

St Aidan's Newsletter

January 2023



Welcome back to everyone. I hope you all had a fantastic Christmas Break and took the time to rest and recuperate. The children certainly seemed to have had a brilliant Christmas; they were all really keen to tell me about all of the things they got!

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Mrs Parker who married her partner just before the Christmas Holidays! I'm sure you'll join me in wishing her and her husband well.

Staffing Updates/Changes

We have appointed Mrs Julie Poynton to work as a TA in a very specific capacity between Reception and Year 1. She joined us before Christmas and is a qualified teacher who has moved back to Ashington from Cumbria recently. She has a wealth of experience and we're very lucky to have her working in this role.

Mrs Traba has returned from maternity leave and begun to work in Maple class. She has had a very enjoyable first week and it feels like she has never been away. We wish Ms. Hudson well. She left on the last day of term after being with us for almost 18 months during two maternity covers. We thank her for her commitment to the school and our children.

Dates for this Term

Please find attached a comprehensive list of dates and chances to be involved this coming term. There are a real range of different things to come to such as Prayer and Liturgy/Assemblies etc. We are in the process of arranging several school trips and School Council events so will inform you of these as soon as dates have been finalised. Wherever possible, we hope that this list remains unchanged, however, if we need to, we will always try to keep you informed this well in advance.

A reminder that we pray together as a school on a Monday afternoon at 2:45 -any parents/carers are always welcome.

School Website

Myself and Miss Givens have spent some time before Christmas updating some of the sections of our website to reflect what goes on in school and what we want to achieve. This has included an update to our ethos and values – the things we want to achieve as a school. This comes from all of our staff and children and is an important step in shaping the future of Our School. We have also updated the Catholic Life section and it gives you a good idea of what goes on in school; minutes from all School Council meetings can be found here too. Please take a look: -



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<http://www.st-aidans.northumberland.sch.uk/web>

School Entrance and Exit

I have had a further update from the Council and they are looking into improving the entrance to the school site for us. I have asked for a raised ramp and barrier to be change on the corner of the school site to allow the children to step straight from the pathway into the car park. I have received the following graphic impression of how it may look: -



This will mean that we will be able to open the gate in the mornings and allow the children to step straight onto the car park. We will also purchase some further barriers to allow stop vehicle access to the car park during the start and end of the day. It will also allow us to continue to keep use of the one-way system which makes entering and exiting the school far more efficient.

Can I please remind parents/carers, particularly at the end of the day, to exit via the path and side gate. I understand that some parents may find this frustrating and would prefer to use the car park as it is quicker.

The sole reason for this is that it sets a bad example to the Year 5/6 children who leave school unaccompanied on their own at the end of the school day – they are often excited at the end of the school day and I do not want them running straight onto the road when they are not paying full attention to the traffic.

I appreciate the vast majority of you do this and are understanding of this reason - if you could pass this message on to anyone else collecting the children it would be much appreciated.

There are a few school improvements which will make your exit more efficient which I will elude to in the next section.



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School Yard Improvements

I am happy that we may now begin to improve the yard and facilities over the coming term. I have engaged contractors to remove the metal fencing surrounding the yard, level off the drop to the field and make good the areas that need replacing. I have also met with the school council in order to decide which markings and games they would like marked on the yard. We will also install some seating/benches etc and a bike/scooter shelter at the far end to store these properly. It will make the yard a bit brighter for the children and give them games to play during break – I've always thought that there were prison exercise yards that looked more welcoming than ours!

The vast majority of this will be funded by the money raised by Last Year's School Councillors who had almost £3,500 in the bank by the time that they ended their term in office. This year's councillors have decided that they would like to erect a plaque with the names of their predecessors somewhere to mark their work during the previous year and I think that's a lovely idea – it really helps our children understand the impact they can have on their school.

Removal of the fencing should also make exiting the site at the end of the day easier.

