

# St Nicholas' CE (VA) Primary School

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**Headteacher: Mrs Sandra L Smith BA (Hons)**

18<sup>th</sup> October 2022

Dear parents

Thank you so much for your continued support throughout what has been an incredibly busy term at school. Our new Badger children have settled at school extremely quickly and all the St Nicholas children have settled back to school life with dedication and endeavour. This term we have focused upon Friendship as our Christian Value and it has been so delightful to squirrel away in the staffroom and watch our wonderful Year 6 children with their Badger Buddies. Watching our oldest children exhibit all the values we hold so dear towards our youngest children is a complete delight to me. The new sectioned off area in the playground has required a little adult intervention at times but the children are learning to take responsibility for an area of the school independently and these skills never happen overnight. I have been pleased however to hear from a variety of parents that these developing skills are on display before and after school with little adult intervention.

## **Parents in School (lovely to have you all back in!)**

Thank you to everyone for taking the time to meet with class teachers for parent consultations earlier this month to discuss how children have settled this term. Thank you also to all who attended our Parent Curriculum Information session. This term we enjoyed our Skilful Curriculum Day and we are so grateful to all the volunteers who assisted us on the day. Florence and Archie in Year 6 commented:

*On Thursday the whole school took part in Skilful Day. We started outdoors and learnt how to do orienteering with Mrs Heath and Mrs Trowern. We used coordinates to unscramble a word – St Nicholas! Then we practised wrapping presents. This was tricky and we used up a lot of tape! Afterwards we learnt how to sew a button on to a hankie. I (Flo) found this fun and calming although others didn't! In cooking we learnt how to cut and peel food and we made vegetable soup. Even though most of us didn't like it some people thought it was delicious. Mrs Vipond taught some of us how to tie our shoe laces using the one bunny ear method. We also tried to tie reef knots, slip knots and bowline knots but they were hard. We ended the day with Maypole dancing which was cleverly put together by Mrs Hedges. The whole day was very enjoyable and I think everyone else had a lot of fun too.*

Many of you joined us for our Curriculum Information session this month and we enjoyed reading your comments about our new Global Explorer Curriculum offer, which is now in full swing at school.

## **Healthy School Award**

As a school we have been incredibly conscious of the physical, mental and emotional health of our St Nicholas Family, particularly since the Covid Pandemic. Miss Pistell recently applied for a Healthy School Award as a reflection of all the work we have undertaken. Last week we were informed that we have been awarded a Silver Award. The following statements accompanied the award:

- *An extremely enjoyable read, the school put so much effort and detail into their work on healthy schools and it really shines through;*
- *There is a buddy system available for pupils and staff, really loved this initiative. I have not seen it in schools before with a teacher*
- *All of the criteria were explained really well and evidenced, would like to see the school go for the gold award in the near future as think they truly deserve it*
- *The school supports national health campaigns and has oral health workshops, oral health is so important especially for young people*
- *Really enjoyed reading the case study, and liked how the objectives and outcomes were clear and concise and they had such success.*

Thank you for all your hard work and congratulations on the achievement of Wiltshire Healthy Schools accreditation



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A wonderful achievement for our school and a true reflection of the pastoral support and nurturing ethos ever present at St Nicholas. Onwards for the Gold Award! 😊

## Attendance

In May this year the government released new guidance for schools in managing attendance. The latest guidance is placing greater responsibilities upon Headteachers to ensure attendance remains a key focus for school priorities. In recent years, attendance for the very large proportion of pupils at St Nicholas has been broadly in line or slightly better than the national average. Since Covid, I have been ever conscious of the demands placed upon families through lockdowns and the need for some families to have term time absence. I have at all costs tried to desist from informing the Local Authority of families when they have met the criteria for a fine through >5 days unauthorised absences.

Of late, the requests for term time absences has not only continued but also increased significantly. Consequently, I have no option to but to follow the guidance set out for me and notify the local authority when unauthorised absence exceeds the levels allowed. Unauthorised absence includes arriving late at school.

Requests for medical, dental and ophthalmic appointments are also increasing. Again, I have tried to have empathy with an NHS system heavily under strain. However, as a staff we all request appointments outside of school hours and are overall largely successful. Could I please therefore request that you request appointments for your children outside school hours. I appreciate some appointments are necessarily in school hours and are not routine appointments.

I have revised our attendance policy in line with government guidelines and it is awaiting adoption by the Governing Body at our November meeting. Once this policy is adopted any unauthorised absence that meets the criteria laid out will mean I shall have to notify the Local Authority and a penalty fine may be imposed.

I work very closely with my colleague Headteachers in neighbouring schools and for consistency in approach we have all agreed within our Cluster of schools to agree and apply these measures.

## Staffing Changes

It is with much regret that I have to inform you that Mrs Vipond has very sadly decided to tender her resignation and will be leaving St Nicholas in December 2022. This has been a deeply personal decision for Mrs Vipond and I am sure you will join with me in offering her our sincere thanks for all her dedication and hardwork during her time at this school and wish her all the very best for her future.

Clearly this has created a vacancy within our teaching team and we have already begun the process of recruitment. Please rest assured we will keep you informed of the situation as and when the recruitment process is concluded.

## Reward System

Our reward system was been reviewed by our School Council with me last year with a view to rewarding the the key elements of the Global Explorer Curriculum while simultaneously staying true to our school aims. A letter will be sent home early next term explaining in greater detail the revised reward scheme.

## Term 2

Next term we will be focusing upon Peace as our Christian Value. Our Remembrance Service will be held in school and parents are invited to join us – Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November at 10.45am. Ms Glover and I will be attending St Nicholas' Church Remembrance Service on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> November and we would love to see St Nicholas' School families join with us.

Christmas is a magical time of year and we will be enjoying the festive period in school and inviting you to join with us for our Church Service and Nativity Performance (Badger, Squirrel, Hedgehog).

So much to be thankful for and so much still to come and fill us all with hope and joy. Thank you all for your love and support this term. On behalf of all the staff we wish you all a very happy and relaxing half term break and look forward to your return on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> October.

Yours sincerely

Mrs S L Smith/Headteacher

