Dear Parents

It has been a great week in school with children enjoying their learning.

One of my passions is reading. I love getting stuck into a good book and believe that reading widens our horizons, helps us understand different perspectives and increases our knowledge. When children become confident readers, the curriculum opens up to them and their progress across all subjects increase. Please read with your child every day. It is so important.

I like to introduce as many new books to the children as I can through our weekly assemblies.

Our assembly theme this week has been ‘Community’. I read a lovely story to the children in assembly called 111 trees.

Based on a true story, 111 tells the story of Sundar Paliwal, who is from a small Indian village ruled by ancient customs. As he grows to be a man, Sundar suffers much heartbreak and decides it is time for change to come to his village. Sundar is determined to live in a place where girls are valued as much as boys and where the land is not devastated by irresponsible mining. Sundar’s plan? To celebrate the birth of every girl with the planting of 111 trees. Though many villagers resist at first, Sundar slowly gains their support. And today, there are over a quarter of a million trees in his village, providing food, water and opportunities for women to earn a living.

The children watched a lovely video clip which shows life in the village today.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZwjrrViBsQ

Our theme in assembly next week is ‘Welcoming Refugees’.

I will be introducing the children to a book called ‘The Boy At the back of the Class.’ By Onjali Rauf.

Told with heart and humour, The Boy at the Back of the Class is a child’s perspective on the refugee crisis, highlighting the importance of friendship and kindness in a world that doesn't always make sense.

I have really enjoyed reading this. I will be recommending it for children in Year 4 who are able to understand some deeper themes of prejudice, the impact of conflict and the refugee crisis. I will make copies available in the school library for Year 4 only.
Celebrate Learning

**EYFS**

We have begun our ‘traditional tales’ topic by reading ‘Puss in Boots’ and ‘The three little pigs’. Both of these stories have provided lots to talk about and plenty of opportunities for children to explore all areas of learning. The naughty cat and the big bad wolf have received many letters of complaint!

We also started our Geography learning. We looked at different types of houses and used pictures of our own houses to help us talk about the features. In maths, we have met numbers 9 and 10. The children have continued to do activities which show them the purpose of counting – to find out ‘how many’ objects there are. They have also been rehearsing the order of the first 5 numbers and understanding that the position each number holds in our number sequence does not change.

**YEAR 1**

The children have had a very settled start to the New Year and have begun this term with great determination and enthusiasm. They have been very excited by our computing curriculum, combining their knowledge of position and direction to create a sequence of commands.

History lessons have created a lot of laughter. The children showed disbelief at the changes in telephones and music devices in living memory. They were not very impressed with the examples of children’s television either! They were able to discuss the similarities and differences between toys over time and noted the use of materials, like wood and plastic, making the link to their science learning.

Reading remains a focus in year 1. Now that we are introducing alternative sounds for graphemes, it is even more important to continue revisiting their prior learning. Copies of the flashcards are on Tapestry to use at home. Thank you for your continued support.

**YEAR 2**

Year 2 have made an excellent start to the Spring term. In Maths, the children have been learning how to solve addition and subtraction problems using a number line and are becoming more confident in this skill. In English, they have been learning how to extend their sentences using a wider range of conjunctions (which, that, as, because). In Geography, the children have demonstrated enthusiasm for learning the continents and oceans of the world. They have been learning a special song to help them remember the names. In History, the children have been using sources of evidence to answer key questions about the Titanic.

Please continue to read our weekly Tapestry posts for further guidance about how to support learning at home.
YEAR 3

Year 3 have made a brilliant start to the Spring term. The children have been particularly enjoying our history topic on the Victorians. So far, we have studied the life of Queen Victoria and her husband Prince Albert. The children were interested to learn about how she ruled the British Empire and was head of nearly one quarter of the world’s population!

The children have also enjoyed learning about some Victorian inventions, such as Edison and Swan who invented the light bulb. The children loved learning about life in a Victorian classroom. We studied artefacts to learn about classroom rules, handwriting, arithmetic, drill and hand inspections!

Next week, we will go on to learn about the introductions of the railways.

YEAR 4

Year 4 has been learning all about sound in science this half term. We have learnt about how sound travels as soundwaves from a source to the ear, the different parts of the ear and how the ear sends a signal to the brain. We have conducted experiments all about volume and pitch and identified how these are different. On Tuesday 17th January we were lucky enough to go to Winchester Science Centre to learn even more about sound. We spent time exploring many different sound exhibits - one of our favourites was the giant guitar and giant ears that you could go inside! We look forward to learning more about sound over the next few weeks.

End of Term Collection

We were overwhelmed by the generosity of parents at the end of last term. Collections from the Christmas Jumper Day and Yr 4 Pantomime resulted in a fantastic amount raised of £1,148 which we are so very grateful for.

This money will be split and sent to the two charities we are supporting this academic year: CLIC Sargent and Wessex Children’s Cancer Unit.

Thank you!
Strike Action

As per the letter sent home via ParentMail yesterday from the CEO of Castleman Academy Trust, Rhonda Moore, parents will have heard much in the press about the strike action taking place on 1st February in schools in England.

There are a number of teaching unions and, so far, only the National Education Union (NEU) has voted to strike. Other unions are proposing to re-ballot and the outcomes of their consultations are being closely monitored. The Trust is currently assessing the impact strikes may have on our schools and parents will be written to as soon as possible to advise what arrangements will need to be made.

It is appreciated that strike action will have an impact on families and the Trust will do all it can to ensure you have as much notice as possible, should you need to make alternative arrangements for your children on Wednesday, 1st February.

Dates for your Diary - Remaining Staff Training Days

We are pleased to confirm that Monday 17th April and Monday 10th July are the two remaining Staff Training Days for this academic year.

