



# Denmead Junior School

Building success, inspiring curiosity

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Friday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

## Weekly news update

Well, the weather has finally turned on us but it hasn't dampened our spirits here at Denmead Junior School. We've all enjoyed another full week of learning despite the sometimes challenging circumstances.

Under current Covid restrictions, we're unable to undertake any school visits this term but this hasn't stopped us from travelling to a huge array of far flung places. Classes have been to the Galapagos Islands, to the Austrian mountains, to a Congolese village, to the foothills of Nepal and even witnessed the Moon landing back in 1969! Using Google Expeditions and our iPads, we've enabled children to experience all these wonderful places and more through the wonders of modern technology.

This week, we've enjoyed our first PRIDE and Sharing assemblies with children across the school receiving their certificates in classes. This week focussed on Mr Goodens' Austria class in Year3/4, who were a fantastic audience and in many cases, participants. We do film these assemblies so that the other classes can watch them safely in their own class. We are considering, with your permission, to make these assemblies available on our website or on our secure learning platform, Seesaw, but we will only do this with everyone's full and clear permission, which we don't have currently. We will shortly be canvassing your views on this to see whether this is still the case because with your inability to come into school this, like Google Expeditions, is your window into school.

It's been lovely to speak a number of Year 3 parents out on the playground before and after school, especially hearing how well their children have settled in. I am also aware that we've not had the formal opportunity to communicate with you all in a face-to-face way. As a way of addressing this, you will now see on our website under 'Our Learning' > 'Welcome to Lower School', our Year 3/4 Information Presentation, which should hopefully answer any remaining questions you may have. Please, if it doesn't, do contact us at school and we will endeavour to answer your question/s.

In my newsletter last week, I spoke about our response to a future lockdown or for when your child is off school with a Covid related absence but might be well in themselves to continue learning at home. Once again, we have uploaded this document onto the website, under 'Our Learning' > 'Home Learning'. This should give you a very clear indication of how you can support your child during this period of absence and what we as a school will do to help support you and your child. The aim of our approach is to provide better, more frequent communication for all, to provide a range of learning experiences depending on each family's capacity and for the provision to be fully inclusive, with online and hard copy packs being made available upon request.

Mr Goodens will be writing to you soon with a very clear guide as to how to access all the online resources and communications that are referenced in the Parent's Guide, along with the terms of use agreement.

We're in the process of discussing how Parents' Evenings may work this term, and although we will definitely come up with a solution, it will not be a face-to-face meeting in school, which I am sure you will appreciate. I hope to be able to communicate this to you very soon.

Your feedback and questions are hugely beneficial to us in refining either our practice or communication (and often both!) and I thank you that you continue to direct concerns straight to school. We are still awaiting the delivery of the lunchbox trollies, despite us ordering the trollies on the day that the issue was brought to my attention. A parent asked me about what her child could wear on PE days when they would normally come to school in shorts. I have decided that girls can



wear either dark, plain leggings under their shorts or dark, plain track suit bottoms. And boys can also wear the dark, plain track suit option on cold or inclement days, when they have PE.

Bikability has gone very well for Year 6 this week and the weather hasn't been too much of a hindrance. This has led to a number of parents asking about the rules regarding riding a bike to school. My understanding is, and this has been the same in all the school I have led, is that those with the Bikability certificate are able to cycle to school independently and use the school's provision for storing bikes on site, as long as they continue to ride safely and with a cycle helmet.

Similarly, children not in the receipt of a Bikability certificate are allowed to cycle to school and store their bike on site, if they are accompanied by an adult, are able to ride safely and wear a cycle helmet. We definitely want to promote the use of getting to school without using the car, and cycling is a brilliant way of getting healthy exercise, but our duty of care is ensuring that this is done as safely as possible.

