



4<sup>th</sup> September 2012

Dear Parents

Welcome back!

I hope you all had the chance to enjoy the sunshine. We would like to give our new Reception parents and pupils an especially warm welcome as they join our school.

### **Building Work**

Whilst the children may not have been in schoolwork continued over the summer. We continue to improve the school with the junior playground area outside the hall being stripped back. We hope to involve the school council in further developing this area. Solar panels have been installed to reduce energy costs. The oil tank has been removed and a new heating system installed which will be more efficient and cheaper to run. The junior cloakrooms have been removed and replaced with individual lockers for each child. This should mean that we reduce incidences of children losing their jumpers and other items! Not only this but it improves the appearance of the long corridor – we will not suffer untidy cloakrooms anymore. The lockers should be big enough but it would be best to avoid bringing in overly large bags. The children will have their locker for a year and we expect them to take care of them and treat them with respect. We decided against keys for obvious reasons (mainly Kerry's sanity in the office!) but they twist shut. Various new display boards have gone up around the school and areas around the school have been redecorated. Mr Murrell our school caretaker has worked incredibly hard over the summer.

### **Staffing**

Unfortunately Anna Geal (3G) has been signed off work. Her sciatica flared up again in the last week of the holiday resulting in her being taken into hospital. She is incredibly disappointed. My understanding at this time is that she will be absent for 4 weeks. I will keep you updated.

This is never ideal at the start of a new school year but I think we have found an excellent replacement. Sarah Bartholomew is an NQT who is incredibly keen and enthusiastic about teaching the class. I wanted to keep the disruption to the class to a minimum so Sarah will be full time in 3G and has already been liaising with Mrs Giggs and Mrs Wallis about planning. A very warm welcome to Sarah

### **About Sarah**

*"I have always wanted to be a teacher. I have just finished a four year teaching degree at Brighton University and I am raring to get teaching! I have worked in a nursery but have found the older the ages of the children, the more I love it! I love reading, history and the beach; so reading a historical book on the beach is my perfect day".*

### **School Priority**

As you know reading was our big focus last year and I have already shared this success with you. Our drive to further improve standards continues. Reading will continue to remain a regular feature of Newsletters but our priority for this academic year is writing. Our aim is to ensure that rates of progress in writing at least match those achieved in reading. I am



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confident that we can build on the success we achieved with reading and that by working again so closely with you as parents we will achieve great things.

I was thrilled to bump into two Polegate school pupils, Woody and Xander at the library. They were eagerly completing the summer reading challenge. I look forward to finding out who else joined in the challenge. The certificates for this are given out in a school assembly. Don't forget to encourage your children in their reading and quizzing as they start their new year.

## **Behaviour**

As a school we were delighted with the judgements made by County that behaviour displayed by pupils around the school was good or outstanding. This confirmed our own judgements and we were already aware of aspects we wanted to develop in the new academic year.

The whole school was involved in looking at our policies, rewards and sanctions. We decided that some of our reward systems: golden tickets and certificates were no longer as motivating or as valued as they had been for the children. We felt it was time for a change.

We are introducing 'Learning without Limits' book marks. On these the children need to collect 10 stickers to move up each rung of the ladder. Once they reach the top they are rewarded with a 'Learning without Limits' certificate in assembly. The stickers are awarded for 'Good Learning'. After collecting 6 Learning without Limits certificates they achieve, bronze, then silver then gold progressively. This will be a great achievement to reach these certificates.

We are also introducing Houses. Every child and member of staff in the school will belong to a house. Each house is named after a constellation – Pegasus, Hercules, Orion and Phoenix in line again with our vision. We want children to aim for the stars! We have grouped siblings in the same house. They can be awarded House points for good behaviour eg good manners, holding doors open, being kind to others etc. Each Monday morning we will have an awards assembly when certificates can be issued and the winning house will be announced. We hope this will create an even greater sense of team work amongst different year groups. We are grateful to the PFA for funding the new book marks and stickers.

Star of the Week will continue but following the guidelines drawn up by the school council last year. We have also simplified our sanctions to ensure consistency. We hope that we will rarely need to sanction pupils but it is vital that children can enjoy uninterrupted learning free from any distractions. At Polegate School we expect pupils to come to school to learn and teachers to come to school to teach. Both should be able to do so to the best of their ability. To support this we will follow a 'good to be green' system. Every child in the class has a named card which is green on one side and amber on the reverse which is kept in a pocket on display in class.

- After an incident of poor behaviour all teachers will follow these steps initially with a verbal warning no consequence for this. Clear explanation for child to ensure they understand.
- If behaviour continues the child is expected to turn their card to amber. This will result in the child being unable to achieve Star of the Week; in KS1 kept in for 5 minutes; in KS2 kept in for 10 minutes. The incident is recorded.
- If continued the child is expected to place a red consequence card in their pocket. At this point they are referred to a member of SLT to complete work, discuss behaviour....
- If it continues they will place a Time Out card in their pocket.
- If your child is sent to Time Out you will receive a letter home informing you why. If your child is repeatedly receiving warnings you will be notified by the class teacher so that together we can work together to prevent poor behaviour escalating.

We hope that this balanced combination of rewards and punishments within a positive community atmosphere will make us outstanding. The emphasis will always be on positive reinforcement of acceptable behaviour. This is just an extract – to read the full code of conduct policy please look on the school website where there is much more detail.

**Website Logo**

Thanks to David Sheppard a parent and former pupil at Polegate who worked incredibly hard on our new logo signage, website, prospectus, handbook and certificates. David is based in Lewes at Proworx Media, a graphic design agency. We owe him a huge debt of gratitude for creating a logo to reflect the vision of the school.

**Attendance**

Whilst it's not the most exciting feature of newsletters it is no less important. Our aim as a school is to reach 97% attendance. We did not achieve this last year but that does not mean we are about to give up! Every day counts for your child's future and we take this seriously and you are legally responsible for making sure your child attends regularly. Our attendance is good and most children achieved between 95% and 100%.

If your child had 90% attendance last year they missed 4 weeks of school and by the time they leave school they will have lost a full year of education.

80% attendance means your child is missing more than half a term each year! Over the child's school career they will miss 2 whole years of education!

Holidays will not be authorised unless in exceptional circumstances. If attendance is poor or previous holidays were taken last year we will refer to county in line with policy who will then take action and issue a fine.

Our Early Morning interventions will continue this year following their success over the course of last year. If your child is offered an intervention please accept as they do make such a difference. If it is difficult for you for whatever reason please discuss this with us. We may be able to help.

**After School Club**

Stacey, Corinne and Julie have opened the After School Club this week and look forward to sharing some of the fun activities they have planned. They will use this term to explore the option of providing a hot meal at the end of the day.

Please enquire at the office if you would like any information or pop over and visit the club to see it in action.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Martin-O'Donoghue  
Headteacher