

Tuesday 15th July 2014

Head's desk

I write to you all at the end of a highly successful year for Layston School. Details of our achievements for this term follow; suffice to say that our recently published outstanding SIAMS inspection judgement is perhaps the pinnacle. The report has been circulated to all and is posted on our website.

On the subject of the website, the children have produced bespoke art work for our new website design and Creative Corner, the website design company we have commissioned to build and redesign our site, will be working on this in the coming weeks. A key feature of the new site should be an enhanced calendar facility which should make it simpler to access up to the minute school information and dates for the diary. We look forward to bringing further details in due course.

We have already circulated details of staffing for September 2014 so you will all know that Mrs Cooper is retiring at the end of this term. Mrs Cooper has given 13 years of dedicated service to Layston and her contribution has been of immense value not only to those who have been taught by her but also to the ethos of caring, nurture and the focus on the whole child as an individual that she has championed throughout. Mrs Cooper has been integral to the success of the school over the entire period we have been lucky enough to have had her on our staff and senior leadership team and we have all marvelled at her achievements in extra-curricular activities including Christmas productions which have been truly brilliant. But above all, Mrs Cooper has brought friendliness, kindness and compassion to her role and we are delighted that she will be back with us for a day a week from September supporting the implementation of the new National Curriculum in Literacy and art.

With the appointment of Mr Colin Whittet as Year 4 teacher, Mrs Sue Smith joining Mrs McMurrrough as Deputy Head and all year groups fully staffed, we are in an excellent position to begin the new academic year.

As a Senior Leadership team (SLT) we have been very grateful for parental contribution to our planning and review this year. Most noticeable has been your active contribution in shaping our new behaviour policy which has now been ratified by the governing body and is proving successful with all. The principle way in which we gather parental view is during 'Parent Chat' which runs each half term on a Tuesday afternoon with items for the agenda are circulated in advance. Even if you are unable to attend, we always consider emailed contributions and of course you are always willing to see me individually if you want to talk anything through. Parent questionnaires (this year on provision around Universal Free School Meals UFSM, views on transition arrangements and participation in out of school sports clubs) are another source of gathering parental view as are initiatives taken by the governing body. Your ideas and opinions are very important to us so thank you to all those who have contributed.

Parents help in multiple ways in our school such as with reading in class, supporting 'taster topic sessions', attending Services at St Peter's, joining the PTA or governing body, accompanying classes on trips, swimming as walkers, providing music tuition. In addition for September we are looking for parental help with

- the library, this could mean the first half hour of the day to supervise children changing books and general tidying
- walking bus helpers (see below)
- gardening club, helping to set it up, promote and run

Let us know if you are interested in helping in any way, either speak to me, a member for staff or email admin@layston.herts.sch.uk

The Walking Bus is a significant way in which we can promote a cleaner, healthier environment (less cars on the roads, significantly less congestion around the school entrance on days when walking bus operates), increase physical fitness and provide a fun sociable way to get to know one another a little better. Coordinated



by Angie Blanchard, the walking bus has a waiting list and is in desperate need of additional parent volunteers to fulfil this need. An innovative and energetic 'scooter to school' walking bus on Friday 4th July proved a great hit with children and adults alike and could easily become part of the repertoire if we had more adult volunteers. Please speak to either Angie Blanchard, Catherine Tallis or email admin if at all interested or for more information. Hopefully these photos will whet the appetite.



We have been working hard to improve and enhance the visual appearance of the school, promote outside learning opportunities and to make out interior spaces of the highest quality. We are delighted that visitors to our school, almost without fail, comment on the high quality and creativity of display, the range of learning opportunities the children have engaged in and the delightful ambience.



