



# 'Be Smart... Be the best that you can be...'



**St Martin and St Mary Church of England Primary School Newsletter No.1 – Monday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

**Welcome Back** – It feels like a long time since term began but I hope all of you managed to find some time to rest, relax and have fun over the summer break. We had a lot of wet weather but I think I remember some sunshine too! We have enjoyed a calm and positive start to the school year despite all the changes that our teachers are having to implement.



This term, we are thinking about our School Vision and our value of **Friendship** - how we all learn together and play together and get along so that we can all achieve the very best and also cope with the challenges of life. This year our school will, inevitably, face some further challenges. However, I know that we will work together to support each other and make the very best of every situation.



**Acceptable Use Agreement** – This year we are asking families to complete our Online Safety Acceptable Use Agreement online. This is an important agreement and a good opportunity for you to talk with your children about how to stay safe online and in the digital world.

We have lots of parents and families who contact us with issues and concerns around 'cyber bullying', 'screen addiction' and 'exposure to inappropriate content'. In school children do not tend to face these problems as we carefully plan, monitor and oversee the children's use of screens and what they can access. The problems tend to occur at home. Our AUAs are full of good advice that you could implement at home to keep your children safe and happy. We also have further information and resources on our school website, and, as you know, our school subscribes to National Online Safety, a helpful resource that all parents can access for free; <https://www.windermere.cumbria.sch.uk/online-safety/>

Please can you click on the relevant link below and discuss the agreement with your child. When you click 'submit', we will know that you have shared and understand this agreement. Many thanks.

Link for children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2; [Reception, Year 1 and Year 2](#)

Link for children in Year 3, 4, 5 and 6; [Year, 3, 4, 5 and 6](#)

**PTA 14<sup>th</sup> October** – After school, on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October, we'll have our first PTA meeting of the year. All parents are very welcome to attend. We will talk about how the PTA have already helped your children, plans for the year ahead and families will be able to offer their support. I look forward to seeing you there.



**Attendance** – Well done to all of those children who have started to collect their 'raffle tickets' by being in school each and every day. I understand how tricky this can be. Remember, for each week of 100% attendance your child will have an entry into our school attendance lottery. Every week of 100% attendance is an extra ticket and an increased chance of winning a prize.

Sadly, some of our families are now facing the prospect of being fined for missing days of school for unauthorised absence. We cannot authorise any holiday in term time. If a child is absent for 5 days (10 sessions) in any 10 week period their parents will have to pay a fine of £80 per child per adult with parental responsibility. This could be very challenging for families where parents have split up and settled with new partners; four adults could, legally speaking, have parental responsibility for one child.

Some children have missed school for holidays and away days and have been instructed by their parents to lie about the reason for absence. This is awkward for children and, as you can imagine, has caused some embarrassment in school. Children are desperate to tell their friends about their experiences. We work hard to encourage children to tell the truth, 'honesty' is one of our values, so it is quite uncomfortable for teachers in school to know that parents are teaching their children otherwise.



**Swimming Pool** – thank you to everyone who managed to attend our meeting about the swimming pool on Thursday last week. We now have a dedicated team of people who will work together to try and secure the future of the pool. They will co-ordinate fundraising, oversee community use and develop a long-term plan for the pool to ensure it is viable and swimming can continue on this site. We will provide further updates as the situation develops.

**Parents' Evenings** – in the week beginning the 21<sup>st</sup> October, we will have our first Parents' Evening of the year. This will run over 3 evenings to try to ensure all parents can attend. Some parents commented, in our School Questionnaire last year that they didn't receive information about how their children were progressing at school. Parents' Evening is a perfect time to get this feedback and to learn about how your child has settled into their new year group or class and how their learning is progressing. Please make a point of attending if you can. If you can't attend please try to make an alternative appointment to speak with your child's class teacher at another time.

### **Admissions – change to PAN Sept 2026**

Last week, our Governors agreed to consult on a proposal to reduce our PAN (Published Admissions Number) to 30 for September 2026, it is currently 60.

This is for the following reasons;

- Local population numbers indicate that the number of school aged children in Windermere and Bowness (and all of the central Lakes) will continue to decline over the next 5 years (and almost certainly beyond) due to a lack of affordable housing. Currently there are 320 empty school places across our 7 local schools, this is set to increase to 460 over 4 years.
- Currently we have 117 empty places in school. This will increase over time as our larger year groups move on and our smaller classes move through. This is financially unsustainable.
- This year, we have 31 children in Reception. As a result of Infant class size rules, 31 children need 2 teachers – this is very expensive and unsustainable long term.
- By reducing our PAN in Sept 2026, we can apply our Admissions Policy and have 1 full and affordable class in Reception. Over a 7-year period, we will become a prosperous 1-form entry school.
- The Governors are also exploring many other avenues to reduce spending to protect the future of the school.

We will open a 6 week consultation period where you and all staff, the community and other stakeholders can comment on, object or contribute to this proposal. This consultation will begin on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> October. School will send information to all families shortly about how you can contribute your comments.

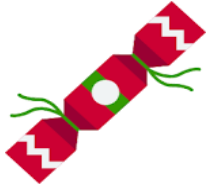
### **Staffing changes**

As you may know, Emily Lang will be going on maternity leave in October. Lauren Aspinwall, who already takes the class on a Friday, will be covering Emily's maternity leave on a full-time basis until her return in the summer term. I am sure you will all join me in wishing Emily and her family well.

### **Polite reminders**

Please can I remind all parents and carers not to drop off and/or collect your child from the school drive. Instead, please park on the road and walk up the footpath. Can I also remind you not to use the disabled bay opposite the school office unless you are a blue badge holder. We have a number of families that need to use this space and it needs to be kept clear for those that genuinely need it.

## Christmas



It's that time of year again where we are starting to think about Christmas. We will be having our school Christmas lunch in December (date tbc) and would like to give each child a Christmas cracker to go with their meal. The children love them and it really helps to make it special. If anyone is able to donate a box of crackers, it would be very much appreciated. Please take any donations to the school office.

### **Advance notice of Christmas performances and KS2 Christmas Church Service**

The Reception and KS1 Christmas Nativity performances will be taking place Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December at 9.30am. These are ticketed events and further details will be sent out nearer the time on how you can purchase tickets.

Our KS2 children will be having their Christmas church service on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> December at 1.30pm at St Mary's Church. Parents are welcome to join us.

### **Important Diary Dates - All dates are in the school calendar on our website for easy reference**

- Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> to Friday 4<sup>th</sup> October – Year 6 Residential to Patterdale Hall
- Monday 21<sup>st</sup> to Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October – Parents' Evenings
- Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October at 9.30am – Reception & KS1 (Year 1 & 2) Harvest Festival in the upstairs hall
- Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> October at 1.30pm – KS2 (Year 3 to Year 6) Harvest Festival at St Martin's Church
- Monday 28<sup>th</sup> October to Friday 1<sup>st</sup> November – Half Term
- Monday 4<sup>th</sup> to Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> November – Year 5 Residential to Patterdale Hall
- Friday 16<sup>th</sup> November – 10.00am to 12noon – Pre School & Nursery Open morning

**Friendship   Love   Forgiveness   Trust   Honesty   Faith**