



# Stratford-sub-Castle Church of England VC Primary School

Headteacher: Mrs Justine Watkins BEd (Hons)



*Life in all its fullness*

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Dear All

I hope you are back in the swing of things! A huge welcome to all our new families and I hope everyone is beginning to get used to our routines etc. It does take a whole year, as there are so many one-off events, so please do not hesitate to come and ask if you are not sure about anything. If you have a question then someone else will too! Ask!

The children have all settled well and have coped remarkably well in the heat. New friendships are being made, old ones rekindled and there has been lots of fantastic learning going on. I hope you have all managed to have a look at the Class pages on our website, these give information about the learning that is happening in each class.

I would like to thank our staff who have been amazing in the heat. Unfortunately Miss Smith has been unwell with a bad throat infection, we are hoping she will be back next week. I would like to say a special thank you to Mrs Diserens, who stepped in to cover Owl Class, and to Mrs Smith for teaching Year 1 phonics.

You will have seen the recent media coverage regarding Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) and its use in educational settings. We have received the information below from Wiltshire County Council, I hope this puts your mind at rest.

*RAAC is a lightweight form of concrete; because it is weaker than regular concrete, concerns have been raised about its long-term durability. Department for Education (DfE) has recently changed its guidance to education settings on the management of RAAC to take a more precautionary approach and as a result areas in affected spaces will be vacated.*

*The Department for Education (DfE) has engaged with all school responsible bodies on the issues of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC). They have asked all responsible bodies (Local Authorities for maintained schools, Academy Trusts, and the relevant Diocese for VA schools) to assess their schools for the presence of RAAC. The Council has therefore assessed maintained school buildings and has found no RAAC present. In a very small number of cases we have procured an external surveyor to also visit to confirm our initial assessment and you will already have been contacted by us regarding this visit if it applies to your school.*

*We do not have any confirmed RAAC in our maintained school buildings and therefore we have not been asked to close any areas or schools. The change in DfE guidance is precautionary in nature, and only affects education premises where the presence of RAAC has been confirmed.*

Along with this letter you find attached the Families Calendar. We are trying a different format this year and I am happy to receive feedback on it. It contains all the dates that may be of interest to you over the school year, including the FOSS Christmas Bazaar, Nativities and Sports Day. We have also marked when Statutory Assessments are carried out and which year group is involved.

## Attendance (See our Attendance Policy on the school website)

I am very proud of the children's attendance at our school. Last year, 2022-2023 we had an average attendance of 96%, which was above the national average.

At the beginning of the school year I would like to share some startling statistics with you. If your child has 10 days off school in an academic year, their **attendance** will be 94.7%. However, they will have lost 50 hours of learning time. If this happens every year of their primary school life, they will lose 350 hours of learning. If you extend this to their entire time at school they will lose 700 hours of learning which equates to 7 months of lost learning. Remember a school year is 9 ½ months of a calendar year, so this represents a greater proportion of time than you may think.

Research shows that attendance or rather good attendance does increase the progress and levels of attainment made by pupils and ultimately their life chances. Reading and reading widely and for enjoyment is a proven indicator of positive life outcomes; including health, employment and well-being!

When the teachers and I monitor the progress made by our pupils; attendance, over the long term definitely has an impact. For good or bad, attendance affects academic progress and attainment. High levels of attendance results in continuity of learning and helps pupils to make links and to consolidate concepts and knowledge. Pupils with good attendance are generally less anxious because **all children thrive from routine and predictability**. Gaps in attendance tend to make pupils anxious; they miss new concepts and they miss shared experiences with their friends. They miss their friends and friendship groups may shift whilst they are away. The vast majority of primary school children will be ill during the year. This is obviously time which can't be helped but if added to holiday time, then it can really mount up. See the table below!

NUMBER OF DAYS ABSENT.	ATTENDANCE RATE	TIME LOST ACROSS 1 ACADEMIC YEAR	TIME LOST ACROSS PRIMARY SCHOOL CAREER	TIME LOST ACROSS ENTIRE SCHOOL CAREER.
10 school days / academic year	94.7%	50 hours (2 weeks)	350 hours (3 ½ months)	700 hours lost (7 months)
15 school days / academic year	92.1%	75 hours (3 weeks)	525 hours (5 ½ months)	1050 hours lost (1 academic year & 1 month)
19 school days / academic year	90%	95 hours (3 weeks & 4 days)	665 hours (6 months & 1 week)	1330 hours lost (1 academic year & 3 ½ months)

90% attendance may sound good but in fact across a child's school career it equates to a whole academic years worth of learning being lost plus 3 ½ months which is over a third of a school year! When you look at 94.7% in more detail it is in fact rather alarming too!

