



AVENUE JUNIOR SCHOOL

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MARCH NEWSLETTER 2017

Introduction

We are well and truly into Spring despite the colder weather this week and very nearly at the end of term once again! We are so proud of our choirs and musicians. All our children play a very important part in the music of the school and it was wonderful hearing the praise that came from the adjudicators and also visitors and parents. The certificates and comments were shared with the children and are on display in school and the music room. They are a wonderful reminder of the advantages that commitment to the arts brings. I am sure you will join me in congratulating the children and, of course, Mr Taylor and Mrs Barwick for their hard work. We had a request in the suggestions box for singing grades to be considered, alongside musical instruments. We have 480 singers in school! We are committed to singing for all and for pleasure. If children wish to take their singing further they can join the Chamber Choir in Years 5 & 6 or Mr Taylor can signpost them to additional lessons outside of school which provide this service. Any adults wishing to join the school in music are very welcome to join the Community Choir on a Monday evening at 6p.m.

Recent News

Class teachers have spoken with their classes today about the events in Westminster yesterday. As with previous incidents of this kind it has been done in a sensitive way making sure that the children have an accurate age appropriate account of the events. We have taken our lead from the guidance given by the Winston's Wish Charity. We have acknowledged that something sad happened in London yesterday and it is very unusual for this kind of incident to happen. Depending on the age of the children it will depend on what they have discussed and also what has been brought into the classroom already by the children themselves. Teachers have answered questions simply and honestly and children have been encouraged to talk to staff or use the worry boxes if they are concerned. Further support and advice can be found on the website

<https://www.winstonswish.org.uk/responding-children-affected-media-coverage-incident-westminster/>

Funding for schools

Along with this newsletter you will find a letter from the associations of headteachers in Norfolk in regard to the looming funding crisis in education. We find ourselves in challenging times but I would like to reassure you that we are working hard to continue to provide the good level of staffing and services that Avenues currently offers. We hope to be able to continue this in the future and the letter explains more about our concerns and what you can do if you wish to support.

Equality Information

We are always thinking about how to make our school a safe and welcoming place for everyone regardless of their age, ethnicity, first language, nationality, religion, gender or sexuality. As part of this process, we are currently working to make our school more inclusive and friendly to trans* people. To this end we have introduced a gender neutral toilet that is available for both children and adults in school if they'd like to use it. We have also amended the school uniform policy so that it is gender neutral. Children are allowed to wear any of the approved items in the policy.

*Trans is a word that describes people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Definition of trans for younger children: 'Babies are given a gender when they are born. Trans is a word that describes people who feel the gender they were given as a baby doesn't match the gender they feel themselves to be, for example someone who is given the gender boy but doesn't feel like a boy.' Please do contact me if you would like to discuss this further.

Social Media and the School

I have been made aware over the year of a number of incidents where Facebook and social media have been used to discuss concerns that parents may have about the school or to share comments about members of staff. Can I please ask that any concerns be raised directly with the school, preferably myself in order for individual concerns to be addressed? It is very easy, in the age of social media for a concern to spread inaccurately and staff may become victimised on hearsay. All the staff in school work extremely hard to provide the best possible education for your children and care deeply about the children in our school. There will be occasions where we need to work together to resolve concerns or problems but please let us do this in an appropriate way that involves the school, and the member of staff in that discussion as this is the most effective way to find a solution.

Parental Survey

You will remember that a survey was sent out in November for parents and carers to give their views about the school. Thank you to those that replied. Your views are very important to us. All the results have been analysed and a report is available on the school website with a detailed analysis of the results. We will be resending the questionnaire towards the end of the summer term as many new parents thought they did not yet know enough about the school so we will review once more in June. We do think very carefully about your views and comments and there are a number of areas that we need to keep working on. One of those areas is homework and we will continue to canvas your views around homework in order to put in place a more family friendly approach for September, but one that also prepares children for the next step in their education when they reach Year 6.

We are reviewing all the results as a staff team as well as with governors and will continue to work towards making sure that every parents feel fully involved, fully informed and that all of our children feel happy and safe in school.

Don't forget that you can use the suggestions box in reception for ideas at any other time and that I am always contactable by email.

Sporting Updates

After winning the Boys' Norwich Cross Country League Trophy last year I am pleased to report that we have maintained it this year also. The girls' team are continuing to make progress and earned a very credible 7th place. We also had some excellent individual success in the league – congratulations go to Finlay Copping who came 2nd and to Joe Machin in 3rd place – tremendous achievements when over 100 children regularly take part. Trials for the Athletics Squad will take place early in the Summer term.

The football teams have had a mixed season, however they have continued to try hard and Mr Hooper and Mr Lowe would like to thank the football teams who had some improved results in the second half of the season. A girls' football club now runs on a Thursday evening and is proving very popular.

We still have a number of places available for morning clubs after Easter for golf, archery, frisbee, dodgeball and dance. If you would like your son/daughter to take part but are concerned about the cost, please do contact me directly to discuss this. Any family in receipt of free school meals (either now or in the past) is entitled to funding for a place in one of these clubs.

PTA

The PTA will be running an Easter Raffle after school on the playground on Thursday 30th March. Any donations of eggs would be gratefully received.

Second hand uniform and PE clothing

We have quite a collection of good quality clothing for sale at reduced prices, some from £1. We will be holding a sale alongside the Easter raffle on Thursday after school – please come along and support both the PTA and school fund. It's always good to have spares!

There will also be the lost property display in school next week for you to check before we do our usual termly visit to the charity shop!

Sainsbury's Vouchers

We are once again collecting the vouchers so please do bring or send them into the office – everyone helps purchase additional equipment for the school.

Collection Arrangements and Admin

Thank you to those who have already returned your information about collection arrangements. The staff are finding these extremely helpful. If you have not already done so, please do return any forms as soon as possible. Parents/Carers Consultation slips need to be returned as soon as possible in order to arrange your appointment to catch up with teachers.

And last, but not least, we have a new member of the office staff. Ellen Dove has been appointed as our new receptionist and I am sure you will join me in welcoming her to Avenues and the very important team in the office that keep the school working so efficiently! Thank you for your continued support and if I don't see you before the Easter holidays, have a lovely break!

Best wishes

Debbie Dismore