



Newsletter

September 2021

A place to

SMILE

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope that you had a good summer and that you and your child are enjoying getting back in to the routines of term-time. A very warm welcome to all our new families—both in Year R and further up the school. We hope that your children will settle quickly and feel comfortable in their new surroundings.

It's been lovely to see more of you in and around the school grounds with the lifting of restrictions, and in school we are really enjoying seeing the older children have more freedom at playtimes and lunchtimes to interact and choose where they will play after 18mths of 'bubbles'.

The changes have also brought fresh challenges and we know that there are still understandably a number of members of our community who are very anxious with the lifting of restrictions. Our school risk assessment and Covid contingency planning are available on the website for any parents who would like to see the protective measures which are still in place. Thank you for your patience as we tweak the end of the day routines—we are getting there, but still some room for improvement, I know! Please keep an eye on Parentmail updates for your year group as this is how we will communicate the tweaks and these may continue over the next couple of weeks - new YR children start full time from Thurs 16th Sept which will again affect the numbers of parents and children on site.

One of the biggest challenges for us in school is helping our children to regain some of the independence they have lost over the last 18mths as their movements have been so closely managed as a class, with an adult, even in KS2. We are gradually supporting the children to become familiar with the routines so that they are able to make safe choices themselves about what and where they play at break/lunch, respond to the 'calling in' for lunchtimes, collect their lunches and clear their plates afterwards, know where to go when they have finished their lunch, and get to know more of the adults on duty as they no longer have one designated member of staff. We are currently segregating older and younger pupils at play and lunch, with children able to move between 2 or 3 designated areas rather than across the full grounds, and the children have responded really well. We are fortunate that we have been able to maintain the increased lunchtime staffing which we brought in due to the 'bubble' system, and this has helped the children deal with the changes. As usual, our new YR children will have their own playground area at lunchtimes, although I'm sure many of them will be desperate for the opportunity to go on to the all weather pitch to see their siblings later in the year!

I was hoping that the lovely weather would continue so we can use the grounds and make sure the outdoor playtimes are sorted before we have to worry about the wet lunch routines, but we will have to see. (At least the rain is good for our school garden!).

Lesley Pennington—Headteacher



Thank you to the Rotary Club

We would like to say a huge thank you to the members of Whiteley Rotary Club who have generously agreed to support our gardening club to buy equipment and materials to help get the garden ready for the Autumn. They have also supported the purchase of our new welly racks for Reception classes.

INSET day reminder

School will be closed for staff training on the following dates:

Friday 8th Oct
Monday 11th Oct
Friday 18th February
Friday 15th July



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Contact Details—Updates

If any of the contact details for your child have changed (including those for second/third contacts), please let the school office know asap so that our records are kept up to date. We increasingly find people changing mobile phone numbers (or swapping their phone with someone else in the family) which can delay us being able to contact someone in an emergency. The easiest way to contact us is to email adminoffice@whiteley.hants.sch.uk with the changes.

News from our Community Link Governor— School Facebook Page

I just wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself. I am Carla Jefferson and have been a Governor at Whiteley since 2020. I sit on the resources committee and I'm currently supporting with our community links. As a parent in the school, I am incredibly proud of what WPS stand for and the fantastic opportunities that are available for our children, and am looking to see how we promote the school in our community. In view of this, I am delighted to announce that we are launching our brand new official Facebook page in the next few weeks. The aim of this page is to help promote our culture, opportunities, and good news with current and prospective parents, local residents, and friends of friends. So please 'like' our page and make sure you follow us. As this is a new venture we will be building the page up over time so do keep popping back to check out new posts, photos and videos.



Carla Jefferson—Community Link Governor

YR/1/2 Universal Free School Meals—Census Day

Funding for the universal free school meals for YR/1/2 children is based on the average meal take up on the two census days in Autumn and Spring, which is why we always encourage as many children as possible to have a school lunch on these two days. In the past, thanks to your support, we had nearly 100% take up of meals on the census days which ensures that the cost of KS1 lunches is covered through the year, with any additional funding helping us to pay for the additional lunch staff. We are keen to continue with the same approach this term. We will therefore be offering some of the most popular lunch choices on the census days again, with the kitchen also offering a picnic lunch (with either cheese or ham roll) to YR/1/2 children, instead of the jacket potato option on these two dates.

This October, the national census day falls on **Thursday 7th October**—the day before the INSET day. Lunch choices on this day will be fish fingers and chips (red) and omelette and chips (green). There will be no jacket potato (blue) choice that day, but children in YR/1/2 may choose a picnic box option if they wish. KS1 families, please look out for the parentmail form which you will soon receive so that you can order in advance to help the kitchen manage the orders. We hope that all YR/1/2 parents will support us with this. It is *so* important for us to receive the funding we are entitled to for meals through the census. The kitchen need to know the order by Wednesday 29th September.

Reading Challenges

Well done to all the children who've kept up with their reading over the summer. I have been pleased to present some book prizes to children who completed their Super Star reading challenge (Y1-3) or Topaz award (Y4-6) in time for the new term. Children in Y1/2/3 will receive their new Reading Rocket challenge cards this week, and the Y4 children will be receive information about the reading ambassador awards that run throughout the upper school. Let's see if we can help all the children get back into some great reading habits!

