



Oaklands School

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HEADMISTRESS

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4 November 2024

Dear Parents

Re: **November 2024 Headmistress's Letter**

I hope you all had a restful half term break and are looking forward to the next few weeks as we roller-coaster towards our Christmas activities and performances.

As you all know we had our routine inspection before the break by the Independent Schools' Inspectorate and I am very much looking forward to sharing the final report with you when we are allowed to publish it. It was a very successful three days of intense scrutiny of our whole school, including the provision of education and systems and processes to safeguard all pupils on site, with feedback we are incredibly proud of.

School Uniform and PE Kit

As we return to school, I would like to remind families that children should come to school in their full winter school uniform, unless they are timetabled for a PE/Games lesson.

We take great care to maintain high standards of uniform and presentation at school. This includes all children wearing the regulation school coat which must be purchased from Forest Casuals in Loughton. In cold weather, the school woollen hat, gloves and scarf, which are also available from the uniform suppliers, should be the only items worn. Please do not allow children to wear hats, gloves and scarves that are not from our uniform suppliers. Blazers should be worn every day. Boots are not suitable to wear for a day in school. Please make sure that all pupils have sturdy black school shoes through the winter months.

If it snows, pupils may wear boots to and from school but will need to wear their normal school shoes in the buildings during the day. If we do have snow before the Christmas break we will aim to let you know by 7am if we need to have a delayed start to the school day to safely clear the footpaths on site. Announcements will be made via Groupcall.

As usual, all items of uniform must be clearly named, preferably in the neck area so that staff can quickly identify the owner. We make every effort to reunite children with named items of clothing, however anything that is unnamed will be placed in the lost property box situated in the covered waiting area for parents, in front of the studio.

Individual Photographs

On Thursday 7 November, individual photographs will be taken of the children. It is particularly important that all the children look smart and are in the correct winter school uniform for these photographs. All long hair should be tied back with the regulation coloured hair bands.

Prospective Parents

We welcomed a large number of prospective families to our Open Morning in October, many of whom are now returning for personal tours of the school. Our Year 6 Prefects acted as tour guides for our prospective parents and it was noted by many visitors how well they conducted themselves whilst touring. Our Head Girl and Boy, Margot and Archie delivered fantastic speeches to a hall full of visitors.

September Entry into Early Years

Our 3+ and 4+ pre-offer taster/assessment programme takes place this half term for children who wish to join the school for entry into Lower and Upper Kindergarten and Reception September 2025. If you have not registered siblings please do this as soon as possible to secure a place for our taster sessions.

OPA

Thank you to Mrs Chapman and her team who helped supervise all the children at the creche on the second evening of Parent Consultation meetings just before half term. I know a substantial number of children thoroughly enjoyed completing some arts and craft activities.

The OPA are now very busy planning Christmas events for children to enjoy and I believe most of our children will be visiting a very special person in his Grotto! Thank you to those parents who have already volunteered to be the Class Reps for 2024 -25; your hard work is much appreciated!

Providing Information to Parents

As a school, we are always looking for ways to share with you the educational methods our teachers use in the classroom to teach your children.

During this Autumn Term, we have already organised several meetings for different groups of parents: Upper Kindergarten 'Welcome and Ready to read', Reception 'Welcome and RWI' meeting, Year 1 Maths and English Information meeting, Year 3 Maths and English Information meeting and the Year 5 11+ meeting. I hope that parents found the meetings helpful and beneficial to further support their child's learning at home.

Parents' Evenings and Drop-in Sessions

Thank you for attending the meeting with your child's class teacher just before the half term holiday and I hope you found them informative.

During this half-term, we have timetabled a second series of 'Drop-in' sessions for all the classes in KS1 and KS2. These will take place first thing in the morning, 8.25-8.50am. Parents of children in UK and Reception will also receive invitations to attend an opportunity to view their child's work, in the afternoon. UK parents will have an allocated day and time, whereas Reception parents are free to choose which session they attend this half term, either the morning or afternoon session but not both please. We have combined some classes this half term due to the number of school events taking place. If you have a sibling clash, my apologies, please either split the time or ask one of the teachers to accommodate you on another day.

Please refer to the 'Dates List' at the end of this Head's letter to check the date of the 'Drop-in' session for your child during this half term. We try hard to keep to the published dates however, there are rare occasions when for reasons beyond our control, that dates may change. We aim to give parents as much notice as possible.

Awards

As you are aware, we present several different awards to the children throughout each term.

Merit certificates are presented to two children in each of the KS1 and KS2 classes on a fortnightly basis. A merit certificate can be awarded for a variety of reasons such as using ambitious words in creative writing, excellent problem-solving skills, imaginative art work or independent research work.

Good Behaviour and Friendship awards are also presented on a fortnightly basis.

A 'Good Behaviour' award is presented to a child who consistently displays positive behaviour and acts as a role model to their peers, or to a child who we can see is making extra effort to rectify any disruptive or unsocial behaviour in the classroom or the playground.

