

Dear Parents,

Welcome back, I hope you all had a restful and relaxing holiday, with just the right amount of fun and excitement!

It is lovely to see the children return with such enthusiasm and clearly ready to fully participate in the “Balcombe experience”. As always, the staff have been busy planning and preparing for this term and have lots of stimulating and engaging learning activities up their sleeves for the weeks ahead. You will be hearing from the class teachers very soon with more detail about topics and events planned.

This year, as a whole school, we will continue to drive forward to be the best we can be, specifically focusing on the following 4 key areas:

- Maths
 - Continuing the work started last year to develop better reasoning and problem solving skills.
- English
 - Continue to embed children’s use of redrafting and editing skills in their writing.
 - Ensure that all children are confident and competent readers by the end of year 6.
- Spiritual Development
 - Continue to identify opportunities for children to reflect and consider their own actions and those of others, the world around them and those “bigger” questions.
- Computing
 - For children to have the skills and knowledge necessary to achieve at the expected standard in IT.

Obviously in order to bring about further improvement in these areas, we will have to allocate both time and funding. You are aware, I’m sure, that funding is extremely tight and there will be (no doubt) occasions when we ask for your help in this area. For the moment though, you will be relieved to know that the help we are asking for now, requires no additional money.

Up until now, we have had a fairly “flexible” attitude towards children doing homework. We know it is always somewhat of a thorny issue – some children and parents love it, some hate it. With this in mind we have encouraged completion of homework, rewarding those who do it with team points and public acclaim, but have accepted that for various reasons, some children/families do not participate fully. Last year, we introduced our “Reading Raffle” homework, (a reminder about this will be included in the meet the teacher sessions) to sit alongside our expectation that every child reads every night. Some of you do ensure this happens, but there are many children in school who do not read enough at home. Research suggests (and our own end of year data last year strongly supported this research) that children who do not read with an adult daily find it much more difficult to develop those higher reading skills. Even older junior children should be sharing text with adults regularly, to discuss themes, preference and inference and ensure a deeper understanding.

Some of our children last year did not meet age related expectations in Reading, of those who did not, the VAST MAJORITY were children who did not have opportunities to share books daily at home.

Those who made most progress, came from families where reading together was a natural part of their daily routine. I appreciate it is sometimes difficult to fit everything in as our lives are so busy these days, but I urge you make this a priority. Reading is the key to so many areas within education and, alongside learning to swim, it is the most important thing we can teach our children. Obviously we do our very best to do this in school, but for some children additional 1:1 practise at home is needed – please help us to help your children by finding time to ensure they share books with you daily or regularly so they can become more confident readers.

Parent support at home played an important part in maths progress last year too. There was a definite correlation between a child’s progress and the amount of support given at home, particularly where a child was finding mastering new concepts, skills and ideas a little challenging.

Teachers will be communicating with you again shortly about homework and the expectation is that all children will complete it. Thank you for your support in the past and please keep supporting your children at home.

A few quick reminders –

- Contact the office by the end of this week to confirm club places.
- Ensure children are wearing the correct uniform – check our website and note that June’s newsletter clarifies acceptable footwear.
- Children should arrive at school (on the playground) between 8:40am and 8:50am, ready for an 8:55am start.
- Infants should bring their belongings in a school book bag and drawstring type PE bag. Juniors may bring a SMALL rucksack if necessary.
- Teachers are available on the playground each morning for quick messages. Please ring the school office to make an appointment to discuss any issues/problems in more detail.
- For a short time, we will still be collecting trainers/ shoes for the Family Support Charity (box in entrance hall).
- We are also gratefully accepting any good quality games etc., for wet playtimes, **especially Lego.**
- Upcoming dates for your diary for the current term:-

Wednesday 6 th September	2.30-3.00pm - LAKE CLASS (Only Year 1) Meet the Teacher
	3.30-4.00pm - MILL CLASS Meet the Teacher
Thursday 7 th September	3.30-4.00pm - COOMBE CLASS Meet the Teacher
Friday 8 th September	3.30-4.00pm - SPRING CLASS Meet the Teacher
Monday 11 th September	ALL CLUBS START (except Gym & Handball)
Wednesday 13 th September	BOWLES RESIDENTIAL TRIP
	1.30-3.00pm - Forest School – Parent Intro Session
Thursday 14 th September	SWIMMING STARTS (Year 2)
	3.30-4.00pm - FOREST CLASS Meet the Teacher
Wednesday 27 th September	8.30am + - School Photos (Individual)
Tuesday 3 rd October	9.45am – HARVEST SERVICE @ ST MARY’S

Here’s to a successful new school year!

Wendy Millbanks