



Tuesday 19th December 2023

Newsletter Number 8 Autumn Term 2023

Dear families,

This is my last newsletter to you as headteacher of this wonderful school – It does all seem very odd after so many years and I wonder how many newsletters I have written over that time!

PTA Christmas Festival

The PTA Christmas Festival is this week on Wednesday 20th December. It starts after school and goes straight into the Fireworks event at 6.00pm. The entrance to the event costs £2 for children and £4 for adults and this includes access to the fireworks. We recommend arriving from about 4pm if you want to enjoy the stalls and refreshments and arriving at about 5pm if you want just refreshments and the fireworks. Activities include; Santa's Grotto (£2 per child), chips with curry or gravy, children's tattoos, face painting, reindeer food, games and stalls for the children to enjoy, tea and coffee or hot chocolate with cream, tuck shop.

PLEASE JOIN US FOR A

CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL AND FIREWORKS

20TH DECEMBER 2023
4.00PM TO 6.15PM

STALLS, ACTIVITIES, GAMES AND REFRESHMENTS FOR ALL THE FAMILY TO ENJOY TOGETHER. VISIT FATHER CHRISTMAS IN HIS GROTTTO!!

Entrance is £2 for children and £4 for adults and includes your entry to the fireworks!

Pay on the door cash or card!

Doors open at 4pm for you to enjoy the full event or arrive from 5pm to buy refreshments and get ready for the fireworks!!

If the weather is too windy tomorrow, the fireworks won't go ahead for health and safety reasons, but the rest of the Festival will go ahead. Entrance to the event will then be free. We will email you tomorrow to let you know if the fireworks can go ahead.

Commemorative Tree for Mr Klausen

We are all thrilled with our 'perfect' Christmas tree to commemorate Mr Klausen. He absolutely loved Christmas so this tree is the perfect way to remember him and it can be seen everyday by all of us. I am very grateful to Mrs Dawson who sourced this tree and arranged for it to be transported and planted for free. Such a generous gesture of her time and care for our school and community and her husband and his colleagues worked together to transport and plant the tree – and only asked for a cup of coffee! Amazing! It is traditional for an outgoing headteacher to purchase a leaving gift for the school so I have paid for the tree and the commemorative plaque – it just felt so right to do that. I hope you all enjoy this tree, as Mr Klausen would have enjoyed it for many, many years and Christmases to come.



Christmas performances

What a way to end the term. The performances were incredible! The amount of work and time that Mrs Shaw dedicated to this event shows just how much she cares for the children and community of our school. The determination and generous time of all the other staff also reflected this. I just cannot thank them enough. The children gain so much from this and they will remember it for many years to come. Thank you for supporting the performances and coming along.

Community (co-opted) Governor needed!

We have had one interested party for the position of Community Governor. We have staff governors, parent governors and community (co-opted) governors in our school. Our parent governor and staff governor roles are full but we have a vacancy for a community (co-opted) governor. This can be anybody within the local community of Wirral. Co-opted governors can make the link between the world of work and education and constructively support the success of their local school. You don't have to be an expert in education and we welcome interest from all walks of life to bring different perspectives and views. These roles are a rewarding and effective way of making a voluntary contribution to the lives of local young people. If you are interested in our children's future, have energy and enthusiasm, and want to help with the direction of the school's future, please send an expression of interest to the school office marked for the attention of the Chair of Governors, Mr David Spencer or email your interest to the school office. Thank you.

PTA End of January Blues Family Bingo!!!

The PTA have planned a new event that will take place on Thursday 1st February. They have called it the 'End of January Blues Family Bingo'! It will be just the event needed to chase away those dark days and welcome the onset of spring which is just around the corner. Add this date to your diary – the bingo is for all the family and is from 5.30pm to 7.00pm.

Santa Dash news!

Wow!! £2593.18 was raised in the Santa Dash! This is a fantastic amount and we can't thank you all enough. The money will be spent on supporting the development of outdoor equipment for the children – so will be put to really good use that everyone can enjoy.

Christmas and New Year break

A reminder that the last day of the term is this Friday 22nd December. School will close at 1.30pm on that day and there is no after school club. I wish you all a wonderful Christmas break and a very happy New Year!

And finally,

The newsletter 'and finally' section is usually short but today it has my final message to you all!

At my last Governors meeting, the Chair told the governors I had been head here for 15 years. My maths is not as good as the children's because I thought it was 14 years – but it is actually 15 years and 1 term!

So much has happened over the last 15 years it would be impossible to document it all here. But maybe some highlights are appropriate...

