



William Gilbert Endowed

(Church of England) *Voluntary Aided*

Primary School

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Headteacher: Mrs S J Whyld

NEWSLETTER

6th May 2009

No. 363

Dear Parents

At their meeting last night, the Governors approved the holiday dates for 2009/2010. These are:-

2009	Autumn term	
	Inset Day	Friday 4 th September & Monday 7 th September
		School re-opens Tuesday 8 th September
	Half term	School closes Friday 23 October
		School re-opens Monday 2 November
	Inset Day	Monday 21 st December
		School closes for Christmas on Friday 18 th December
2010	Spring Term	
		School re-opens Monday 4 January
	Half Term	School closes Friday 12 February
		School re-opens Monday 22 February
	Easter	School closes Thursday 1 April
	Summer Term	School re-opens Monday 19 April
	May Day Bank Holiday	School closed Monday 3 May
	Half Term	School closes Friday 28 May
		School re-opens Monday 7 June
		School closes for Summer Friday 23 July

2 further Inset Days to be taken during the academic year.

London Marathon

Paul Marval successfully completed the London Marathon in 3 hours and 8 minutes which was inside his target time – congratulations! He would like to thank all those who supported and sponsored him. He raised nearly £2,000 which is to be distributed to the following charities:- Downs Syndrome Derby, Rheumatoid Arthritis and World Vision.

Hockey News

On Friday 24th May a team of Year 3/4 players attended the Shobnall Hockey tournament. Although they didn't reach the play offs they played really well, conducted themselves in a sporting manner and enjoyed the experience. Well done to Adam Bashir, Alfie Barke, Ellie Carroll, Archie Pearson, Daniel Sanders, Lucy Goodacre, Bethany Johnston, James Antonov and William Abbott.

Last Friday 1st May it was the turn of Year 5/6 to attend Shobnall. The team got all the way to the final and then lost 2-0. Mrs Williamson reported a very happy team, travelling home with medals and the 'runners up' shield. Congratulations to Harry Barke, Jacob Bashir, Jamie Franklin, James Rogerson, Lucy Pearson, Joe Das, William Goodwin, Charlotte Pritchard and Emily Bullock.

Thank you to all parents who supported the event and in particular Mrs Bashir, Mrs Barke and Mrs Spilsbury for your coaching and organisational skills.

Hockey Club

Hockey Club will be for Year 5 this Thursday and this will be the last hockey session for this academic year. Thanks again to Mrs Bashir and Mrs Spilsbury for running the hockey club – they will be back in September.

Carnival Queen and Attendants

The draw for the Carnival Queen and her attendants took place on Monday 27th April at William Gilbert. The Carnival Queen is a young lady from The Meadows Primary School but I am delighted to inform you that her attendants are from William Gilbert. Lucy Pearson (Y6) and Amy Foster (Y5) will be the attendants this year. We hope you will enjoy your year of duties and events girls.

Leave of Absence/Holidays

In 2006 Derbyshire Local Authority introduced a system of fixed penalty notices as part of a nationwide drive to improve pupil attendance in schools. At that time each school had to decide on their philosophy for term time holidays and implement a system to decide whether or not to authorise a holiday. Ultimately it was, and still is, the Headteacher's prerogative as to whether a holiday was authorised or not.

Historically holidays were more than likely unauthorised during May for pupils in SATs years, (Year 2 and Year 6). However as the assessment of pupils has changed significantly over the years and as the school is held accountable by the LA for its performance and its % of absence, it is important to take into account the timing of a holiday request for every pupil.

Formal Statutory Assessments (SATs) for Year 2 no longer take place. The final level awarded is based purely on Teacher Assessment, but this judgement may be informed by the use of a SATs style test or task.

Only pupils in Year 6 still endure the stress of an intense week of tests. No doubt you will have recently read or heard in the media the unrest about this form of testing. Since September 2008 all pupils are assessed by the latest Government directive Assessing Pupil Progress (APP).

In order that pupils in all other year groups other than Year 6 do not feel the stress of test after test and so that we maximise teaching, learning and assessment time in the summer term, teachers will use the months of May and June to make their end of year judgements, ahead of senior leaders analysing both results and pupil progress made throughout the year during the month of July.

