

SEPTEMBER

7.9.26



WHITEGATE COFE PRIMARY

Newsletter

What an absolute delight and pleasure it has been to welcome everyone back! The children have returned with their usual bright enthusiasm, as well as lots to tell us about their summer holidays! They have settled well into our new five-class structure and have quickly set about impressing their adults with their excellent behaviours for learning. I hope you all had some lovely quality family time together over the break and are as ready as we are for all of the exciting times that lie ahead of us in this new school year.

This first newsletter of the year contains a few key annual updates, as well as some other reminders to help us ensure a smooth beginning to the year.

A huge welcome to the 28 new starters who have begun their Whitegate journey in Acorns, along with Mateo, who has joined Y2, and Amelia who has joined Y6. We are really looking forward to getting to know you all.

Healthy Breaktime Snacks

Thank you to everyone who has ensured that the snacks they are sending their children into school with are healthy. The overwhelming majority of people have supported us brilliantly with this and it has been wonderful to see the children eating their healthy snacks with such enjoyment.

Uniform and Jewellery

Thank you to all those who are following the uniform policy. Just a reminder that we have now moved officially over to the new royal blue polo shirts only—no white shirts any more. Please also remember that socks and shorts should always be plain with no logos.

Please also ensure that you have labelled your children's uniform, especially jumpers and cardigans. Children often take these off during the day and it is tricky returning unnamed items! We have a huge stock of pre-loved uniform in school - mainly jumpers and cardigans. If you require any items, please call in at the school office.

Apart from watches and stud earrings, jewellery is not permitted in school. As per our policies, children who cannot take their earrings out are not able to join in with PE. As this subject is part of our core offer and not optional, please support us and your child by not getting their ears pierced during the school year. Thank you.

Parking

We had great success with the 'Parking Charter' that the vast majority of families agreed to and signed a couple of years ago and we are keen that these improvements for our whole community are maintained. For those who have just joined our Whitegate family, a copy of our 'Parking Charter' will be sent out soon.

With this in mind, **when parking in the village, please do not park, or drive, on the pavements, across driveways, on double yellow lines or on the zigzags at the front of school.** For everyone's safety, please do not drop your children off on the zigzags either. Please also remember that the loop is out of use to everyone except staff and those with blue badges.

Reading Challenge

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."

Dr. Seuss

Reading unlocks the rest of the curriculum and the world around us, and this is why it is so important to read at home. As our homework policy states, 'Children whose reading is not supported by adults at home do not make the same good progress as their peers. Reading impacts on children's achievement in all other subjects.' Thank you as always for your support with this, and well done to all of those children who took part in the **Summer Reading Challenge!** This Friday, in our Celebration Worship, we will recognise the efforts of all of those who have taken part, so please remember to send in any certificates or medals that your children have received.

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Meet the Teacher Evenings

This year's Meet the Teacher Evenings will return for each class. They are an important opportunity for all, both those new and familiar with our school, to receive important information for the year ahead, as well as giving you the opportunity to ask any questions or raise any concerns that you may have. It also gives us the opportunity to just have a catch-up! Please see the dates and times at the end of this newsletter.

Extra-Curricular Clubs

As we settle into the new school year, the first club run by staff will be the Walking Bus, which will run on Mondays and Fridays, starting this Friday 11th September. Please email the office if you would like your child to take part but please make sure to include the exact dates, not just days. Please collect your children in the car park at Vale Royal Abbey from 3:45pm. Depending on how many of our littlest children we have joining us on those days, we may take a little longer to arrive, so thank you for your patience on those occasions.

The new drama club, offered through Marmalade Drama, as well as Mrs Finney's Craft Club, will both begin this week as well. We are currently in the process of trying to secure a sports club to run at least once each week which we will communicate to you once we have more information.

Each week also sees a special activity in the Ark, such as Autumn Art Attack, the Great Baking Bash, Crime Scene Investigation, The Ark Wacky Races and many more! These particular Ark sessions last until 5pm and are available to book via ParentMail.

