

# STMS Newsletter 17<sup>th</sup> October 2018

Dear Parents,

As I write this newsletter, I am in the heart of idyllic Devonshire countryside, sitting at a table and staring out through the enormous, tall bay window of the dining room to the front of this striking Victorian Manor house, in awe of the sheer beauty of the countryside. Over the past 5 days, the Year 6s and I have witnessed nature at its best, from field to fork. The other night we witnessed the difficult birth of a calf and the devoted attention of the farmer who struggled to bring her into the world. And today, we gathered the 6 pigs and 2 lambs we've come to know so well and herded them calmly into the trailer so that farmer could take them to be slaughtered.

Whether you are a meat eater or a vegetarian, it matters not. When you are at Nethercott you witness the enormous lengths our farmers go to, to produce the food we buy in our shops and supermarkets. You develop a sense of wonder and appreciation for the natural world. But above all, God becomes almost tangible in his creation.

I can't tell you how proud and privileged I am to witness the care, the kindness and the empathy that our children show for that creation and for each other in this place and I pray that they will return to their lives in Portsmouth and continue to appreciate the beauty of our world and each other.

And now for more exciting news. We heard Monday that Miss Ridd delivered her baby boy, Max, safely in hospital and that mum, baby and family are all doing extremely well. Congratulations to them all.

But the beauty of life doesn't stop there. I am delighted to announce that Mrs Stather, class teacher in Delphinus and Year 3/4 leader, is expecting a baby in March next year. Congratulations to Mrs Stather and her husband too.

We also saw one of our newest teachers, Miss Bainbridge, become Mrs Weston over the weekend as she and her husband were married. Congratulations to them also.

Moving from talk of the beauty of nature and care, kindness and empathy for each other, I feel I have to share my disappointment that a small minority of parents feel it is appropriate to 'slag off' teachers and staff on Facebook and social media.

Look, everyone is entitled to free speech and this is a tiny group of people, but these individuals feel they can make assumptions about what goes on in school via mixed messages from children and parents and then post their criticism without having the decency to say something face-to-face to the staff or to me.

Not only is this unfair, unjustified and unnecessary but it is deeply upsetting for staff, parents and the School community that read them. Often what is said is completely misconstrued and inaccurate, but once it is published, it snowballs out of control with a flurry of sympathetic responses from friends, without knowing the true facts at all.

As I said, this is a tiny minority of people, and most know how incredibly hard our staff work. Of course staff make mistakes once in a while, but they are always willing to admit those mistakes and learn from them.

So I am pleading with the vast majority of parents to take what is published with a pinch of salt, to take your concerns, moans, or questions directly to us, but above all - to stamp out this cruel, public humiliation of my staff by ignoring their comments. If you do feel the need to respond to them, simply suggest they get the facts first from those whom they are not brave enough to confront in person!

Finally, I hope you have all received our letter about changes to our approach to learning spellings and spelling homework. We are very excited by these changes and believe children will benefit so much more from a system of learning in context than one of learning lists of words in isolation.

I would like to add that there are no changes to the homework policy and that children in all year groups must complete each of the following at home.

- Reading of a reading scheme book or their own choice of books
- Number bonds or tables practice (This will begin in KS 1 soon)
- A reading Challenge Activity in KS2
- Enquiry homework.
- In addition children from Y2 upwards may be given additional practice tasks in reading, writing and/or maths.

All of the above must be completed in every year group with increasing frequency and quantity as children get older. All of the above is monitored and recorded each week and children who do not complete it will be sanctioned accordingly.

For many of you, and indeed for me, homework can be seen as a headache and an extra pressure for children. But while our feeder secondary schools continue to have homework policies that require students to do vast amounts of learning at home with serious consequences for non-completion, we owe it to our children to develop good habits from an early age so that they succeed at secondary school.

With this in mind, we have adopted a firm stance on our policy since September and together with senior leaders, I am monitoring homework completion very closely and sanctioning where necessary. So please, work with us to give our children a fighting chance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bobi Haraga', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

## Firework Family Event Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> November

5.30pm-8.15pm

To book tickets please go online to [www.ticketsource.co.uk](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk) and search St Thomas Mores.

### Ticket Prices:

Adult £5.00 Child: £2.00 Under 3's: FREE

Family (2 adults and 2 children): £12.00

Additional family member

(Only available with family ticket): £1.00

If you don't wish to order online, you can hand an envelope into reception for the PTA to collect. This envelope must not contain any other school payments. Mark this clearly with **Firework Night, your child's name and ticket request. Place the exact payment amount inside, as no change can be given.**

### ***'Carve a Pumpkin' Competition***

We are also holding a ***'Carve a Pumpkin'*** Competition at the Firework Family Event.

Letters will be sent home with a return slip attached; this must be returned with your 50p entry fee by 29<sup>th</sup> October to guarantee your entry. The pumpkin will need to be clearly marked with your child's name and class.

There will be a prize for each phase; Nursery/year R, year 1/2, year 3/4 and year 5/6.

No pumpkins can be entered on the night without the slip being returned in advance.

## Polite Notices

Can we ask that you make sure all children bring coats into school for outdoor play times.

Even though we have a school dog, please be aware that no dogs are allowed in the school playground at any time.

Many thanks

## Church News

### St Michael and All Angels Catholic Church

**First Holy Communion 2019.** The names of children in Year 3 and above wishing to make their First Holy Communion in 2019 should be given directly to Fr. Gerard after Mass. The children will need to attend the regular sessions with at least one family adult and to participate in Sunday Mass.

**Church cleaning.** One of the regular cleaners of the church will soon be out of action for six weeks. Could you step in for a while? If so, please see Judy Stringer, who speaks at Mass this weekend, or let the Parish Office know. Thank you.

**For hire.** The Church Hall and Committee Room are available at very reasonable rates. Bookings can be made on 023 9248 4323 or at [leighpark@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:leighpark@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)

## **ITEMS FOR YOUR DIARY**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Event</b>
Friday 19 <sup>th</sup> October	TBC	Year 6 Nethercott Farm trip return
Friday 19 <sup>th</sup> October	15.15	Last day of half- term
Monday 29 <sup>th</sup> October	08.45	First day of half-term
Thursday 1 <sup>st</sup> November		School Photographs (Sibling groups at 8am if required)
Thursday 1 <sup>st</sup> November	17.30	Fireworks Night
Friday 2 <sup>nd</sup> November		INSET Day
Monday 5 <sup>th</sup> November		Parent / Teacher Meetings (Year 6 only)
Tuesday 6 <sup>th</sup> November		Parent / Teacher Meetings
Wednesday 7 <sup>th</sup> November		Parent / Teacher Meetings
Tuesday 13 <sup>th</sup> November	09.00 – 11.30	School Open Morning – all are welcome
Tuesday 20 <sup>th</sup> November	14.45	Year R – Stay & Play (entry through Year R door)
Wednesday 21 <sup>st</sup> November	09.15	School Nurse Coffee Morning