The 'Friendship' award is presented to a child who is a caring and understanding member of the class, willing to share, listen and help others. The children often discuss what it means to be a 'good friend' and the School's Code of Behaviour during their class assemblies or in a PSHE circle time.

'Wow' certificates are awarded once every half term in a special 'Wow' assembly. These are presented for an outstanding piece of work, independent research or presentation, or for displaying significant perseverance to complete a task.

I also award Head teacher's certificates to a class for a number of reasons, such as excellent attitude and participation during a school visit or an outstanding class assembly. Sometimes individuals receive a Head teacher's certificate for their contribution to the life of the school or for a special achievement or effort in their academic work.

Other awards and badges are awarded throughout the school by individual teachers. All these awards are part of, and enhance, the school's aim to create a positive learning environment for the children, and to continually praise and celebrate their achievement and progress. By having a wide range of awards, we aim to ensure that a substantial number of children receive additional recognition for their effort and work during each half term.

Please be reassured that a log is kept for each award to monitor that there is a fair distribution of awards within each class during an academic year.

Siblings

As you are aware, we have a system whereby our staff supervise children in 'Siblings' (from 3pm until 3.30pm). Please collect your child from 'Siblings' before you collect your older child. Any child who has not been collected by 3.30pm will automatically be taken to Tea Time club, which does incur a charge.

These arrangements mean that the office staff will be able to provide the correct location of your child to you if there is an occasion when you are late for collection. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Changes to afternoon pick up

If, during the school day, you need to change the collection arrangements for your child/children. Please ensure you let the school office know. Teachers do not routinely pick up emails whilst teaching and important collection information may be missed.

Harvest and the Whitechapel Mission

Thank you very much for your generous donations to our Harvest Festival which were given, as usual, to the Whitechapel Mission for the homeless. As you will see from the photographs included in the next Newsletter, the hall was brimming with goods. Tony Miller led a wonderful assembly that highlighted to our pupils exactly where their wonderful donations were going. Later in the year we will collect donations for the Epping Forest Food bank and we are hopeful our Year 5 pupils will have an opportunity to visit the depot in Loughton to see how this important charity stores and distributes the generous donations.

Parking reminder

Thank you to all our parents who are parking responsibly away from the school gates and avoiding the drives of our neighbours. Sadly, we had an increase in inconsiderate parking towards the end of last half term which led to a number of our neighbours complaining to the school office. Please remember not to bring the school name into disrepute by causing distress to local residents.

Absence

Further to my letter in October this is a reminder that no absence for holiday during term time, for any child of statutory school age, will be authorised. It is a legal requirement that pupils of school age are in school unless they are unwell, attending an urgent medical appointment or another reason serious enough to warrant a day's absence.

You must however, still fill in the absence request form, found online, as it is my duty, as the Headteacher, to know where pupils are for each school day. If your child accumulates 15 or more days of absence in any school year, for any reason, this is now reportable to Essex so they can track absences across the district. We are lucky that our holidays are longer than Local Authority schools and I encourage you all not to book flights for school days.

Site Security

As many of you have seen, our new fencing and electronic gates at the Albion Hill entrance to school are very nearly finished. These gates will be closed at 8.45am and will re-open at 2.45pm. All access between these hours will be via the intercom system. Our first collection at the end of the day begins at 3pm so please bear in mind that no parents will have access to the school grounds to wait for their child until these gates are opened automatically at 2.45pm. There is a very small waiting area inside the old school gates for those of you arriving before 2.45pm. Our car park gates open at 2.30pm, slightly earlier, to avoid a backlog of traffic on Warren Hill, however, it is helpful if parents do not walk up to the main school site until 2.45pm.

ISA Autumn Conference

Miss Dee and I will be out of school on 14 and 15 November as we are attending the Independent School's Association Autumn Study Conference. The conference provides a valuable opportunity to hear and learn about the latest educational developments in the UK and helps us to continue to provide an excellent educational experience for our pupils here at Oaklands. We can both be contacted via email for the duration of this conference.

Coffee Mornings

Mr Hagger, Mrs Osborn and I will be holding our annual coffee mornings on Tuesday mornings starting on Tuesday 5 November. These are opportunities to chat informally about the school and its provision, and also to answer any questions you may have.

Please check the table below for your class time:

AUTMNM TERM		
Tuesday 5 November	8.30am – 9.45 am	Year 3 to Year 6
Tuesday 12 November	8.30am – 9.45am	Year 1 and Year 2
Tuesday 19 November	8.30am – 9.45 am	Lower and Upper Kindergarten and Reception

Christmas Performances

In the next few weeks, we will write with more details about our Christmas performances. Please remember there will be only two tickets per family with no exceptions. If you have children in more than one class for the KS 1 performances, please feel free to choose which day you attend. Children in all four classes will perform on both days, but we have to split parents because our hall will not hold all adults in one sitting.

If you are a Reception Owl parent you will see below you are either group A or group B for the Christmas concert. Group A parents are those with surnames beginning with B, H or K and group B parents are those with surnames beginning with S, T or W. Siblings will not be invited to the Christmas performances but where possible they will be invited to dress rehearsals.