I therefore appeal to you not to take holidays in school time during May and June. Previous appeals for skiing holidays to be taken the week before February half term, if it is not possible to take the holiday during half term or at Easter, have been widely embraced and had a positive impact on learning and absence.

If you already have a holiday planned for May/June and have not already submitted your holiday request form please don't panic, but do so as soon as you can. If you are planning a holiday during school time (and before the 6 week vacation) please try and aim for July when our assessment will be completed.

We have adapted our holiday authorisation calculation chart to reflect the May/June assessment period, in an attempt to make more clear the reason for an unauthorisation. We will monitor the impact of this, during the Summer term, in order to make any necessary amendments for next academic year.

I appreciate that many of our parents take their children attendance at school very seriously and will do all they can to support their children's learning. However, may I remind you of the principles of Leave of Absence.

There are 190 school days in each year, which leaves 175 days to spend on family time, holidays etc. It is rare that primary children will get through a whole academic year without illness. A total of 10 days absence means a child has had 180 education days (95%), which is "Good" and gives them the best chance of success. However if 10 days holiday leave is applied for there is no time allowed for a child to be off school due to ill health.

For this reason parents are asked to think very carefully before requesting holiday leave and then, only make such requests in exceptional circumstances ie, when there is no viable alternative to the proposed arrangements. It would be expedient, wherever possible, to make the request and secure permission from school before confirming bookings and incurring costs.

The situation is then as follows:-

A Headteacher has discretion to grant up to ten days authorised absence for family holidays in a school year. However, each application is considered individually and must take into account factors such as: the reason why the holiday has to be taken in school time; the timing of the holiday within the academic year and the pupils' attendance.

In due course I expect to receive confirmation that the SATs for Year 6 pupils in their present form will be axed. The Qualifications & Curriculum Authority are currently piloting a new form of assessment called 'Making Good Progress'. We anticipate that there will be only 2 windows of opportunity to access a Single Level Test and this will mean we will have to readdress Leave of Absence once again to take the new initiative into account. I will inform you of any changes in the light of this new testing in due course. In the meantime please try to avoid holidays in term time but in particular in September (transition) and May and June (assessment).

If you wish for more clarification please do not hesitate to call in and see me. Thank you for your continued support.

Gardening Club

Mrs Hare is going to finish gardening club at the end of this half term so the last session will be Wednesday 20th May. Any produce still growing will be harvested at a convenient lunchtime with the club members. Mrs Hare is offering members of Year 6 the opportunity to experience netball during the last half term. If there is insufficient interest other classes may be invited.

Swine Flu

Derbyshire Local Authority have advised all schools that there are no confirmed cases of swine flu in Derbyshire and that as we have not reached the pandemic stage yet, the main message is to encourage good hygiene measures to prevent spread.

We will be talking to the children and encouraging them to be extra thorough when washing their hands etc.

If any pupil or immediate family member has recently travelled to North America and is showing symptoms of swine flu then they are advised to stay at home and contact their GP or NHS Direct on 0845 4647.

It is important that the school has up to date contact details for all parents. If you have changed any of your contact details recently please let us know as soon as possible.

If we do reach pandemic stage, the Government will advise Derbyshire County Council about whether or not schools should close and I will continue to update you accordingly.

Child Illness

We have a number of children across the school who are suffering from a red rash either on the torso or the face, which then turns itchy and dry. Other symptoms have been high temperature, severe stomach pains and sore throat. However, all these symptoms do not manifest in every child.

The symptoms seem to be spreading to more and more children. If your child does have any of these symptoms please see your GP and seek advice as to whether your child should refrain from school to avoid spreading the symptoms.

If any of our GP parents could offer me any advice I would be grateful of your support.

Dates for this Half Term

Year 6 SATs week – Monday 11th – Friday 15th May

PTA May Fayre – Saturday 16th May

Inset Day – Friday 22nd May (School closed to pupils and school closes for half term)

School re-opens Monday 1st June

As always, if you have any queries or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

S J Whyld
Headteacher