We have been working to transform the physical environment for lunchtimes. Rearranged tables into short rows give more circulation space and cut down on noise. Table clothes, menu and prayer cards and flowers on tables make for a more pleasant restaurant-like



dining experience. We also have introduced food plants growing on the window ledges helping children make the connection between the food they eat and its source as well as enhancing the visual appearance. A new 'band scheme' helps speeds up counter service and very recently installed fans will keep the temperature down in hot weather. These enhancements have been much appreciated by the children and come the autumn we are hoping to collaborate with the PTA on redecorating the dining hall too. Over the summer we will also be refurbishing the demountable classroom, buying new furniture, painting and redecorating to create a more 'family room' environment for the users of that space who include pre and post school club our under 2's and Nurture Group.

Collaboration with the PTA has also bought us a very fine outside learning play space with our KS1 children very much in mind. A huge thank you to the PTA who have donated funds for the beautiful canopied sand pit, 2 pebble pits with hidden dinosaur bones beneath, a pulley system, giant scales and handcrafted wooden log structures. It will enable high quality mathematical and scientific study within a play based environment as well as opportunities for children to collaborate, problem solve and team build together. In addition, a handmade balance beam has been installed in the green area at the bottom of the lower playground funded by the PTA.

Many of you have already commented on our fine new entrance canopy. Its unique feature is the patterned Perspex structure which throws out an extraordinary light when the sun shines, not dissimilar to a stain glass window in a sacred space and it was installed with this reference in mind. Those of us lucky enough to be in school early in the morning have been touched by the rather other worldly effect of low morning light illuminating the entire entrance hall with a golden light and patterns of colour dancing playfully on the carpet. The children have been captivated too and it is a wonder to watch their faces as the light plays tricks on them!



Such delight is a tangible example of the awe and wonder which can be inspired from the simplest of experiences and is a constant reminder of the beauty and majesty of God's creation. As a church school we aim to nurture each child and offer them

chance 'to shine'. In a rare wistful moment in school last week I was sitting at one end of the dining hall watching the children chatting and enjoying one another's company over their meal. I was suddenly struck by the enormity of the task that schools are entrusted with - the education and fostering of the lives of all the children in their care. It suddenly felt such an enormous privilege to be part of this process and I am deeply grateful to ALL the staff who give such dedicated service to your children day in and day out, in often hidden and quiet ways. I thank parents too for entrusting their children with us and finally I thank the children who are as always the stars of the show and from whom we continue to learn more than we can ever teach.

All that remains is to wish you all a very happy, safe and restful summer break.

Kind regards

Myra Bloomfield

Summary of our achievements June and July 2014

- Outstanding SIAMS Inspection Report- thank you everyone!
- Reaccreditation of our green flag eco status and the delivery of a new green flag - thank you Miss Bowman and eco warrior team.
"Layston is a delightful school which is clearly embracing sustainability and the Eco Schools programme... this is an amazing achievement....." (eco assessors comments July 2014).
- Excellent end of year performance data (validated data will be available for publication in Autumn term)
- Successful transition arrangements for both children entering reception in September and those in Year 4 moving on - thank you Mrs Smith and Mrs Cooper
- Cycling proficiency achievements for Year 4- thank you Mr Hall
- Refurbishment of site including installation of an entrance canopy, and new learning resources on lower playground- thank you PTA and children for contribution to design
- Participation in whole day World Cup Football themed dance workshop
- Whole day class visits YR - Ryemeads nature Reserve, Y1/2 - Shepreth Nature reserve, Y3- Whipnade Zoo - thank you all teachers TA's and parent helpers
- Y4 - Hudnall Park 3 day residential centre visit- thank you Mrs Cooper, Mr Strahan and Mrs Handy
- Variety of visits to Edwinstree and Freman for exhibitions, taster sessions, performances and G+T activities
- Development of links with school in Ghana and China - thank you Miss Bowman and Mr Strahan
- Whole school Makaton signing training course
- Enhancements to our sensory garden- thank you little Acorns
- Enhancements and management of the Forest / wild wood area- thank you Ms Lomax and Mrs Angus and team
- Child led fundraising events including King George's Hospital, Save the Children Fund and Great Ormond Street Hospital- thank you Y4 Charity Club
- Running a variety of clubs including French Club, homework club, art/quiet time club, gym club, choir club , eco warrior club- thank you to Mrs McMurrrough, Eloise, Mrs Dray, Mr Green, Mrs Watkins and Miss Bowman
- Delivering high quality newsletters throughout the year - thank you Mr Strahan