Term Time Leave Requests

I am receiving an increasing number of term time leave requests for the purposes of a holiday. We are sympathetic to the challenges families are facing today, together with recovering from the Covid pandemic over the past two years. We also recognise the value of family time together, however, we must prioritise the importance of school attendance which is why requests for holidays in term time will be unauthorised, unless in the most exceptional of circumstances.

Y2 Titanic Assembly

Following on from our learning in History about the Titanic, we would like to invite all Year 2 parents to a special ‘Titanic’ assembly on Thursday 9th February. During this assembly the children will be displaying what they have learnt in their topic this half term. You are welcome to attend at either of our two performances at 9.00am or 2.30pm. Please note: Due to health and safety regulations, we are only able to offer 2 seats per child on this occasion.

To help the children get into character for this assembly, we would like them to come to school dressed up as either a passenger or crew member of the Titanic. Some ideas could include a Victorian lady or gentleman, a captain, or even a chamber maid.
Children will need to either wear their school uniform underneath their costumes, or bring it with them in a separate bag to change into after the assembly.

Entry to the hall for the assembly will be through the staff entrance and doors will be opened 10 minutes beforehand. We look forward to seeing you soon!

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**M & M Productions - Beauty and the Beast**

We will welcome M&M Productions back to school next week for a production of Beauty and the Beast. A ParentMail has been sent home providing further details and requesting a voluntary contribution which should be paid via ParentMail no later than Thursday 26th January. Thank you for your continued support.

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**Adverse Weather - Information for Parents re School Closure**

As the weather can become unpredictable at this time of the year, arrangements need to be in place to cope with sudden snowfalls or severe weather that may prevent staff from reaching school.

- Parents are advised that, in the event of a heavy frost, there may be occasions when site staff have to lock all access gates until gritting of key areas has been completed.
- There may be days when we have to close the waiting areas and bring year groups in to school from doors at the front of school.
- Parents will be notified of any changes to the entry and exit arrangements but this might be at short notice, so we ask for your patience, understanding and co-operation.
- Parents must:
  - adhere to the designated, gritted pathways into school only
  - supervise their children before and after school whilst on school premises
  - ensure that their children are wearing sensible footwear and warm coats

Please check ParentMail text messaging service and updated notices on our website.

Parents can also access information on: https://mapping.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/closedservices/Service/schools

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**Internet Safety Day**

Tuesday 7th February is Internet Safety Day with learning based around the theme ‘Want to talk about it?’ As part of our preparations for this, assemblies will be focused on keeping safe online – especially when playing games, as some of children tell us that they play games and use apps which are not recommended for their age group.

Information about Safer Internet Day 2023 can be found here: https://www.saferinternetday.org/en-GB/
Social Media Age Restrictions

We are aware that some children are active on different social media platforms and have many ‘contacts’ within their social media groups. We have provided details of the age restrictions for some of the more popular social media platforms below. Parents are asked to please monitor their child’s activity on social media and, if they also play any online games, to ensure they are age appropriate. Thank you.

- 13 Years and Upwards - TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, YouTube
- 16 Years and Upwards - WhatsApp

Information provided above from the internetmatters.org website.

More information about children using social media can be found by using the following links:
https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/what-age-can-my-child-start-social-networking/

Life Education Workshop visit

Usually known as ‘The Life Bus’, the Coram Life Education & SCARF team will be visiting the school on Monday 30th and Tuesday 31st January and Wednesday 1st February. Workshops will take place in classrooms, to support our work teaching a variety of themes in Personal, Social and Health Education.

Please see the letter which has been sent home via ParentMail that provides parents with further details regarding this visit.

Reminders......

Entry & Exit Routes

We are very grateful for the overwhelming support which parents and children have shown with regard to the entry and exit routes at the beginning and end of the day. This has worked very well and we can confirm that these arrangements will continue remain the same.

Car Park - Pedestrian Routes

Parents are asked to ensure that they keep to the marked pedestrian routes into and out of school at all times please and avoid walking through the middle of the car park. Children should be supervised and should not be allowed to play between the parked cars.
An Extra Layer of Clothing

As advised by the UKHSA earlier this month, winter illnesses such as Covid, flu and scarlet fever continue to circulate at higher levels than normal amongst childcare settings and the wider public. We are, therefore, keeping occupied spaces and classrooms well-ventilated to let fresh air in. Even though the heating is on, the temperature in school may, at times, be lower than we’d like. Please provide your child with another layer under their uniform, eg a plain t-shirt or light weight jumper, if required. An additional fleece in plain navy or black, can also be worn.

Staff Vacancies

We have vacancies for the following members of staff:

- Lunchtime Supervisors

Lunchtime Supervisors

We are seeking to appoint at least one Midday Supervisor to join our friendly team to support the children for the lunchtime period during term time only. Your role will be to help children whilst eating their lunch and when they are playing. Duties include setting up the school hall, assisting the children during their lunch, supervising the children in the hall, classrooms and on the playground, and clearing the hall and/or classrooms after lunch. There is manual handling involved in setting up and clearing away the hall.

For more information about this post please contact Mr Watts, Acting Headteacher for an informal discussion.

Ferndown First School values the diversity of our workforce and welcomes applications from all sectors of the community. Ferndown First School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people; this is a commitment which we expect all staff and volunteers to share. The successful candidate will be required to have a Disclosure and Barring Service Check in line with the Government’s safer recruitment guidelines.
Our next Newsletter is due to be published on Friday 3rd February.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Mr S Watts
Acting Headteacher

P.S. Thanks to Ginny in Year 3 for the lovely drawing!