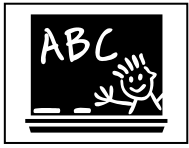


Thomas Russell Junior School

Inspiring all, achieving together.



Newsletter



Issue No. 22

Headteacher Mrs S Sharpe

27th February 2015

World Book Day – just to clarify and avoid any confusion, we will not be marking World Book Day with any events in school this year, but we will still be sending Book Tokens to every child and maybe a homework or class related task in some year groups.



There are a number of alternative activities going on in school over the next half term.

We started our half term with two **Maths Mornings** this week. Children spent time working in their houses engaged in a range of activities designed to enthuse children about maths and help them to understand about maths in the world around us. Mrs Gahagan has had some very positive feedback from across all year groups. Look out next week for a special article and photographs on the website.

We will be celebrating **British Science Week** 9 – 13th March which culminates in '**Science Day**' on Friday 13th March. Miss Murfin has some brilliant activities planned and we hope the week will ignite some sparks for any budding scientists in our midst.



On 13th March we will also be raising money for **Comic Relief** – children are invited to wear their red noses / wrist bands that they may have bought and bring in face paints (if they have them) as we will be having a host of themed Golden Time activities throughout school.

Some Y5 children have also offered to hold a 'Bake Sale' at the end of the day, so please send your child with some money, or meet them on the playground if you would like them to be able to buy a cake.

Y5 children are also off to **Chasewater** on 16th March for the week so I know they are busy organising and packing. Please look out for consent / medical forms and kit information that have been sent home today.

Reading Book Labelling

This half-term we are on a mission to sort, re-label and update our reading book resources. This will enable us to ensure that our spending in the new financial year is targeted exactly where we need it and ensure children across all reading abilities have access to high quality, interesting, good condition books.

We have three volunteers for the working party (jelly and ice-cream not included!) which we hope to hold on **Friday 6th March starting at 8:50am**. If you have a spare hour or so and would be willing to help, Mrs Vardy would really appreciate your support. Thank you.

Dinner Money – reminder that dinner money for this half term is due. We have a number of families who have accrued debt from last term, which must be cleared. Parents should be aware that once the debt reaches £25 we are required to send this to SCC who then has to issue an invoice. Should this happen, children will be required to bring sandwiches for lunch until the debt is cleared.

SPAG Workshop – Look out for your invite to join us for our workshop on Monday 9th March. Reply slip required please.

Parent Consultations

We hope you found consultations useful and informative this week. It was interesting to see the number of parents who chose to bring the children's termly report from Christmas with them. We do hope you are finding the more regular reporting useful. Thank you for helping us to keep to time by arriving promptly and limiting discussions to the appointment time allowed.

Receive Newsletters by e-mail, or ask a question: questions@thomasrussell-junior.staffs.sch.uk

Apologies for the cancellation of Miss Murfin's appointments at short notice. We hope this did not cause inconvenience. Miss Murfin will be offering an open classroom on Thursday 5th March from 3:30 – 4:30 for all parents who wish to spend time looking through their child's work. This would be a suitable time if you wanted a quick chat with Miss Murfin where she would be available to give a brief update. If you wanted to make a more formal appointment, or cannot make this time, or you have a specific issue that you would like to discuss in a more confidential environment, then please drop her a note and she will be happy to arrange that.

With regard to the reports, we are aware that the headings chosen for the descriptions have caused some discussion. We firmly believe in having high expectations of all children and have evidence over time that these high expectations improve children's outcomes.

When we designed the reports we made a deliberate choice to have 4 headings:

Exceptional, Consistent, Most of the time and Requires support or prompting.

This was a conscious change from the headings parents will be familiar with from our annual reports:

Outstanding, Good, Satisfactory, Varies and Needs to improve.

We made the change because we wanted to be really clear with parents about their child's performance. In the old report we inadvertently created a redundant category – by having varies and needs to improve. We effectively had two categories which were similar and interchangeable. It is our understanding from conversations with parents that they found the 'satisfactory' grading more acceptable when it fell in the middle of the spectrum (3rd of 5), however less parents are comfortable when their child falls in the 3rd of 4 categories.

The introduction of the exceptional category seems to have also caused consternation for some parents. By the very nature of the word exceptional, we are identifying those children that stand out above the norm of the class. It is only possible for a very small number of children to be exceptional.

What we would ask parents to do is read the whole sentence with the judgement included e.g.

Your child: **Respects and responds well to adults, most of the time.**

Your child: **is exceptionally organised and independent**

We hope this will give a slightly clearer understanding and help parents to understand our rationale.

Changes in reporting to parents have been discussed at each stage in great detail with Parent Forum. If you would like to get involved in these type of discussions, please share your thoughts with a Parent Forum representative, or even consider standing yourself next year.

What I am pleased to share from a school perspective is that we have noticed a number of improvements in children's approach / attitude / engagement as a direct result of the Christmas reports and this can only be a positive step forward for our children and their success.

School Terms and Holiday Dates Term 2015/2016

Autumn Term 2015

School opens	Tuesday 8th September to Friday 23rd October
Half-term	Monday 26 th October to Friday 30th October
School opens	Monday 2 nd November (INSET day Friday 27 th November)
School closes	Friday 18 th December

Spring Term 2016

School opens	Monday 4 th January to Friday 12 th February
Half-term	Monday 15 th February to Friday 19 th February
School opens	Monday 22 nd February
School closes	Thursday 24 th March
Easter Holiday	Friday 25 th March (Good Friday) to Wednesday 6 th April (INSET day Thursday 7 th & Friday 8 th April)

Summer Term 2016

School opens	Monday 11 th April to Friday 27 th May
School closed	Monday 2nd May (Bank holiday)
Half-term	Monday 30 th May to Friday 3 rd June (INSET day Monday 6 th June)
School opens	Tuesday 7 th June
School closes	Friday 22 nd July

School is closed to pupils for the following Staff In-service Training Days (INSET).

Monday 7th September '15, Friday 27th November '14, Thursday 7th April '16, Friday 8th April '16 & Monday 6th June '16.

Best wishes, Mrs Sharpe

Receive Newsletters by e-mail, or ask a question: questions@thomasrussell-junior.staffs.sch.uk