School Uniform

Just a reminder that any earrings should be removed before entering school. Clear plastic retainers may be worn to preserve the holes.

Please ensure the children arrive to school in correct school uniform and PE kit – including black school shoes, not trainers.

Please remember, we have a significant amount of pre-owned school uniform, most of which is in excellent condition, stored in the caretaker's bungalow. If you would like to request some uniform – free of charge – please speak to Mrs Shortt or Mrs Jobling and they will be happy to help.

Activities/Trips etc

Please remember that the cost of one of these will never be prohibitive to the children taking part in one of these events. If you are struggling with the cost of living, please speak to us in confidence and we will support any of our families in whatever way we can.

A-Star Attendance

As part of the Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust, we have been enrolled on a trial attendance monitoring scheme with A-Star attendance. It will support us in school in



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monitoring attendance levels and supporting children in achieving all they are capable by being in school as often as possible.

A-Star attendance uses a traffic light system and attendances will be categorised as follows:

Attendance %	Colour
96% and above	Green
90% - 95.9%	Amber
Below 90%	Red

Where a child's attendance falls below 96%, parents/carers will receive a letter explaining next steps. We ask you to work with the school to ensure your child attends every day.

Our target for all pupils is to be above 97%

I would also ask that children continue to arrive punctually.

All holidays should be booked outside of school times. Parents should note that the vast majority requests for leave of absences will be rejected in line with the school Leave of Absence Policy.

Clubs

The vast majority of Clubs have started up again this week, beginning with Show Club and Coding Club on Monday.

In the Summer term, we will be able to run more than one club at a time when we have access to the outdoor space as well. This will include some cricket/athletics/multisport etc.

I am also delighted that we will be able to offer children the chance to learn a musical instrument. Those who expressed an interest will begin their guitar lessons with Mrs Owen next week.

Social Media

The best way to stay up to date with all the wonderful things happening in the classroom is to follow our Instagram account. It is full of photos of all of the wonderful things the children get up to. The tag is @staidansashington.

Personal Development

At the end of last year, I asked you to provide us with some feedback relating to the skills you wish the children to attain outside of the classroom. We have used these to support us in designing our enrichment visits and trips etc. This year, we will be encouraging our children to:



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Aspire to Inspire

From your feedback, the skills that you wished children to leave us with were:

Teamwork Confidence Resilience
Independence Leadership

The staff have been identifying many different experiences and learning opportunities for the children to gain these activities over the first term. We have also planned many extra-curricular activities to focus on these such as Y3/4s overnight camp on the field and Ian Lavery's visit to Year 6, amongst many others.

Later in the year we will be having 'Aspirations Week'. We will plan many events around the children's understanding of 'what they want to be when they grow up', culminating in a day when they come to school on Friday dressed as what their ambition is (if they wish to, of course).

We will also be planning a number of activities and workshops focussed around that this week. We would also like to invite some speakers into school from our local community to help the children understand what different jobs entail. If you know of anyone/company etc. who would be willing to do something like this and host a small workshop with the children or speak to them, please get in touch. I would also be keen to have any former pupils who have gone on to University to discuss their experiences with some of the older children.

I would like as many people from a range of different industries as possible and if you're nervous about coming into school, we're happy to provide support and expectations etc. – they're not as scary as they seem, I promise.

Any details of contacts can be forwarded to: admin@st-aidans.northumberland.sch.uk

Length of the School Day

The Department for Education has introduced the expectation for all state-maintained school to have a minimum school week length of 32.5 hours by September 2023. At present, we are currently 25 minutes in total short of that expectation so we will be changing the opening/closing times to meet this requirement in the coming months. A full consultation process for parents/carers will follow with our intended changes in the near future to outline our plans to meet this requirement. I don't envisage and significant changes to the start/end times of the school day.

Finally



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Thank you again for your continued support. I look forward to all this term brings for our lovely little community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Moran', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr M Moran

Headteacher



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