Sporting achievements include:

We have participated fully in plethora of festivals fixtures and events from late Spring to Summer term meaning at least one group of children have represented Layston in a sporting event practically every week which is in itself is a huge achievement. Activities have included tri golf, tennis, district sports and swimming lessons. Of particular note has been the success of our Speed Stacking team (see below) of which we were the County representatives and we came runners up overall but were placed first in County Championships with Amber crowned as fastest girl. A special thank you to Mrs Scarrott who has a particular knack at training children to achieve to such a high standard.

First places were also achieved for Layston in the interschool Rounders tournament, and swimming gala. We also achieved the highest number of placings in the interschool cross country festival. Our Year 4 children achieved a 93% pass rate at our recent cycling proficiency course and all Year 4 children took part in a 'Bike Smart' course.

In addition to this, staff members have been working very hard preparing children for statutory tests such as the Year 1 phonic screening and Year 2 SATS, assessing achievement and progress, moderating work, writing reports, preparing for SIAMS inspection, monitoring visits, consolidating Nurture Group provision, enhancing links with our preschool providers and feeder schools, moderation and leavers' service. There has been extensive work done in preparation for the implementation of the new curriculum and for the implementation of the new SEND code of practice. All this additional work goes on alongside the regular teaching commitment of each of our teachers so I would like to thank wholeheartedly the teachers Mrs Smith, Mrs McMurrough, Mrs Betley, Miss Bowman, Mr Strahan and Mrs Cooper for their dedication, commitment and sheer hard work, together with our supply staff, TA's and 1:1 TA's who work alongside in such a dedicated way. In addition, a huge thank you to our admin staff and caretaker, cleaning, meal time, kitchen staff and sports and swimming coaches. It is a pleasure to work with them all.

A few advance dates for your diaries

Tuesday 2nd September - Autumn term begins

Tuesday 9th September - 9am - e-safety training for parents (repeat session)

Tuesday 16th September - 6pm - e-safety training for parents (repeat session)

County Speed Stacking Team 2014

(North East Herts)



County Results

3-6-3 Mixed x 8 **2nd PLACE 53.56**

3-6-3 Girls x 4 **1st PLACE 24.18**

3-6-3 Boys x 4 **3rd PLACE 26.67**

3-6-3 Individual Girl **2nd PLACE**

3-3-3 Individual Girl **1st PLACE**

3-3-3 Girls x 4 **2nd PLACE**



CONGRATULATIONS!

Reception

We have had a very busy time planning and building our own Ark.
First we had to design it by talking to others in our group and
then build it



We all worked really well in our groups. Some of us wrote lists of the things Noah might need on his journey, thinking what the animals needs as well. We thought they might need food and water on their trip. Elliott thought very carefully about this.



We have been busy making cakes for our cake bake and we voted to find out which type of cake was the most popular. The adults were very surprised when we asked for sponge with jam



in. Mrs handy helped us make them and they were delicious! Most of us especially liked helping to ice and decorate them.

We hunted for caterpillars at Hare Street Road Wildlife Park but

couldn't find any. We did find lots of other mini beasts to study though. We found lots of beetles that like bright yellow. When we got back to class lots of us found information books about butterflies, we found it so interesting we have watched caterpillars turn into butterflies in class. We went into the school grounds to look for butterfly eggs; did you know they lay them underneath leaves to hide them?

When they emerge from their eggs they eat the leaf around them.



We have also made bug hotels and insect cone homes for other small creatures to live in.



We will check to see who has moved in before the end of term.

