
NORTHUMBERLAND County Council

The Federation of Longhorsley St Helen's and Whalton Church of England Aided Schools

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Dear Parents

Just before we enter the festive season in its entirety, here are some staffing updates and a summary of what we have been focusing on to maximise your children's learning and progress in key curriculum areas across the Federation this term.

Staffing

Mrs Mayer had a really lovely send off on Friday at Longhorsley. Thank you to all of those who brought in gifts of appreciation; 17 years is such a long time and we wish Mrs Mayer a wonderful early retirement - Christmas shopping was on the list for this week I'm sure!

At the same time, a big welcome to Mrs Adcock, who we have appointed as our new EYFS Teaching Assistant and Cover Supervisor, who brings with her many years of teaching experience to our Federation and Longhorsley; I am sure you will make her feel welcome.

Mr Gunn is now officially our Lunchtime Supervisor at Longhorsley and huge thanks to the Playgroup for letting us 'borrow him' in the interim!

At Whalton, we have two Northumbria University teaching students; Miss Gilbert in Class 2 and Miss Kaur in Class 3, both who have impressed us with their professionalism and enthusiasm.



Read, Write, Inclusive (RWI) - our Phonics Programme

Back in 2016, we invested heavily in this phonics programme with both resources and staff training and have continued to buy into development days and training to keep all staff updated in the teaching of phonics. To date, it has been a huge success in enabling our children to become even quicker at recognising their sounds to decode words, moving quickly to blend sounds to make words



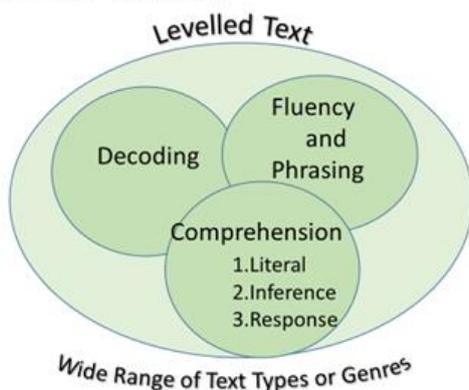
to then read and write fluently and confidently, forming their letters correctly. Now, due to the generosity of parents and fundraising by the PTA across both schools, we have been able to update our phonics programme to buy the 'book bag books' and sound blending books that go hand in hand with this programme. Over the next few weeks, parents of children in EYFS and KS1 especially,

will be seeing these beautiful new books coming home to support your children's decoding even more accurately so that they can fully enjoy reading their books whilst practising these vital skills. We hope that you enjoy spending time with your children using these new books and hope to get some feedback on how you see these helping your children to understand the sounds in words.

New Home School Readers

Back in 2016, we also invested heavily in a new home school reading programme at Longhorsley called PM; this is a reading programme, chosen at the time with the help of parents, to build the 'balanced reader' which has three components:

The Balanced Reader



To become a good reader, you need to have all three components.

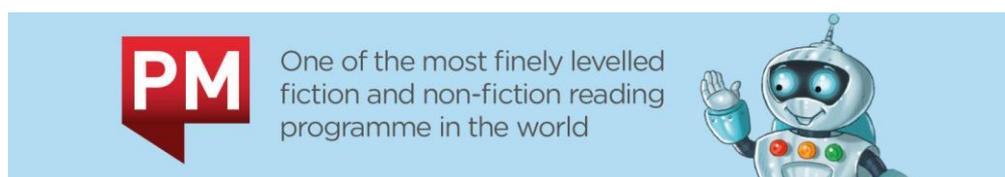
This core scheme is matched to reading ages to make sure everyone is supported and challenged and is broken down into 30 incremental levels spanning from Reception to Year 6.

The staff at Whalton cannot thank the PTA and Parish Council enough, because three years on, we

have finally been able to afford to buy the full range of PM books at Whalton to completely replenish our reading books, which we are currently sorting ready to come home to you with your children (huge thanks to Sian and Amy's mums for their stamping and unpacking efforts - so needed and so appreciated as there were hundreds of books!).

For those parents who would like to know more about reading at our schools and how to

support your child, we will be sending a flier out in the New Year with workshop dates to sign up to.



Mathematics

We are also really trying to improve our children's early mathematics skills and the ability to master mathematical skills across all year groups at both schools. Mr Reilly has already sent out an update on what every class has been learning about this term at Longhorsley and an update of Whalton will be sent out next term; with more information on how our children have found the new Numicon resources, which have also been bought using the PTA's funds.

Commando Joes

You may have heard your children talking about 'Commando Joes' or 'Dave'. Our Church School ethos, based on our Christian core values, has always been to be the very best that we can be, and that does not mean just academically but also about becoming a good person who can make informed choices and learn from mistakes. Our broad curriculum intent is to provide the building blocks, experiences and tools for our children, preparing them for the next stage of their education. Commando Joes helps with this - it is a programme all about character learning; the staff teach pupils the importance of resilience, empathy, self-awareness, positivity, excellence and communication through a series of missions and adventures. Dave has been working with all year groups at Whalton on a Friday morning and with Year 4 children in particular at Longhorsley this term, on Friday afternoons and after school. All children will have a chance to be a Commando Joe by the end of the year and staff at both schools have received training to embed it fully after that. In the Spring term, we will be inviting parents to join in with a session, so that you can see, hear and feel what your children are experiencing; it is a whole lot of fun!

At this point, I would like to take the opportunity to say a huge thank you again to the PTA and to everyone who supports their events to fundraise for both schools - the Christmas shopping night was a huge success at Longhorsley and the Christmas hampers for the raffle are looking good at Whalton - it really does make a difference to our children (as shown in the examples above) to support the school in getting the very best resources to ensure the very best teaching and outcomes for all of your children.

I look forward to seeing you all at our Christmas events, starting with our Christingle Services on Friday; 9am in the morning at Longhorsley and Whalton in the afternoon at 2pm.



Festive wishes

Mrs Brannen
Executive Headteacher