



*"...Let us remember that, as many hands build a house, so many hearts make a school."*

## ST. PAUL'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

3 September 2019

Dear Parents/Carers,

It is hard to believe that six weeks have gone by and we are starting another academic year at St. Paul's. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our new Reception children and their families into our community and wish them every happiness over their time with us.

It has been a busy period of time for the school and a lot has been achieved in a short space of time. Most classrooms and corridors have had a fresh coat of paint, a huge amount of tree work and new fencing has been erected at the edge of the Glebe and a new flat roof has been installed above the offices. My thanks go to Mrs Simmons and the cleaning and caretaking team for organising this and ensuring that all work was completed for the start of the term.

A new academic year often brings about a time of reflection and a chance to adapt and change. Much has been achieved in the last two and a half years and I look forward to developing our school further to ensure that your children have the very best experiences that they can; as a school community we get one chance to get this right – one child, one chance!

### **Meet the Teacher**

Communication was sent during the holidays regarding 'Meet the Teacher' events. For those that may have missed it, please note that these meetings will be held on **Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2019**, with meetings starting at 3.15 p.m., 4.00 p.m. and 4.45 p.m., in the classrooms. Please choose a meeting time that you can attend and hear about your child's journey for the year ahead – there is no need to pre-register.

### **School Uniform**

Thank you to those parents/carers that have ensured their children return to school in full school uniform. Please note that I am expecting blazers in school every day, for every child, to ensure that our high standards are maintained. Can I also ask that bows of any size and other hair accessories are not brought into school. Hair ties or Alice bands should be red, black or white only, in line with the uniform policy.

### **Homework**

Over the summer holidays, I analysed the homework questionnaire that was sent out during Term 6. There were a variety of wide ranging views and some very strong opinions on the use of homework in school. With this in mind, we have made some adjustments to our homework policy which will become effective immediately. Firstly, we have removed compulsory homework for Years 1 and 2. Oak class will get similar tasks to Birch in terms of sharing activities and discussions at home. In addition to this, Years 1 and 2 will still have access to Spelling Shed and Mathletics, should they want to complete any activities at home. Reading books will still be sent home daily.

Homework and sharing activities will now be sent out on Monday and returned the following Monday; including spelling tests for Key Stage 2. This is in response to feedback on the questionnaire asking for more time to complete the tasks. In addition to this, spelling scores will be written into the

contact books by the children once they have completed the test, so that these can be shared at home.

There was a very strong feeling against the termly family projects, causing a lot of unhappiness and anxiety for you at home; with this in mind, termly family projects will no longer be sent out.

Previously, children who have not completed their homework have been kept in at break time to complete their missing tasks. Whilst I fully believe that there should be consequences for not completing activities, we have decided to take a more positive approach to this. Children that do complete their homework will be given additional raffle tickets for the weekly raffle.

Finally, in line with our work on independence this year, children in Beech and Maple will have the opportunity twice a term to set their own tasks on Mathematics and Spelling Shed, based on where they think they need to develop skills.

Whilst I appreciate that not everyone will be satisfied with the changes we have made, I believe that they are sensible changes following on from the questionnaire results.

### **Reading**

We have spent a long time over the summer holidays thinking about how we can develop our reading system so that children who are deemed 'free readers' are reading books that are appropriate for their age and ability. Starting from this week, children in Years 2-6 will be allocated a book band number that relates to their reading ages that were assessed in Term 6, last year. All the books in school have been given a number based on the word length, vocabulary and comprehension and children will be assessed regularly to ensure that they are reading at the correct level. This is not to say that children should not be reading other books or materials, just in school we will be expecting them to read a book at the band they have been assessed against.

### **Social Media**

As ever, I will be Tweeting and posting on Facebook with messages, photos and announcements. If consent for your child's photography to be used has changed, please let us know. You can find us on Twitter by searching for @StPaulsSwanley, you do not need to sign up to see our postings, and on Facebook by searching for our closed group St. Paul's Church of England Primary School.

Finally, one of our priorities for the year is around your children becoming independent learners and thinkers. This involves them becoming more responsible for their actions and ensuring that they have everything they need in school, every day. Can I ask that you help us with this by giving your child more responsibility for carrying their things in and out of school, for remembering their PE and Forest School kit and handing in money or letters to their teachers. As adults, I think we are often too eager to do everything for our children in case it goes wrong, myself included, and we forget that if we don't give them the opportunity for independence, then they will never be independent.

This is an exciting and busy year for the school and I look forward to seeing our progress throughout the next twelve months. As ever, if you have any questions, comments or queries please come and see me, my door is always open and if I don't know about something, I can't help to resolve it!

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, enclosed in a hand-drawn oval. The signature is stylized and appears to be 'B Hulme'. A long, thin horizontal line extends from the right side of the oval across the page.

Ben Hulme  
Headteacher