Year 1

We have had a really busy half term in Year 1, learning, working hard and having fun!
In maths we have been learning to tell the time to the nearest half hour.



In June we visited Shepreth Wildlife Park with Year 2. We were really lucky and got to handle some of the special animals in the education centre!





We saw lots of amazing animals as we walked around the park, including otters, tigers and a mountain lion!



During recycling week we made wind chimes using old CD's. Last Monday we had fun during our World cup dance workshop. We performed a dance to music from Brazil!

Year 2

Our last half term in Year 2 has been action packed. We have been so busy learning and working hard. Miss Bowman has been really impressed with our work!

We had a really enjoyable trip with Year 1 to Shepreth Wildlife Park. It was a lovely sunny day and we were really excited when we arrived. The first animals we saw were cabybaras and alpacas, followed by fish, meerkats, a puma and 2 tigers. We listened to a keeper talk and learnt that the keepers spray perfume in their enclosure as an enrichment activity.



We walked through the bat enclosure where the bats were flying free above our heads. We had to be very brave but some of us liked it so much we went back through it again! We saw the snout of a small alligator in the tropical house, but it was hiding under a bridge. We also saw a beautiful peacock but he was very shy and wouldn't show us his fan of feathers.



We got to handle some special animals in the education centre including stick insects and giant snails. Miss Bowman cuddled a skunk and Mrs Strachan held Rocco the Rat! We listened to a talk from the keepers about which links in with our topic of Habitats.

In class we have researched our favourite animals using our ICT skills to cut and paste pictures and information. We then created a scene of their habitat and included our pictures. We had a great time and really enjoyed making these.

Homework club also created their own undersea habitats from cereal boxes adding fish, creatures and plant life.

During our recycling week in June we collected used bottles and tins from home and created our own recycled creatures. We made tin can bugs and also made vases from old plastic bottles. We all made a turtle for our habitat display using the bottom of a plastic bottom for its shell.

We had great fun last Monday during a World Cup dance workshop. A lady came to show us how to dance to music from Ghana. She showed us a routine to practice then performed it to the whole school in the afternoon. Mrs Downs and Miss Bowman enjoyed helping us strut our funky stuff!

Next week is our school talent show and we are busy thinking of acts to perform. It's always an enjoyable event with everyone being given a chance to showcase their talent to the rest of the school.

We've had such a lot of fun in Year 2, learning and growing. We are all looking forward to our new adventure in Year 3.



Year 3

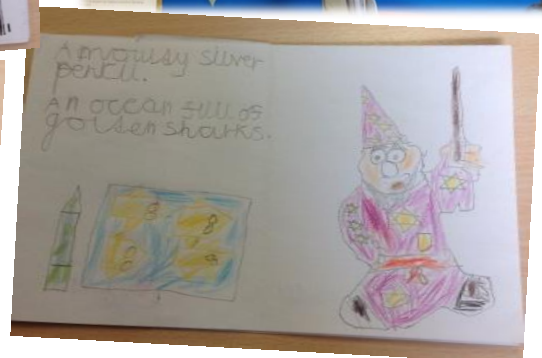
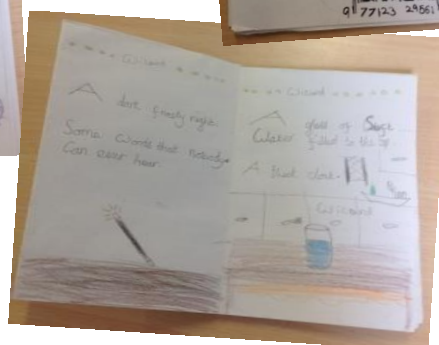
As you can see below, we've had a very busy summer term!

For international day, we made Egyptian themed crayon drawings on sandpaper.

