



Newsletter 5

Friday 4th October 2019

October

Monday 7 th	Bookings for Parents' Evening can be made via the school office
Wednesday 16 th	Parents' Evening 4.00 – 7.00 pm
Thursday 17 th	Parents' Evening 4.00 – 7.00 pm
Tuesday 22 nd	T1 Ends
Wednesday 24 th	Training Day #3 for staff only

November

Monday 4 th	T2 Starts Osmington Bay (Y6 Residential)
Saturday 9 th	Photos - pop up photo studio – http://www.martinjonesphotography.co.uk/about.html
Thursday 14 th	MUFTI – Children in Need £1 voluntary donation
Friday 15 th	School Photos (Individual/Siblings)

Christmas boxes

For eight of the last nine years the school has supported the Christmas Box appeal run by Trussell Trust. This year we will be continuing our support. Rich Parsons, who leads on the appeal, will come in and talk to the children about the charitable work and impact it has achieved in Bulgaria and Serbia. Alternatively, information can be found via: <https://www.fscinet.org/what-we-do/christmas-box-appeal/> Please note that there is no expectation to participate. Boxes are not cheap to prepare though very gratefully received. In previous years we have facilitated children compiling boxes in school. For example, individual items are brought in by children and a whole box completed from the components and sent on. This collaborative and economical approach will be available again this year. Thank you in anticipation.

Parents' Evenings

The first parents' evening opportunity is fast approaching, just before the end of T1. Bookings can be made from Monday 7th October via the school office (in person or by calling 01722 333497 or emailing admin@st-marks.wilts.sch.uk). Confirmation slips will be sent out on Monday 14th October via the children.

This first meeting is essential to discuss settling in/friendships, targets to work on for the coming year, look at the first six week's work etc. It is essential that parents attend and engage in the process. For those who have not attended previously the vast majority of consultations occur in your child's classroom as it is where they learn, the teacher works and provides a professional and private space to discuss their progress. The children's work will be left in one of four 'waiting areas' – one per year group. Please take as long as you like to look at your own child's school work. The teachers will collect parents from this waiting area. Exceptions (please see map) tend to be:

- Y3 waiting area is between Ash/Chestnut (West Corridor) – Miss Adkins in Ash Class
- Y4 waiting area is Fir Class (North Corridor – last on the left) – Mr Cook in PPA Room
- Y5 waiting area is Maple Class (North Corridor – second on the left) – Mrs Avery in DHT Office
- Y6 Waiting Area is Willow Class (South Corridor – second on the right) – Mrs Long in HT Office

Osmington Bay 2020 – Please would parents who have not returned the reply slip advising us whether their child will be participating or not, do so without delay. This will then enable us to calculate the exact amount payable as it is dependent on the number of children going.

Secondary School applications

Y6 parents - Please make sure you apply for a secondary school place by 31st October 2019 without fail.

Y5 Open Days, taster days

Many parents of Y5 children will be beginning to think about secondary school places for 2021. The secondary schools seek to secure new pupils in a very competitive market and consequently there are many opportunities for open evenings, taster sessions, open days. Most of the ten schools we feed to send fliers or marketing materials. Examples are kept outside the office (east corridor) for children or parents to collect if they wish. Alternatively please visit individual school websites for more information. Please be mindful that some Y5 children can miss up to five days schooling whilst visiting secondaries for such events. Whilst we appreciate that parents will want to research and try-before-you-buy the more children are out of school the more disruptive it can be to all. Please choose carefully before you pick your visits. Please also put a note in communication books if children are planning to be out of school for such events or complete a leave of absence form. Thank you in advance.

Teacher Training

In the coming weeks we will release the dates and information for teacher training opportunities in 2021 via ArrowITT – the school direct PGCE scheme we offer in alliance with ten other local schools. If you are interested in becoming a primary school teacher, are a graduate (about to graduate this year) and want to find out more please contact me via head@st-marks.wilts.sch.uk

Teaching Assistant Training

In recent years we have trained twenty-six parents to become Teaching Assistants/Teachers. The internship opportunity (approximately four months of voluntarily, daily morning work) is available from November this year. If you are interested and would like more information please contact me. If there is enough interest we will hold an information session.

Homework

Several parents have asked about arrangements for homework. Two years ago we took the decision to move away from too many worksheets, large projects etc and focus on some essentials e.g. times tables, spellings and reading. For me reading will always play a special part of home learning – when you learn to read you can read to learn. A whole world of interest and opportunity can open up. We encourage children to read at least five times a week, preferably every day, with a signature from parents to confirm. This helps us track who is/is not reading, who may need to be supported more etc. Please don't forget to read to your child – to model, practice voices/accent, subtle intonation etc – it makes reading and vocabulary more 'sticky' and likely to be reused and remembered.

Handwriting

Two years ago we made a significant emphasis on handwriting, presentation and the pride shown by children in their written work. We now see so much better and consistent work across the school that shines through. We changed the handwriting font from a printed one to a cursive one - which allows better and smoother joins. We continue to teach this style from Y3 when the children join us and the long term benefits are evident in children's work. From the beginning of September, as part of the primary learning collaboration (or PLC as it has affectionately been termed) the same style has been adopted at Wyndham Park. This is a significant change and underlines (no pun intended) of our commitment to design and deliver the most coherent and effective primary experience across both schools – aligned, continuous and brave. Undoubtedly there will be bumps along the road in the first six months or so as children get to grips (oops, another one) with a new style. Learning is rarely easy, predictable or linear. Sometimes we have to persevere, make new mistakes, endure doubt etc. We want older siblings to help and model to their younger siblings how wonderful and effective it becomes. We have also invested in the 'proper font' with all the correct lead-ins, joins etc called '**letter-join**'. We will be using it more and more in worksheets, displays, power points etc. We will also send home log in details for parents to see it in detail and access useful practice material e.g. how/where to join, over-learning of letter formations etc. We trust you will find it of interest and informative.

Reminder/Updates and everything else

- Many thanks to those parents you have heeded my please about the hatched drop-off zone
- Several schools have started publishing how much dinner money is owed by parents. This approach is not favoured by me (neither is naming/shaming drivers). Please ensure your accounts are cleared in a timely fashion as several parents have been embarrassed when I have stopped their children ordering more meals with huge debts incurred. Please be reasonable.
- The HR department have been working very hard to streamline the process and paperwork for having regular volunteers in schools. In accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019 there is no way around this. Safety trumps all. If you come in weekly to hear readers and help in school we have to gain some details/references/DBS (the update service is best as a DBS is useless if you have had a break of three months – the update service allows quick resetting without incurring extra costs). Parents who already have a DBS can be swiftly 'risk assessed' and can get on with helping children as soon as possible. I intend to hold a quick and simple process to expedite things. I anticipate this will be early next week.
- Please note that dogs, other than assistance dogs, are not allowed on the school site. This includes small dogs that are carried or tucked into clothing. Many thanks for helping with this.

Vacancies

St Mark's (SM) are still looking for an MDSA to join our team as soon as possible.

Term time only, Monday to Friday, 12.00 – 1.30 pm

If you would like to talk about the role or need more information please contact me via head@st-marks.wilts.sch.uk

Wyndham Park (WP) are also looking for an assistant cook to work term time, daily (morning). An official advert will be circulated soon. Let me know if you would like to talk about the role via head@wyndhampark.co.uk

Photos

One of fantastic parents, Martin Jones, is again offering a weekend opportunity for family photo portraits in SM hall on **Saturday 9th November**. More details to follow. This is the perfect time with Christmas approaching – excellent family gifts and lifetime mementos.