The interview for the headship of Pensby Primary School was advertised as "do you want to be the headteacher of a new school and plan a new school build?" – It was too tempting to ignore.

My interview for the headship of the new Pensby Primary School started with some of the old Pensby Junior School pupils showing me and the other candidates around the old Junior school. They fed back to the governors that I was 'ok'! Then 2 days of interviews and tasks took place – three interviews by small panels on every aspect of education, then the final interview before all 13 people on the selection panel! There were 13 people there because the 3 old schools all wanted to be represented in the selection process and they decided to 'play' it with very serious faces – not one smile! The final interview before the 13 strong panel, included a presentation "As the new head of a new school what would you do in the first term, first year, first 5 years? I had 10 minutes to present my ideas and finished with seconds to spare and was very relieved, but the first comment was "is that all you will do? And yet I was appointed to the role! I don't remember what I said I would or wouldn't do fully, but I know I said I wanted to guide and develop the school to become a place where staff wanted to work and felt valued, where children were happy and felt heard and where families felt they belonged. I like to think I have managed to achieve that for more part although 3 headships have taught me that you can't please everyone all the time!

What no one realised at the time was what a huge task it actually would be! When the school opened in September 2008, we had the staff of the 3 schools that had closed (Pensby Infants, Pensby Juniors and Pensby Park), plus new staff. The team had to get to know each other very quickly and learn how to work together and they didn't actually meet until the first INSET training day in September. The next day, the children from the closed 3 schools came together and like the staff they needed to learn about each other and work together. It was a very unusual and stressful beginning to the new school. On the first day, Mr Klausen was the new year 6 teacher and he was expecting 32 children in the year 6 class. However, Wirral Admissions had been merrily admitting children over the summer break and emailed the school the details, but the new school server had not been installed and so no emails came though!! 39 children appeared in that year 6 class alone and it was a similar story in other classes too – how we got through day 1 I will never know! Chaos!

It soon became apparent though, that we had struck lucky with our new staff and children. They pulled together very quickly and by the end of the first year we were getting into our stride and started to get excited about a new building. We had a bumpy OFSTED inspection 4 terms in but from then it was up, up, up!

Did you know that the school uniform is a combination of the 3 schools that closed? The tree was the logo from Pensby Infant School, The circular sun shape was the logo from Pensby Junior School and the burgundy colour was the colour of the uniform at Pensby Park – a perfect combination to remember the 3 schools.

We had initial plans for our new school building drawn up – it looked like a spaceship! It was a circular building with the hall in the middle. We were getting used to it when I had a visit from the Local Authority SEND manager, a lovely man who told me about Stanley School and how awful their building was. They needed a new building desperately – would the governors consider sharing the site? I had been a headteacher in 2 Cheshire Schools previously and in Cheshire at that time, special primary schools were few and far between, so in my previous schools we had catered for many children such as those in Stanley school – so I knew this would be a great model for both schools. The best of both worlds for all the children. The governors agreed. Most of our community were very happy but some didn't understand and were concerned – they just needed reassurance. Of course, now those days of doubt are far behind us and we have a fabulous connection with our Stanley colleagues and children that has brought incredible benefits to so many children and families and it is a model envied far and wide.

From those very first days, I have stood on the gate on most days come rain or shine. Many of you ask me why, especially when the weather is awful! It is the best way to get to know people and getting to know

people means you can understand and help them better. I can also solve most problems on the gate, which means children and families can get on with their day without a worry or concern. I know that the gate spot is one that the staff enjoy too.

When we opened in 2008, year 5 and 6 were in the old junior school building and the rest of the school was in the old infant school building. One day when the premises staff arrived, they discovered the old oil boiler had somehow leaked oil in the building. It was time for the children to move out and they were taught in the school hall for a while whilst we waited for a temporary building to arrive. The good news was that this incident really sped up the new build process and things started to progress very rapidly. It was such an exciting day when the crane arrived with the temporary building and the children stood in awe watching the building being lifted into position. This was just the start of a building project that took nearly 4 years from start to finish but our children had a platform built so they could watch what was happening and it was incredible! You may not have noticed, but in the entrance hall are images of the construction of the building and in the atrium are photographs of the infant and junior school buildings and sites, that housed our school up until May 2012.

One of the funniest incidents happened at the end of the first day in the new building. The leadership team had been 'trained' to lock up the school and it was much more complicated than the old school, so we decided to stay and do it altogether. As we closed the office door, the handle fell off. We laughed – we can deal with that in the morning we thought! We walked to the main entrance and I realised I had left the key in the main office. We knew with the handle broken we couldn't open the door to get back in. Panic began to rise! Then we realised the glass panel to the office wasn't locked so we slid it open. As Miss Grant was by far the smallest of the leadership team we all pushed her up and pushed her through the hatch and into the office to get the keys. It was so funny! This photograph is taken on that first day!