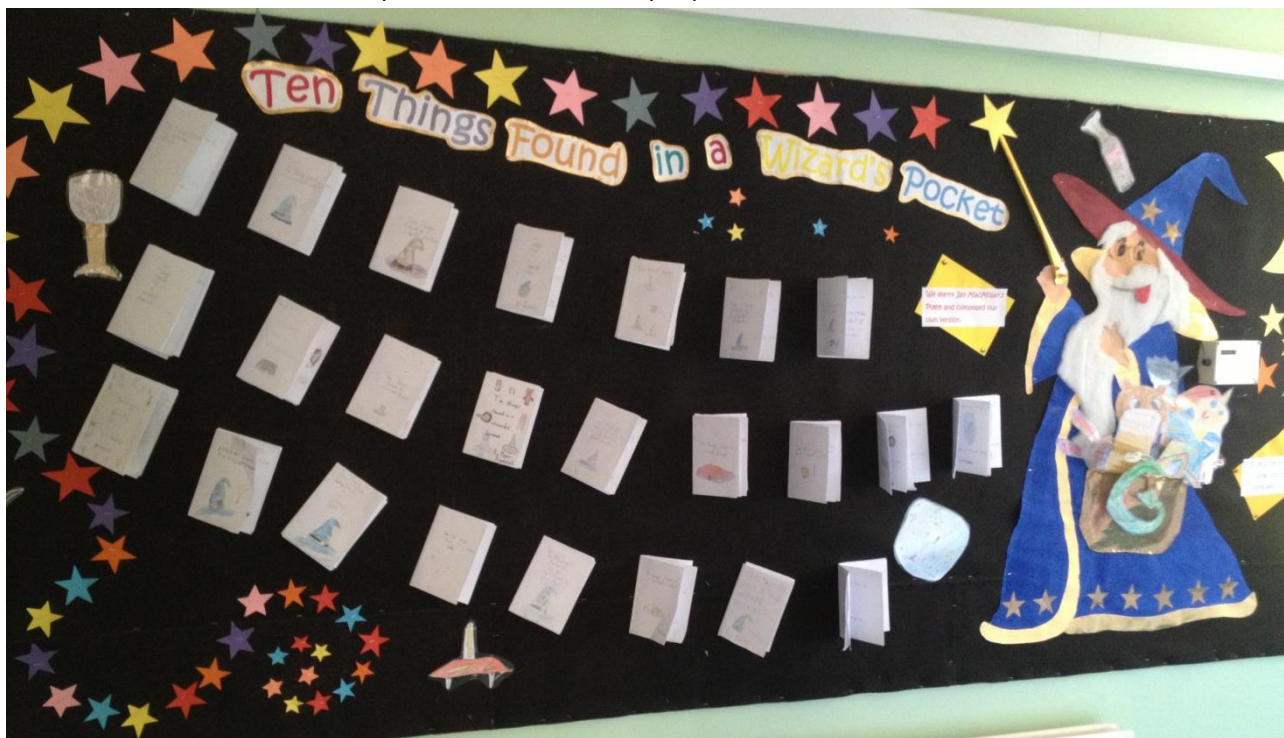


We wrote our own stories about space and we drew chalk pictures of the planets in those stories.

"In Literacy we have been making little poem books and they were all very good. We based it on the poem 10 Things Found in a Wizard's Pocket by Ian McMillan." - Reuben and Megan.



You can see the finished poem books on display in the corridor.

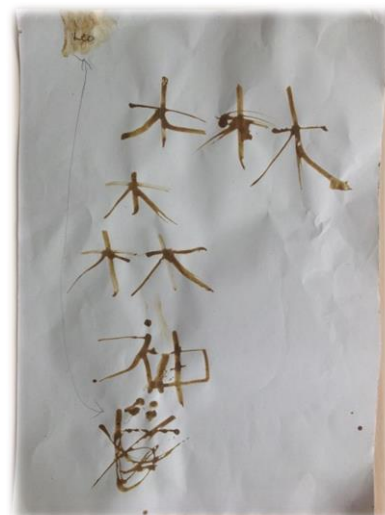


Also in literacy, we have been writing instructions. We had some fun making jam sandwiches and then the children wrote their own instructions using different time connectives.



