



Another busy half term at South Gosforth First School has come to an end. Whilst you are reading this newsletter, I hope that all of the children and families in our school community are having a wonderful and restful break and recharging their batteries for another exciting half term ahead.

It is crazy to think that we are half way through the academic year now, but we still have so many brilliant things to come!

As always, if you would like to find out any more information about anything in this newsletter, please feel free to pop in and see myself, Mrs Whitehouse or any member of staff, who will be happy to discuss things in more detail.

Mr Adams

Reading & Phonics

Meetings

New guidance has recently been released from the Department of Education linked to the teaching of Reading and Phonics in school. The systematic teaching of Early Reading and Phonics is also a big focus in the new Ofsted framework which was put in place at the beginning of this academic year.

I am aware that we released a letter towards the end of the Autumn term which highlighted some of these key changes and how we were going to address these in school. Due to the fact that some of these changes are quite different from how many schools (including SGFS) used to approach the teaching of Reading and Phonics, we felt that it was important to hold meetings for parents and carers after the half term to talk through what these changes look like and the rationale behind this new approach. Dates for these meetings will

be shared very soon after the half term break.



Digital Leaders

Mrs Logan is in the process of appointing 'Digital Leaders' in school. These Key Stage 2 pupils will have the opportunity to apply their ICT and computing skills in a range of different ways and help other children from all across school to use technology effectively and safely. It is a really super project for all involved.

'Together Time' & School

Council

Our weekly 'Together Time' slots are now well underway and every class in school now accesses a weekly slot to discuss a range of different 'BIG Questions' which are designed to help strengthen pupils' social and emotional wellbeing. School council have also now met a few times with Mr Adams and they have lots of great ideas for how to improve provision in school. Watch this space with further updates on all of their views.

A Restorative Approach to

Positive Behaviour



As I am sure you will all remember, a new approach to managing behaviour in school was introduced in Autumn term linked to 'traffic lights'. Mr Adams has worked closely with senior leaders and staff in school and made some refinements to this policy which we felt was more representative of our school ethos. The 'traffic lights' and defined behaviours which the children clearly understand will still be in place, but the children's names will be removed from the wall and replaced with restorative strategies which the children can use to get back to being 'ready' and 'safe' to learn. We believe that this amendment is more supportive and helpful for our children, whilst still being very clear and consistent for them to understand. This will be on the website very soon after half term.

After School Sports Clubs

As I mentioned in my last newsletter, there will be some changes to the times of after school clubs after Easter. Lee Sterry will still be leading the same clubs as he was previously, but some of these will now be on a morning. Grass Roots will now be delivering after school clubs on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Sign up sheets for these clubs will be available soon after the half term break—I will email parents and carers when these are available.





Computing

The children in Year 2 and Year 3 have had a wonderful time last half term working with 'GEM Education' using their coding skills to program 'Microbits' and 'Crumbles'.

These are really nifty little pieces of kit which link up to the computers. The children then have to give the machines clear computational instructions in order to do various tasks. Some of the children even managed to 'debug' the codes and spot the errors! I am sure that the children could teach me a thing or two about all things 'coding'.



Attendance & Punctuality

I am so pleased to report that after the end of last half term before Christmas, when there were so many awful illnesses and bugs going around, our overall school attendance percentage has gone back up to 98.47% from 97%. Obviously, we would never expect children to come in to school if they were really unwell, but it is really important to emphasise how important excellent attendance and punctuality is for pupils in school. Even just missing the odd day here and there or being 5 or 10 minutes late regularly can really have a detrimental effect on pupils' progress, so I am sure that the families of SGFS will continue to work alongside us, as you always have, to ensure that we keep these attendance and punctuality figures as high as we possibly can for our children.



Safeguarding—Cars on

Alnmouth Drive

May I please remind parents and carers to be safe when driving up Alnmouth Drive at drop off and pick up times. I know that it can be difficult, but if families who live close by could consider walking or biking to school, it really would be a fantastic help and make these tricky times of day so much safer for our children. I have had a couple of meetings with our local Cabinet Member for Transport and Air Quality to try and come up with a plan for how we can improve this situation in the future. I will keep families updated on this.

New School Website

We are going to be updating our school website over the coming half term and upgrading to a new and more user-friendly design. If any of our pupils, parents or carers have any ideas for things which they would like to see on our website or have any thoughts for how to make it easier to navigate, please get in touch with Mr Adams.

Reading Buddies

I would like to say a huge thank you to the kind volunteers who come in to school as 'Reading Buddies' to help our children with their reading. In an already very full curriculum and packed out teaching day, it really is an invaluable help to us and really benefits so many of our children. Mrs Burnett is looking for one more volunteer to come in and be a reading buddy, so if you could spare some time to come and help, please get in touch with either Mrs Burnett or Mr Adams.

Newcastle University & Gosforth Central Middle School

You may have seen on Twitter that some of our children in Key Stage 2 have been doing some work with some very keen students from Newcastle University linked to Science. We are continuing this after half term with some Year 8 pupils from Gosforth Central Middle School who are coming to deliver a session on Electricity. It is always lots of fun for the children to work with young people in the city to really help them develop their own aspirations and interests.

A Big THANK YOU!

I would like to say a huge thank you to all of the parents who have come along to our coffee mornings and who brought their children along to Film Night. We raised lots of money to buy books and other resources in school. An extra special thank you must go to Mr Davies (Otto, Fleur and Claude's Dad) who gave up his own time to come and paint our new sensory room—this really was so kind and everyone in school is so grateful for your help.