For KS 2 parents, there is one performance for which you can book two tickets, we are aware this date now clashes with Forest 11+ scholarship interviews but sadly we booked the church before these dates were released.

Please rest assured that rehearsals do not disrupt the learning of our core subjects, staff cleverly weave rehearsals into PE, RE, PSHE and Drama lessons.

In our School Improvement Plan at Oaklands we have been looking at opportunities to improve and embed resilience in our pupils to give them strategies and skills we know will help them now and in the future. I thought some of you may find the short article below interesting to read if you have 5 minutes.

[Building resilience in children 3-8 years | Raising Children Network](#)

Dates for the Diary

The following list provides a current list of events planned for the rest of the Autumn Term:

Tuesday 5 November	8.30-9.30am	Coffee Morning	Year 3 to Year 6 Parents
Thursday 7 November	Morning	Individual Photos	Whole School
Tuesday 12 November	8.30-9.30am	Coffee Morning	Year 1 and Year 2 Parents
Wednesday 13 November	9am	Christmas Show	Lower Kindergarten Parents
Thursday 14 November	All Day	Trip to the Barbican	Year 5
Friday 15 November	All Day	Children in Need	Whole School
Monday 18 November	Morning	Mock Exams	Year 6
Tuesday 19 November	8.25-8.45am	Drop In Session	Year 1, Year 3 and Year 4
	8.30-9.30am	Coffee Morning	LK, UK and Reception Parents
	2.30-3pm	Drop In Session	UK Foxes and Rabbits Parents
	All Day	Flu Vaccinations	Whole School
Wednesday 20 November	Morning	Mock Exams	Year 6
Thursday 21 November	8.25-8.45am	Drop In Session	Year 2, Year 5 and Year 6 Parents
	9am	Reception Christmas Show	Woodpeckers and Owls (Group A) Parents
	2.30-3pm	Drop In Session	UK Badgers, Hedgehogs and Squirrels Parents
Friday 22 November	9am	Reception Christmas Show	Robins and Owls (Group B) Parents
Wednesday 27 November	9am	Dress Rehearsal for Christmas Show	All Upper Kindergarten children to attend
Thursday 28 November	9am	Upper Kindergarten Christmas Show	UK Foxes, Rabbits and Badgers Parents
	2.30-3pm	Drop In Session	Reception
Friday 29 November	9am	Upper Kindergarten Christmas Show	UK Squirrels and Hedgehogs Parents
	2.30-3pm	Drop In Session	Reception
Tuesday 3 December	All Day	Carol Service Rehearsal	Year 3 to Year 6
Wednesday 4 December	2-3.30pm	Carol Service at St Marys, Loughton	Year 3 to Year 6 Parents
Thursday 5 December	9am	KS1 Nativity Play	Year 1C and Year 2S Parents
Friday 6 December	9am	KS1 Nativity Play	Year 1W and Year 2Z Parents
Monday 9 December	Morning	Early Years Disco & Magic Show	LK, UK and Reception
	All Day	Pyjama Day	Whole School
	Afternoon	Movie Night	Year 3 to Year 6
Tuesday 10 December	1-3pm	Pantomime at Millfield Theatre	Year 1 to Year 6
Wednesday 11 December	Morning	Pantomime in School	LK, UK and Reception
	All Day	Santa's Grotto	Whole School
	All Day	Christmas Jumper Day	Whole School
	All Day	Christmas Lunch Day	Whole School
Thursday 12 December	All Day	Christmas Parties	Whole School
Friday 13 December	Morning	Last Day of Term – 12pm finish	LK, UK and Reception
	Morning	Last Day of Term – 12.15pm finish	Year 1 and Year 2
	Morning	Last Day of Term 12.30pm	Year 3 to Year 6
Monday 16 December – Monday 6 January - Christmas Holiday			
Thursday 9 January	5pm	Meeting regarding Residential Trip	Year 5 Parents
Tuesday 14 January	5pm	Meeting regarding Residential Trip	Year 6 Parents
Thursday 16 January	5pm	Meeting regarding Residential Trip	Year 4 Parents
Wednesday 29 January	8.25-8.45am	Drop In Session	Reception, Year 2, Year 5 and Year 6
	2.30-3pm	Drop In Session	UK Squirrels and Hedgehogs Parents
Thursday 30 January	9am	Assembly to Parents	Year 3C Parents
Friday 31 January	8.25-8.45am	Drop In Session	Reception, Year 1, Year 3 and Year 4
	2.30-3pm	Drop In Session	UK Foxes, Rabbits and Badgers Parents
Wednesday 5 February	All Day	Young Voices	Year 5 and Year 6
Thursday 6 February	9am	Assembly to Parents	Year 3V Parents

Thursday 13 February

8am

Assembly to Parents

Year 4 Parents

As ever, please do not hesitate to contact any of our team at the school if you have any queries or if there are any matters you would like to discuss.

With kind regards

Yours sincerely



Gretchen Copeman
Headmistress

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