Beginning of the Day

Please note that the gates to the playground do not open until 8:30am so if you are dropping off your child to walk onto the playground by themselves, please do not do so before 8:30am. From 8:30am until the whistle is blown at approximately 8:40am, **there is limited supervision** with one member of staff standing by the pedestrian gate on the bottom playground. On really wet mornings, the children will be advised to go straight to their classrooms. However, if it is damp or drizzling, we will aim to be outdoors. Please send your children suitably dressed for the weather every day. Thank you.

Collection at the End of the Day

Children in Acorns up to and including Elder are directly supervised at the end of the day as we complete the handover to their adult. The older children in Hawthorn and Oak are able to do this without their class teacher being present; however, they must come back into the classroom if their adult is not on the playground. Children in Hawthorn and Oak are not allowed to leave the playground without an adult unless this has been discussed with the office first. Please can you reiterate this message at home. Please also remember we are unable to allow children to use the play equipment at the end of the school day. Thank you.

Attendance

Articles 28 and 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child ensure children have the right to education no matter who they are and that this education develops their personality and abilities as much as possible. Together, we need to support our children to access their right to education and the opportunities that regular attendance and engagement in their learning provide. Attendance so far has been excellent and it is vital that we maintain this strong start to ensure all of our children have the opportunity to reach their potential.

There are many things that families can do to help our children make the most of what education can offer them. Ensuring that children have enough sleep, maintain healthy routines and focus on what they enjoy about school prior to returning is always a useful start and a good way to maintain motivation as the school year progresses. It may seem that an odd day off school doesn't really matter, but when a child or young person is persistently absent, research tells us that this can impact on their levels of participation, attainment and ultimately their future opportunities. We would ask that, where possible, term time holidays are avoided - whilst we appreciate the impact the cost of living is having on our families, the consequences of missing teaching time can be significant for all learners. **If your child's attendance falls below 95% then school will be in touch to offer support to help with this.**

As per our policy, we ask that where possible medical appointments, including the dentist, are made outside of school hours. If your child is absent due to an appointment, we will need proof of this so that we can keep our registers up to date.

Please let us know by 9.15am on the first day of absence the reason for your child's absence. To ensure that your child is safe, it will be necessary for us to contact you by telephone if we have not received confirmation of your child's absence by then.

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Lateness

Although occasional lateness due to unforeseen circumstance is understandable, please ensure that your child is in the playground when the whistle is blown each day. This allows your child to join friends entering their classroom, enables children to take part in the normal settling-in routines and ensures that they are able to take part in all learning from the very beginning of the day.

Like every school, we monitor attendance and lateness and it may be necessary to be in contact with you to discuss this in order to avoid this becoming routine.

The school day begins at 8:45am. If your child is not on the playground by this time, they will have to enter through the school office and must be accompanied by a parent as you will need to sign them in. To keep children safe, please refrain from dropping your child off on the loop and asking them to walk to the main entrance on their own.

School Dinners and Packed Lunches

If your child has a school lunch, this will be ordered each day in the classroom. We have recently moved to a new provider and it will take until after half-term for them to set up their online ordering system. We have sent out the menu via ParentMail so that parents know what will be served each day. School lunches are free for all children in Reception—Year 2. For those in KS2, **we will be raising invoices fortnightly via ParentMail until the new system is in place.** If you have any difficulties paying online or with the payments themselves, please let us know straight away so that we can assist. If you still have an outstanding balance from last academic year, this needs paying as a matter of urgency. Thank you.

Benedict's Law: Allergies and Anaphylaxis

We are a nut-aware school and all staff have recently completed allergy and anaphylaxis training in line with the expectations of Benedict's Law. This helps ensure that pupils with severe allergies are kept as safe as possible while at school.

How parents can help

Please continue to be mindful of children with food allergies when preparing packed lunches and snacks. Avoid sending foods that the school has identified as high risk and follow any allergy guidance provided by the school. Small actions can significantly reduce the risk of accidental exposure for children with severe allergies. As a reminder, please avoid giving children peanuts, peanut butter sandwiches, other spreads containing nuts such as Nutella and snacks/bars containing nuts or labelled "may contain nut traces" in school lunches. Please also remind children to not share their lunches.

The advice for school packed lunches is that sweets, chocolate and crisps should be avoided. For lunchbox ideas and recipes please look at the NHS website: <https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes/>

Communication

As previously communicated, we have recently set up Facebook pages, one of which will be limited to existing families and will be used to keep you updated about the children's learning, as well as wider school events and opportunities. Further information about how to access these will be sent out soon.