We continue as a school to be focussing on Reading in all its various forms. Mr Stapleton is working on his Reading Action Plan which details some very exciting ways in which we can encourage children to both read more and with greater enjoyment. One of the key ways we are going to use to measure how successful we are being, is through the monitoring of the Reading Records. We will be doing this formally on Mondays, so although we would expect for the Reading Record to be going back and forth from home to school on a daily basis, **they must be in school on a Monday** for us to be able to collect this important data.

We would ask that home reading entries be completed on the left hand side of each double page in the Reading Record. Each double page will represent one week's worth of reading, with the 7 rows on the left hand side of the page being each day starting from Monday through to Sunday. Our expectation is that children should be reading at least 5 x (days) a week (not 5x on one day – although I would not discourage that!). We would ask that, as a minimum, you sign the Reading Record at least once, at the end of the week, to confirm that your child has read that week. Below is taken from the Reading Agency website:

*"Proven power of reading*

*Reading for pleasure is more important for children's cognitive development than their parents' level of education and is a more powerful factor in life achievement than socio-economic background.*

*16-year-olds who choose to read books for pleasure outside of school are more likely to secure managerial or professional jobs in later life.*

*Having books in the home is associated with both reading enjoyment and confidence. Of children who report having fewer than 10 books in their homes, 42% say they do not like reading and only 32% say they are 'very confident' readers. For children who report having over 200 books at home, only 12% say they do not like reading and 73% consider themselves 'very confident' readers.*

*Children who read books often at age 10 and more than once a week at age 16 gain higher results in maths, vocabulary and spelling tests at age 16 than those who read less regularly."*

There is other similar research available, but all of it clearly refers to the benefits of Reading and of reading regularly.

Some advance notice, on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October, we will be marking #HelloYellow, which promotes the importance of mental health and well-being in young people. One of our parents brought this to our attention and I believe it is the first time Denmead will be joining in. More details will follow in a separate communication next week, however we will be engaging in a variety of wellbeing activities that day and we will invite the children to wear something yellow in addition to their school uniform (no hair dye please).

Talking of wellbeing, lunchtimes are an important part of many, if not all, children's sense of well-being whilst at school. Our staff all do our best to make sure this time is happy and productive but from time-to-time issues do occur. We are in the process of reminding all children that whilst they may wish to resolve issues for themselves, that adults are always on-hand to help and support to ensure that the resolution both occurs and occurs functionally. We are impressing on the children that they must try and resolve issues before the end of the lunchtime period and to involve the adults during the lunchtime period and not necessarily after, when the focus should be on the afternoon learning.



Also on the week of the 5<sup>th</sup> October, we will be celebrating Harvest Festival. Donations will be gratefully received and we will organise this in the same way as if your child has forgotten something that day, by asking you to place your donations in boxes which we will position by the two playground entrances at drop off for ease.

And finally, as a reminder, can I ask that if your child is absent for longer than one day, that you inform us on each day of absence.

I hope you are finding these lengthy missives from me helpful and that the information we are able to provide on the school website equally so. Please do let me know how we are doing as I do want to be getting it right for you and your child.

Have a great weekend.

*A. Clarke.*

**Mr Andy Clarke**  
**Head Teacher**

### Updates this week:

**Uniform:** all outstanding uniform orders have now been delivered to classes.

**Library books:** please keep searching for library books at home; we have had over 100 returned but this leaves 200 still missing.

**Forgotten items:** if you pop in to drop off a forgotten water bottle, lunch bag etc, please do ensure you have the full name and class clearly labelled on it so we can return to the rightful owner.

### Key information sent out this week:

- Outdoor Activity Sharing Invitation
- Flu vaccine programme and date information

### Key dates:

**Monday 28<sup>th</sup> September** – revised school photo day

**Monday 5<sup>th</sup> October** – Walk to school week & Harvest Festival *(details to follow)*

**Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October** – #HelloYellow day *(more details to follow)*

**Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> October** – INSET DAY followed by half term

**Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> November** – First day back & FLU immunisation day

