

DEBDEN PRIMARY ACADEMY NEWSLETTER

Friday 18th December, 2020

Dear Parents,

Festive greetings! We have finally reached the end of what has been a long and extremely eventful term here at Debden. A huge well done to all of the children, who have adapted really well to the unusual circumstances, and have impressed the teachers with their positivity and zest for learning.

I would also like to take the time to thank the wonderful staff team at Debden for all of their efforts this term. Education staff have been faced with an extremely challenging set of circumstances nationally – there are of course the ongoing pandemic restrictions, the associated funding issues, and of course trying to close the attainment gap for children affected by the school closures in spring and summer. At Debden, this has also been compounded by the fact that our pupil numbers have swelled by around 25% since the end of the last academic year! Having spoken to Heads from across the area, I know that there are a number of schools who are absolutely on their knees at the moment, but the teachers and supporting staff at Debden have been so resolute and positive throughout the whole term. Thank you to you all - I really couldn't wish for a better team of people to work alongside.



There have been a whole host of events going on across the school to celebrate Christmas over the past couple of weeks. We have of course had our Christmas dinner and Christmas jumper day, our Christmas Service, and our Reception/ KS1 Nativity performances. Mrs Dale has sent the link to the Nativity to all Reception and KS1 parents yesterday, whilst the link to the full Christmas service will accompany this newsletter for your viewing pleasure. There are also some photographs of the Nativity on the school website. A big thank you to Mrs Murrell, Reverend John and all of the teachers for organising this, and well done to the children for your fantastic singing, dancing, acting and reciting! We have also of course had

our 'Giving Tree' - thank you for all of your kind donations, which were gratefully received by the HomeStart charity. This will ensure that children who are less fortunate are able to receive a gift this Christmas.

Our FODs have also been exceptionally busy organising various successful events and activities for our school. One of the children's favourite days of the school year, the Elfridges Sale, was once again a phenomenal success (selling around 400 gifts in a school of just over 100 children!) The raffle was also exceptionally popular, raising a grand total of £877! Finally, the FODs provided the funding for all of the children to watch an online Christmas pantomime – they absolutely loved it! A huge thanks to the FODs for everything that they have done for the school throughout the Christmas period (and the entire calendar year), your support is hugely appreciated. A special thanks to Mrs Clare Samson, the FODs chairperson, who is continually



coming up with new and innovative ideas for helping our school. Finally, a thank you to all of the parents for your fervent support of these fundraising events.

The end of term always brings a hint of sadness in schools, as we are often bidding farewell to members of our community. At Debden, we have three members of staff that we have been saying goodbye to this week.

As you know, Mrs Murrell is leaving her post as a KS1 teacher at the school, after 17 years of working at Debden! Almost all of the children in the school have been taught by Mrs Murrell at some point during their time at Debden, and many have told me of their fond memories of being in her class. Mrs Murrell has always played an active part in school life, and this term has been no different as she has been the driving force behind our remote Harvest and Christmas services. Both services were excellent, and we would like to thank Mrs Murrell for her commitment to her RE leadership role right up until her leaving date! We would also like to wish her well for her new role in Haverhill.

Miss Everitt is also leaving her position as our Year 5 and 6 LSA. Miss Everitt is an extremely knowledgeable and skilled LSA, who has shown excellent classroom presence and understanding of the curriculum. I know that lots of the Kingfishers class, in particular, will really miss her. Miss Everitt is leaving to pursue her ambition to eventually become a teacher with older children – of which we have no doubt that she will be an unequivocal success!

Finally, Mrs Atkins will be leaving her role as a catering assistant. Mrs Atkins has always performed her role superbly and I know that Mrs Andrews in the kitchen will miss having her around. However, Mrs Atkins does have a daughter at the school and so I am sure that we will continue to see her friendly face for many years yet!

Of course, these departures mean that we have had some vacancies to fill, and we have made the necessary arrangements to ensure that our children continue to be served by talented, enthusiastic and dedicated staff members:

-As previously communicated with the KS1 parents, we are very pleased that the wonderful Ms Weetch will be working 4 days a week from the start of next term, with Mrs Alison Hutley (who had a successful trial experience with the Minnows Class) facilitating Minnows' learning on a Monday.

-Mrs Allyson Harrison will be our new catering assistant at the start of the next term, after a successful interview with Mrs Dyster and myself. Mrs Harrison's family is moving to the area in January, and we will also be welcoming two of her children to our Year 3 and Year 6 classes.

-We are also in the final administrative stages of recruitment for our LSA role, and will hopefully be in a position to update you on this in the very near future.

In January, we are excited to be taking part in two special events – Wellbeing Week and Red January. You will recall that Wellbeing Week, organised by Ms Weetch, was a fantastic success last year, and involved the children thinking about mindfulness, learning new skills, being active, getting creative and building relationships. We are looking to run similar (COVID-compliant) events this time around, with the week running from Monday 11th – Friday 15th January. Watch this space.

Alongside this we are going to kick start 2021 in a positive way and get involved in RED January. This initiative was set up five years ago by a lady called Hannah Beecham who had witnessed the transformative effect that regular exercise had on people struggling with their mental health. You can read more about it here <https://redtogether.co.uk/>.

RED January's motto is 'Get active every day, to beat the blues away' and we want to do exactly that in school. We would also love you to get involved at home as a family which will help to keep your child/children motivated and in turn, make you feel great! Your children will be bringing home a calendar so that you can log what you have done each day and we have made it nice and big so that everyone can join in. You can do absolutely anything you like to be active each day and it does not have to involve covering long distances or taking up too much time. More ideas will follow in the New Year.

This year, RED January's official charity partner is Sport in Mind, the mental health charity that uses sport to empower and improve people's lives. At some point in January, we will be holding a special event in school to raise some funds for this great cause.

If any family has a new laptop for Christmas and has an old one which is still in good condition and would like to donate it to school, we would be very grateful! As our numbers are growing, we are short of laptops and as you know, budgets in schools are very tight. Please drop any laptops into the school office and our IT manager will wipe them and set them up for school use. Many thanks.

I hope that you all have a lovely break over the Christmas period, and that the children thoroughly enjoy the time at home with their families. There is a teacher inset day at the start of term, so we look forward to welcoming the children back to school on Wednesday 6th January. All that is left is for me to wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Kind Regards

Mr Hawley