Parents Meetings

Face to face parents meetings are being planned for before October half term—this is earlier than we usually hold them, but we are conscious that it is really important for parents to have that personal contact with class teachers after so long only being at a distance! Please check the diary dates and keep an eye out for the Parentmail link to book appointments which will come out in a couple of weeks.



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Y6 Parents—Secondary Transition

We would like to remind Y6 parents that you will need to make your choice regarding which secondary school you would like your child to go on to by 31st October 2021—the on-line admissions form opens on Monday. We will send out information regarding open days etc. which we receive via Parentmail, but also suggest that parents check the relevant school websites for up to date information regarding open days / meetings.

School Grounds Development

We have had another busy summer for the site team with lots of contractors on site to help get the site ready for September. New tarmac has been laid from the bottom of the slope around to the gym to even out the path where roots had started to break through, and we have a new wider gate for the YR outdoor classroom.

Some of you may have noticed that we have started to replace the sails over the grass by the all weather pitch. One is already in place and the others will follow shortly.



We are particularly delighted with our new canopy outside the Y1 classrooms which provides a permanent shelter so that children can access learning all year round. The soft surfacing has also been replaced and a new purpose-built seat around the base of the tree which will hopefully minimise the impact of any root growth in years to come. Further work will follow over the next few weeks and into October half term to complete the area.

Introducing Mrs Fran Gallagher—Assistant Headteacher

I am really excited to be joining the Whiteley Primary School community as your new Assistant Head. There is a fantastic learning environment here at Whiteley, and I have been impressed already by the behaviour and attitudes I have seen around the school. I feel very privileged to be part of the team and I will be working with Mrs Pennington, Ms Bolton and the rest of the staff to make sure all the children can get the most from their time at school.



For the last 18 years, I have been teaching in Portsmouth and Hampshire, most recently at Castle Primary in Portchester. I have 2 children, who love swimming, scooting and going on the trampoline in the garden!

I have already met many of the fantastic Whiteley children (and their parents) over the last week and I look forward to learning many more names!

YR Admissions 2022

If you have a child who is turning 4 this academic year, applications for Reception school places open on 1st November with the deadline of 15th January 2022 for applications. We are hoping to offer school tours this year—some during the school day which will be mainly external tours and some after school which will include a tour of the classrooms. We also still have our welcome video and virtual tour available on the school website.



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Mobile Phones—Reminder

Please can I remind parents of older pupils (Y5/6) that if you wish your child to have a mobile phone in school, you need to provide a signed note for the class teacher to give the reason. Your child should then hand the phone in to the teacher first thing in the morning, and it will be returned to them at the end of the day. Phones should not be left in bags in the cloakroom. Any mobile phones found in school without your written permission, or used during the school day, will be kept at the office until a parent can collect it.

Volunteers in School

This term, we are welcoming back classroom volunteers. If you are able to offer some regular time to support in class, or hear readers, please contact adminoffice@whiteley.hants.sch.uk and we will send you the link to our new Google Form for volunteers. Our new assistant Headteacher, Fran Gallagher, will be overseeing volunteering and work experience placements and will be in touch if a suitable place is available.

We will also be re-launching our 'paired reading' scheme this half term so would welcome contact from parents who would be willing to commit to 10-15mins at least twice a week at the end of the school day, or first thing in the morning. For this intervention, volunteers are paired with one or two KS2 children who would benefit from increasing their word reading confidence and fluency. Volunteers are trained to follow a specific process of reading together with the child which is proven to accelerate reading progress. If you are interested in finding out more, please email the school office and we will put you in touch with Ms Bolton.

Term Time Absences

Please can I remind parents that we are required to follow the Hampshire policy regarding term time absences. Whilst there has obviously been a lot of disruption to family holiday plans due to the pandemic, the county are keen to remind us all that the loss of schooling has had significant impact on many children and therefore we have been asked as Headteachers to continue authorising term time leave only in exceptional circumstances. Applications for term time leave should be made on the form available on the school website (parents/absences section) giving as much information as possible regarding the leave request. These are collated in the office and passed to me on a Friday. Some parents will make the decision to take their children out of school for holidays and accept that the absence will be unauthorised, but please do complete the form to inform us of the absence. Information regarding the use of penalty notices (where there are 5 days or more of unauthorised absences) can also be found in the absence section of the school website, and I would encourage all parents to familiarise themselves with the information prior to making leave requests. **A final plea**—if you do take your child out of school when you know it's going to be unauthorised, please don't phone them in sick, or ask your child not to tell anyone in school. Not only does it waste office time, it also puts the children in a difficult situation— and they usually tell people anyway!

Has your work or family situation changed?

Have you checked to see if your child is eligible for Pupil Premium Funding?

If you are in receipt of certain benefits, your child may be eligible for Pupil Premium funding. These include Income Support, Income-based Jobseekers Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit, Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190), Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit and Universal Credit.

You can check eligibility by going online at <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/caterers/hc3s> or contact the school office. (You will need your National Insurance number). Pupil premium funding comes directly to schools to support pupils from low income families. If eligible, your child will also be able to access free school meals, whichever year group they are in. We always deal with such enquiries discreetly and even your child doesn't need to know that their meals are free. You will also receive a £30 school uniform credit with our main supplier once your registration is complete.