Values Day

Following on from the successes of past whole-school days such as Golden RE Day, French Day and last term's 140th Anniversary Victorian Games afternoon, I am excited to inform you that another whole-school day is planned for Friday 18th September - our first Christian Values Day! The day will see the children mixing into groups with different ages to experience a range of fun and enriching activities linked to our school's Christian Values. As we have done on other occasions, we will also all be walking to Vale Royal Abbey where we will enjoy a picnic in (hopefully!) the sunshine. As with previous whole-school days, we hope this day will give our children fond and lasting memories. Further information will be sent out before the day.

Autumn Fair

As usual, the children in Oak class will be organising and running our annual autumn fair. This will take place on **Friday 16th** October in the afternoon - more details will follow soon. So that we can be super organised, can we ask for donations of toys, games and bric-a-brac to start coming into school please. The fair finishes at 4pm, so an advance warning to those in Oak class who will need to stay until approximately 4:15pm to complete the clear-up.

School Reports/Assessment

Informal assessment is part of everyday teaching and learning, whilst more formal periodic standardised tests in mathematics and English help us to check that our children are making the progress that we would expect. In addition to this, the following statutory tests are undertaken:

- Children in Acorns will complete a baseline assessment in the next couple of weeks;
- Birch children will complete a phonics check in June (plus any Y2 children in Elder who didn't pass last year);
- Y4s complete an online multiplication check in June;
- Y6s complete SATs in reading, spelling, grammar and punctuation, along with mathematics in May. Writing is teacher assessed based on a number of pieces of independent work that take place throughout the year.

All assessments, whether informal or formal, help teachers to identify areas of learning that are strengths or indicate gaps in knowledge (at both class and individual child level). This year, we will continue with the reporting schedule to parents which we trialled last year: providing a written report in the spring term, rather than the summer and then following this up with a parent consultation meeting towards the end of the year. We are hoping that by doing this, you will feel better informed as to the progress and attainment of your child, as well as how you can support them in their learning at home. Children in Acorns will still receive an end-of-year written report.

Homework

As already mentioned, reading at home four times each week is crucial. If children are not able to do this, then we will ensure that they catch up at break or lunch-time. (We will also ensure that they get some time to run around in the fresh air too!)

Children need to know their multiplication tables by the end of Y4, hence the statutory test. This is vital as they are not able to access the Y5 and Y6 mathematics curriculum without this knowledge. For this reason, those children who have access to Times Tables Rock Stars (TTRS) must complete activities several times a week as part of their homework. We hope to continue raising the profile of this in school this year and value any support you can give us from home.

Thank you for your anticipated support in all these important areas of school life. If you ever have any questions or would like to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to get in touch. Thank you in advance for your continued partnership and I hope you all have a wonderful week.

Mr Thomas

Key Dates

Friday 18th September	All day	Whole School Christian Values Day
Tuesday 22nd September	5pm	Elder Meet the Teacher
Tuesday 22nd September	6pm	Birch Meet the Teacher
Thursday 24th September	6pm	Acorns Meet the Teacher in the hall
Friday 25th September	9am -11am	Macmillan Coffee Morning hosted by Y6 (Individual class times to be confirmed)
Tuesday 29th September	5pm	Oak Meet the Teacher
Tuesday 29th September	6pm	Hawthorn Meet the Teacher
Friday 2nd October	8am	Family Breakfast
Wednesday 7th October	12:30pm	Senior Friends Lunch
Thursday 8th October	3pm-4pm	Meet the Caterers (Aspens)
Friday 9th October	3:30pm -5pm	FOWS Event (more information to be sent out next week)
Monday 12th October	All day	Oak visiting Chester Cathedral for Pilgrims' Day
Tuesday 13th October	10am-11am	Harvest Festival at St Mary's (Elder Class leading)
Friday 16th October	1:30pm - 4pm	Autumn Fair
Wednesday 21st October	3:15pm	Finish for half-term
Thursday 22nd October	All day	INSET Day for Staff
Friday 23rd October	All day	INSET Day for Staff