Last month, we started an international link with a class in a Chinese school. Already, we have sent a couple of PowerPoint documents explaining what it is like in Year 3 at Layston (thank you Reuben and Megan E.). Recently, we replied to a song sent to us by recording and sending our Easter song.

Half the class created some Chinese symbols using natural ink made during Forest School. The other half went outside onto the playground with iPads and chalk to create animated greeting messages which, once edited into a single video, were also sent to the class in China. "It was tricky trying to





Keep the iPad really still" - Orran. Some children even created an animation of the school badge using leaves and twigs.



And finally, just this week, we received an envelope all

the way from China which contained some of their children's work! Year 3 found the artwork very interesting and they were fascinated by the Chinese stamps (there were quite a lot!) and postmarks on the envelope.

As mentioned above, we had a really enjoyable afternoon at the Rounders festival at Freman College. All three teams tasted victory (including a clean sweep against Millfield!) with the Yellow team winning all of their games. The class have really enjoyed Rounders this term and many have become very accomplished players (which is a country mile away from that first afternoon we played it!).



During recycling week, we painted feathers and pine cones, many of which are now hanging from trees outside. The children really enjoyed painting them and some of the multi-coloured patterns on the pine cones were really impressive.



The children enjoyed a World Cup themed dance workshop last month. Year 3 had to learn a Russian dance which they performed in front of the school that very afternoon. It was a high tempo routine and they did really well to master it in such a short period of time.



Finally, we had a great time on the recent school trip to Whipsnade Zoo. Many of the children were captivated by the animals including tigers, elephants, rhinos, cheetahs, lions and giraffes. It was quite special to see their reactions to certain animals that they had never seen



before: "I've never seen a tiger before!" - Mike. We had lots of walking to do (it's a very big zoo!) but everyone was impeccably behaved throughout.



We finished the day with an education session featuring a variety of impressive animal skulls. The children were able to apply what had they learnt in class regarding teeth and animal diets to investigate whether the skulls belonged to predators, prey, carnivores or herbivores.



Year 4

Last month Year 4 went away for three days to Hudnal Park, a field studies centre set in beautiful countryside. The whole place was brilliant; we were the only class there and no other buildings or roads within half a mile.

There were lots of activities and the first one was teambuilding challenges. Here is a picture of one of the challenges. The challenge was to get across 'the swamp' using only a plank, 2 tyres, a crate and 3 pieces of wood. It was tough!



In this challenge groups had to get through the 'Laser' or be zapped!



There were other challenges but we don't want to spoil it for next year's group!

We enjoyed the activities in the woods, including den building and having them tested for rain! Mr. Strahan really enjoyed that part!



And sculpture making:



We were able to do mountain biking and a low ropes course which were both exciting and fun! Mrs. Cooper took us on a night walk (well in daylight actually) and we managed to see a whole herd of deer feeding on the edge of the woods.

It was quite amazing that during the three days both Mr. Strahan and Mrs. Cooper had to rescue baby deer from the wire fencing where they were caught by their hind legs. This was a bit scary but a great relief to know they could return to their herd. We have no pictures of these two events unfortunately!

The whole trip could be summed up with Billy's words "It was awesome!"

PTA

Summer Term

We held the Reception cakebake last month, which raised an impressive £118.60!! Well done to those who organised and contributed to the event, we hope you enjoyed eating the cakes! Early this month we met with all the new reception mums prior to their meeting with Mrs Smith just to explain what we are all about. Hopefully some of them will get involved and help with events once their children start in September.

The main activity this half term has been preparations for the Friday Fun Night..... It was a lovely day and we raised an amazing £780!! I hope everyone enjoyed the event and thank you again to everyone for all the donations and turning up on the day! Special thanks go to Mr Hickey for being a good sport allowing us to get the stocks out again....!!