Learning is cumulative so please help your children by showing them that education is important and that attendance is important.

The Government continues to state that it is the duty of schools to report all absences to the Education Welfare Service, which will follow its normal processes (including fining persistent absentees).

Please remember should your child be unwell or unable to come to school please let the School Office know, by telephone or email communication, by each day. If you are unsure on whether or not your child should be attending school, the DFE have issued the following advice <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

Those children that arrive after 09:00 will be marked as arriving into school late "L" but before the register is completed and those children that arrive after 09.30 will be marked as "U" which is late after the register has been

taken and will affect their attendance. Please ensure you leave plenty of time in the mornings for your child/children to arrive into school on time.

I have received several holiday requests this week. Please can I remind you that the Government has issued clear guidelines with regard to family holidays during term time. Be aware of the following:

- a maximum of ten school days authorised absence for the purpose of a family holiday may be granted in any school year, and **only in exceptional circumstances**
- parents do not have the automatic right to withdraw their child from school for a holiday during term time and should not normally do so
- parents need to request permission in advance from the school (minimum of 4 weeks' notice) if they wish to take their child on any holiday during term time
- each request for a holiday absence is considered individually by the school
- if the school does not agree to an absence and the child is still withdrawn for a holiday the absence is recorded as unauthorised on the child's record.

***An "Authorised Absence Request Form" is available from the school office should parents wish to take a family holiday during term time. It should be completed prior to any withdrawal of a child during term time.***

### **A few reminders...**

PE for all classes will be every Tuesday and Thursday. Children may come into school in their PE kit on these days. PLEASE make sure all PE kit is named, especially hoodies as we cannot return them if they are not.

### **P.E. Uniform**

Plain white t. shirt or school logo white t. shirt

Plain dark shorts

Dark track suit trousers/ leggings

School P.E. hoodie or school jumper (in cold spells)

Plimsolls / trainers

### **Also....**

**Hair:** Long hair must be tied back for health and safety reasons. This is essential during PE lessons but is encouraged in all activities.

**Jewellery:** Pupils may wear watches and a small pair of studs for pierced ears (in ear lobes only). Nose studs and other types of body piercing are not allowed. No other jewellery is allowed. In order to comply with L.A. Health and Safety guidelines, pupils are required to remove earrings for PE activities. If children cannot remove them, they are asked to cover them with tape.

**Make-up:** The Governors believe that any form of make-up or hair colouring is inappropriate for this age group. Nail varnish may not be worn.

### **Children being picked up by other adults**

To allow your child to be picked up by an adult other than one with parental responsibility, (including when they might be having a playdate) please send an email to the school Office address with 'Going Home' in the subject box or write a message on the clipboard by the gate.

### **Walking home independently**

If you give permission for your child to walk from school on their own, either to the car, the Reading Rooms or home, please send an email to the school Office address (admin@stratford-sub-castle.wilts.sch.uk) with the title "Walking Home Permission" along with your child's name and Class in the subject line.

Within the email please state:

- that you give your permission for your child to Walk or Cycle home at the end of the day
- which days you give your permission for your child to Walk or Cycle home at the end of the day;

**Please note this is an annual update, so for Year 6 children even if you gave permission last year you will need to do so again for the new school year.**

### **Mobile phones**

Those children that do walk home independently are allowed to bring a mobile phone into school which they can use on their journey to and from school. Children hand their phones into their Class Teacher.

There are no circumstances where it is acceptable for a child to have their mobile phone with them during the school day. The children must switch their phones off on arrival at the school gate and they can be switched back on again once they have left the school premises at the end of the day.

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

#### **Packed Lunches**

Can I remind you all that we are a nut-free school and this also including products that contain nuts. Please check the labelling of foods carefully as we do have several children who have a nut allergy.

Kindest regards

Justine Watkins