And so to things I have learnt in this job, having been a head of 3 primary schools over the past 21 years - some little nuggets to guide you as parents and carers.

When your child comes home and says they have been "shouted at" and are upset, your first response should be "what did you do?" If they say they did nothing, you know there is missing information that either your child has chosen not to tell you or has forgotten. So just politely ask for that information. You should also talk to your child about the difference between shouting and being told off or just spoken to. In 34 years as a teacher/headteacher I have only heard staff shout a handful of times. It is probably a telling

off or just a talk they are referring to but they didn't like it and call it being 'shouted at' – they weren't.

When your child comes home and says "I'm not allowed to..." 'I was told off', please stop and remember they are giving you their view of what happened and it will not be the full picture. Is it really such a big issue that you need to raise this with staff and take away their time from caring for the children in their class and the school? Or is it something you can use as a discussion point to help them understand and move forwards?

All children (and all adults) lie. If you think your child does not lie you will be given the run around by them for the rest of your life!!! It is a natural human instinct to lie. Our job as teachers, parents and carers is to guide our children through this and understand why they lie and ensure they learn to take responsibility when they do lie. They should be brave enough to admit it and take learning from what has happened. It worries us hugely when an adult says 'my child doesn't lie'!

Bear in mind that arriving at school late has a huge impact on the whole school and staff. Most parents send their children into school in good time. This gives those children an excellent model of how they should live in the future and they will be part of the future workforce that arrives for work on time, completes tasks in a timely manner. They will therefore be able to hold down a job! There are also the other children who have arrived on time that then have their learning disrupted as a member of staff has to leave them and go and explain what is happening to the late child. That tardiness affects the whole class and it really isn't acceptable.

I want families to support the new leadership of the school. Remember that all the staff want to come to work and help the children learn and thrive. I don't know of any staff that wake up and think "what can I do today to upset a child or their family?" When a new Acting Head or Headteacher starts in a job, there are always some people who feel the need to 'test them' or challenge them – please give them your support. Let them find their way and do what they think is right for the children – you are all especially fortunate as the new leadership team at Pensby already know the school and the children so well. Making their life difficult will stop them from focussing on the children and giving all they can to them. They want to take this school on to greater things, they want the best for the children and they are time short and staff short, so your support for them will be crucial over the coming months and years.

All schools are facing the biggest challenges they have ever faced. Budgets are crippled and this has led to reduced staffing. Nationally our schools are in crisis because of this and it will probably worsen. In Pensby we have the equivalent of 10 less full time staff than we did 5 years ago – this means increased workload for those who are here and this creates pressure beyond anything I have known. Nationally, this is causing an exodus of staff on top of an already depleted school workforce. Pensby Primary has a wonderful staff team and our children need them to stay and the community needs them to stay. Cherish the staff here, respect that their professional approach to all that they do remembering it comes from a good place and with good intentions. I don't know of any staff in Pensby who wake up and think "Which child/parent/carer can I upset today and therefore make my job even harder!?" When a new Acting Head or headteacher starts their role there are always some people who feel the need to 'test them' and challenge them over the smallest of issues. This just makes it so much harder for them to do their job effectively for the children. Please give your support, so the team can drive this school onwards to greater things. Given their understanding knowing that they hold every child's interests in their hands and hearts and want to do the very best they can. Your child is quite rightly the apple of your eye, but for the staff here, they have 240 apples in their eyes every day and each one is just as important as the next.

And a final...and finally....!

I thank you all for an amazing 15 years. It is hard to leave but it's time for me to travel the world with my back pack (and some luxury at times too!). I will never forget how amazing the whole school community was when my gorgeous husband died 8 years ago – you all carried me through that with such care and warmth. I really will miss the school - the staff, families and the amazing children.

Have a wonderful Christmas and I wish you all a very happy 2024. Good luck to you all!



Mrs K Brown, Headteacher (over and out!)

Dates for the term

DATE	TIME	EVENT	DETAILS
Friday 22 nd December	1.30pm	School closes for the Christmas Break	
Monday 25 th December to Friday 5 th January		Christmas break – school closed	
Monday 8 th January 2024	8.40am	School opens for Spring term	
Thursday 1 st February	5.30 to 7.00pm	PTA End of January Blues Family Bingo	