The highlight of this term has to be the installation in the bottom playground of the sandpit, pebble pits and pulley system. This was purchased by the PTA using funds raised over the course of the school year. The children absolutely love it and will use it for both fun and learning activities for years to come. Purchases like this, and the 16 iPads we have funded over the last couple of years are a massive enhancement to their day to day life at school. So we would like to say a really big thanks on behalf of the children to all of you for supporting all our events. We really do appreciate it.

One more thank you is to Paul Arnold the piano teacher. In return for using our hall and piano for his lessons Paul donates some of his fee to the PTA, so thank you!

Autumn Term

From the Autumn term we will be changing our name to Friends of Layston, this will enable us to invite members who are not parents to become involved in our events. We'll send more information out next term about what changes this will mean. Our first meeting after the holidays will be Wednesday 10th September, and our October AGM will be held on Wednesday 1st October. Anyone can come along to the meetings which are held in the staff room at 7.30pm. As for events there will be a disco and quiz in October to look forward to..... We will send out an events list once we are back in September.

Thank you again for all your support this year.

Governors - Attendance

Layston is a successful and high achieving school. But did you know that our attendance figures fall in the bottom 25% of schools nationally? This is a real concern for the governing body and remains a key area for improvement.

As parents, we recognise that attending school regularly is vitally important for the progress of our children - every day counts. Setting good attendance patterns from an early age is really important and will create habits that children will take into adulthood. It is a common misconception that absence from school at a young age is not as important as for older children.

This is not the case.

So, what does good attendance actually mean?

On the face of it, **90%** attendance sounds good. But in reality, this means a child has missed **half a day every week**, which over a year adds up to four weeks off school. 90% attendance from reception to year 4 is the equivalent to missing half a school year. It can be surprising how quickly children accumulate absence.

What can you do to help?

- Keep your child at home if they are genuinely ill but they should return as soon as they are better, even if it is a Friday. Generally we would consider a child well enough to return when they are able to participate in class activities.
- Bear in mind complaints of a stomach ache or headache which may be a sign of anxiety. Speak to the school to resolve, our door is always open.
- Avoid medical/dental appointments during the school day if possible.
- Dismiss the idea of days off for Birthdays etc.
- Avoid taking holidays in school time.

There are inevitably circumstances that arise which may require children to be taken out of school. Mrs Bloomfield is very approachable about this and will endeavour to authorise appropriate requests for leave.

Recognition Rewards

Building on our rainbow reward system for behaviour, the Governors will be working with the staff to develop certificates for attendance each term, gold (100%) silver (98%+), and bronze (96%+). We will also include the names of children with 100% attendance records in the newsletter at the end of each term. We will work with

parents to ensure this system is inclusive and where a child may have a specific medical condition that affects attendance, develop a bespoke target.

Claire Shearn

NHS 111

All schools have been asked to circulate the following for information over the holiday period.

NHS 111 - here for you during the holidays



**when it's less
urgent than 999**

If your family needs urgent medical help and your usual GP practice is closed, there's now just one number to remember.

NHS 111 can help with everything that needs urgent medical attention, but is not a life-threatening emergency. That could be anything from bumps and sprains to feeling ill overnight or at the weekend.

The service is staffed by a team of fully trained advisors, supported by experienced clinicians. They will ask questions to assess your symptoms, then give you advice or direct you to the local service that can help you best. That might be a doctor, urgent care centre, minor injuries unit, late-opening pharmacy, or A&E.

If NHS 111 advisors think you need an ambulance, they will immediately arrange for one to be sent to you.

Call 111, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Calls are free from mobiles and landlines.

If you're holidaying in England or Scotland this summer, you can call 111 and be put through to the local 111 team, who will know all the services near you which can help. If you're visiting Wales, call 0845 46 47.

If you have the old NHS Direct number stored in your phone, please delete it and replace it with 111. The NHS Direct number is no longer in operation and your call will not be transferred to another number.