



Denmead Junior School

Building success, inspiring curiosity

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Friday 27th November 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Weekly Newsletter from the Head Teacher

First of all, a big welcome back to Monaco class. It is lovely to have you back and from the looks on the 'mask wearing faces', many of your parents are delighted that they are back also!

I know these are difficult times but I can reassure you, that whilst your children are in school, not only are they safe (and part of that is that they behave safely), but they also **feel** safe and I can tell this from the relative sense of normality that there is around the school. Playtimes are as happy as usual, children in class are eagerly enjoying their learning and engaging in an enthusiastic manner. Below is a link that may address some of your concerns and maybe those of your children too.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tU0J8k0JO0E&list=PLhD9100QRr6YG5r8kPSGtBOMntkTfZqR1&ab_channel=HealthierTogether

I really enjoy being out on the playground at the start and the end of the day, which allows us the opportunity to chat with you about any worries or concerns that you may have. Sharing your concerns with me at the earliest opportunity allows any issues to be 'nipped in the bud' and for your sense of anxiety to be allayed, knowing that matters will be acted on in a sensitive and active way.

I had a recent conversation with a parent about the notion of 'challenge' in children's learning. I think it is absolutely central to how we present learning to our children, that they experience a level of challenge, appropriate to their ability and capacity to accept that challenge. I think challenge should be in the daily diet of ALL children and that pitching that challenge is not only based on their ability but also their resilience. Some of the most resilient learners are often those who find learning difficult and so for whom, everyday can seem challenging. Historically, those more-able children can sometimes be the least resilient, as they have often found learning 'easy' and have experienced high degrees of success and so on the occasion where they are taken out their comfort zone they are reluctant to venture far as they are 'scared' of getting things wrong.

At Denmead Junior School, there is an inherent level of challenge in all of the learning we present. We want all our children to gain a sense of 'mastery' over what they are learning. We want them to positively embrace challenge, failure and uncertainty as a necessary part of real learning and deep understanding. I think however, sometimes the children are not always aware in the ways in which we are challenging them. It doesn't always come with a giant label - it's not always in the form of larger numbers or longer spellings.

I remember, many years ago, in my first class as a fresh-faced NQT, there was a child named Stephanie Brist (not her real name, despite the fact that she is now in her late thirties!) I 'challenged' her with even more difficult spellings, so much so, that I remember giving her the spelling 'floccinaucinihilipilification'. She of course learnt it, but I couldn't say, hand-on-heart, that I had truly 'challenged' her. Was she a better speller? Did she have a deeper understanding of how our language system works, the various rules and patterns that underpin our amazing but difficult language? Did she have a better appreciation of the derivation of our language and various words?

Did you know for instance, that 'bungalow' and 'pyjama' are Indian words? That our alphabet used to only have 23 'letters' based on the Anglo-Saxon way of speaking? It was the Romans who added the 3 other letters to help translate Latin more successfully into the Anglo-Saxon language. The Old English alphabet had some serious weaknesses that are still inherent today: Some letters have more than one sound, and some sounds are shown by more than one letter; take 'photograph' for example, or 'circus' and 'cut' both beginning with the same letter but one having a soft 'c' and the other a hard 'c'. I



think I would've been better to have taught Stephanie about this, than making her learn to spell a 29 letter word correctly. Stephanie today, may disagree – it was an impressive feat! Or should I say 'feet'... or 'pheat' even?!?

Rest assured, we have been discussing the notion of challenge as a staff and of how we can make it more explicit so the children know more clearly when they are being challenged. Please let us know how we are getting on in this area.

Have a great weekend – I think, in the Clarke household, we may very well be putting the Christmas tree up!

A. Clarke.

Mr Andy Clarke
Head Teacher



CHRISTMAS @ D.J.S.



With changes to the national restrictions announced this week, many of us will be thinking ahead to Christmas so I thought it timely to share with you how things will look here at DJS this year. As you will appreciate, we are unable to offer some of the staples of the festive period like the PTA fayre and shopping day, choir events etc. However, I strongly believe that we can and should, still safely provide opportunities to sprinkle a little Christmas cheer across the school. We are very fortunate that our PTA volunteers have already been preparing things behind the scenes, so please look for the letter from them in the coming days. In the meantime, I hope that you will find this guide useful (we will send reminder emails, don't worry).

DATE	ACTIVITY	COMMENTS
From 1 st December - closing date: Monday 14th	Christmas cards – posting in school	This deadline allows a quarantine period before distributing. Please ensure each child's full name and class is clearly labelled on the envelope.
<i>See letter from the PTA to follow</i>	Christmas decoration competition	PTA fundraising activity – open to all children. The PTA are also sourcing a tree for the school to display entries.
	Chocolate selection box	Donated by the PTA (<i>alternatives will be offered to allow for some allergies, but you will be able to opt out if you wish</i>).
	Christmas craft pack	The PTA have kindly offered to provide each class with resources to help decorate their room.
Tuesday 15th & Wednesday 16th	Lower school virtual workshop	To give a festive boost to lower school's English and drama learning, each class bubble will take part in a virtual workshop to explore the classic tale 'A Christmas Carol'.
Thursday 17th	Christmas lunch & Christmas Jumper Day	Save the Children's fundraising event to coincide with our Christmas Lunch. Optional £1 donation on SCOPAY. The PTA are kindly donating Christmas crackers for lunch.
Friday 18th	House cup winner & Last day of term	The winners will be shared on Thursday 17 th December by email for non-uniform on the last day of term. Staggered finish times: Yr6 1.30pm, Y5 1.35pm Austria/Estonia/Ireland - 1.40pm Andorra/Malta/Monaco - 1.45pm

One final thing I would like to address is **gifts for staff**. This is never an expectation from any of us and even more so this year, given the impact of Covid on many of our families. I do however, recognise that some of you will appreciate knowing the school's position on this, which is simply that if you do still wish to bring in a small gift for staff, this should be taken in to class directly by your child during the last week of term for the teacher to stored safely.

Additional key dates:

- **Monday 7th December** – home learning deadline for the second piece for upper and lower school.
- **Monday 4th January 2021** – INSET day @ DJS – *children expected back in on Tuesday 5th January 2021*

