, as many are new to them and are outside their usual vocabulary. We should all work together to extend their vocabulary and see this as a wonderful opportunity rather than a chore. Words are fun!
3. Reading more often, particularly lower down the school has definitely proved to be really worthwhile. Mrs Watkins reports that she can see vast / rapid improvements in the pupils in KS1 and the EYFS. Many studies have linked avid reading to future life chances and it is a life changing skill / habit to get into. Some of our Y6 pupils (boys) read for 80 minutes every night and do it because they enjoy it! To me, this is the best form of home work!
4. The termly topic is designed to help families organise their busy lives. Many parents expressed in a previous questionnaire that the pressures of family life including Cubs, Brownies and swimming alongside weekly deadlines were becoming stressful instead of enjoyable/useful. Research shows that photocopied worksheets, which are churned out weekly, don't actually help pupils learn much. Does putting children under stress now help to prepare them for the future? I don't think so! The idea of the topics is to allow pupils to focus on something they are interested in and to show some **creativity**. They will also need to organise their time wisely, a skill needed for secondary school and life! Our expectations of these written projects are that pupils show us something of their interests and inclinations and that they include that **spark of creativity!** This will be different for each pupil. We do not expect anything from the younger children, but they may take part if they wish. We do not want to exclude them from doing a project if they find it fun. We expect a submission from the Y4 – Y6 pupils. Some may find the choice uncomfortable, but how do pupils get to make decisions unless we put them in these positions? Next year all children will get a certificate and we will not judge the home learning as this year. Hopefully this will mean that the whole process will be more enjoyable and less competitive. Judging creativity is actually very difficult!

Thank you for supporting your children with their learning. We will tweak a few things for the next academic year but keep the framework essentially the same. Finally I'd like to share with you the thoughts of the children regarding some of the changes we made this year. This was a secret poll!

KEY STAGE 2	Y6 (14)	Y5 (26)	Y4 (18)	Y3 (22)
YES I feel I have learned my times tables better than in previous years.	100%	100%	100%	95%
YES I feel I have learned spellings better than in previous years.	86%	89%	89%	82%

When questioned pupils expressed the feeling that they had learned their spellings pretty well in previous years.

Kindest regards Kay Bridson

