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Newsletter 5
February 2012

A message from the Headmaster

It is difficult to believe that it is already only a week to half term and although the term is short, we seem to have crammed so much in already. The weather has so far been relatively kind although as I write this, the forecast is suggesting that this may not be the case for much longer.

In the event of inclement weather resulting in the need to close the school, a message will be sent to all parents using the clarion call system. As this system is still in its infancy we would urge parents to also check the website and tune in to BBC Essex for updates.

After Half Term, it is my intention to publish a shorter newsletter once a fortnight. This will take the form of a much more colourful production which will include photos, examples of children's work, sport and music write ups, forthcoming events etc. It may even have a section for parents to contribute to. This newsletter will predominantly be distributed online via the website, although as usual, there will always be the option for you to pick up a hard copy from the office.

I am aware that a lot of the information contained in this particular newsletter is specifically related to Edwards House, although I felt it would still be useful for Andrews House parents to be made aware.

With my best wishes to you all. I hope you all enjoy a relaxing Half Term break with your families.

Nick Jones,
Headmaster

Questionnaire

Many thanks to all of you who have filled in the online questionnaire. So far we have had forty one family responses. If you have not yet put forward your views, please could you to do so as soon as possible. The children in Edwards House also completed a questionnaire before Christmas on various aspects of school life at FKS and both of these followed on from a staff questionnaire which Mr Jones asked staff to complete before starting last September. Mr Jones feels all of these questionnaires have given him a greater insight into life at FKS and have assisted his thinking as he has started to prepare his first Development / Improvement Plan. He will be putting forward some of his ideas to you over the coming weeks and hope that you will feel that they will be beneficial in providing the sort of school we all want for the children.

Behaviour (Edwards House)

One interesting aspect that came out of the pupil's questionnaires was that there was a general feeling amongst the children that behaviour was not all that it could be. It is an area that Mr Jones had previously thought needed some attention although this in no way implies that the overall behaviour of children at FKS is particularly bad – far from it. However, listening to the children is an important part of education and we have subsequently taken the opportunity to use the children's ideas to

formulate a plan to improve the behaviour at Edwards House. We have attached an information sheet with this newsletter and ask that you support the children in this venture at home as well as at school.

Rewards & Sanctions (Edwards House)

Related to the above point, Mr Jones has also decided to introduce a different reward scheme to replace the 'stars' system to ensure that we are rewarding both academic achievement and behaviour. On the flip side, there will also be a new sanctions system running alongside, to encourage the children to think about their actions a little more. Once again the attached information sheet will give further details. We do hope that you will support the school in this new initiative.

11+ Examination

As many of you have doubtless heard, a nationwide decision has been made to move the date of the annual 11+ examination forward by two months as from this coming September. This obviously has implications for our teaching programme at FKS and we are currently looking to adapt our timetable and curriculum to ensure our children are still fully prepared to the necessary standard. Our current Year 5 parents will have received a more detailed letter about this yesterday. Obviously we will keep you all updated with developments as they occur. Needless to say, your child's education remains our number one priority.

Recent Sport Fixtures at Edwards House

In the matches that have taken place so far this term, there have been some notable performances by the boys – impressive Under 11 victories against Elm Green and John Ray in Rugby and Football respectively and an outstanding win for the Under 9 Boys Rugby Team away at Holmwood House. The girls' fixtures start in earnest next week. We have been attempting to find a wider range of fixtures to ensure that all children at FKS have opportunities to represent the school. In doing so, this term's fixture list does look very full and is something we will review at the end of the term. Getting a balance right is not an exact science and in the light of the 11+ changes, we have to ensure that our Year 5 children in particular do not miss too much lesson time.

On the subject of sport, we are looking to update our match kit on a rolling programme. If there is any parent whose company would like to sponsor a kit, we would be very happy to hear from them. We are always ready to display company logos on shirts / shorts etc.

Mathletics and Clarion Call

Mathletics is now up and running and the children are already benefitting from the addition of this into some of their lessons. We have begun to use the Clarion Call system for some Sports Fixture correspondence at Edwards House but this will be developed further over the next half of the term.

The request for payment to cover the costs of these will follow the next half of the term. We hope that parents are satisfied that the benefits of both these systems represent good value for money.

The School Office

The School Office is manned from 8am until at least 4pm daily, and mostly until 4.30pm. If both the secretaries have had to leave the office for a short period dealing with children, visitors or speaking with staff, or are already taking another call, then you would not get an answer if you telephone. In this instance, please do leave a message on the answerphone and it will be retrieved and actioned as soon as possible. On the rare occasion that the Office needs to be unmanned for a longer period (for example on Sports Day) then we will be arranging for a mobile phone to be available for parents to call in the event of an urgent or emergency situation where a message cannot be left on the Office

answerphone. We hope to have this up and running after Half Term and will inform you of the mobile number as soon as possible.

School Calendar/Change of dates to note

This term, we have trialled using an online calendar only, however we do feel that parents would still benefit from a hard copy which they can keep in their bag, pin to their noticeboard etc. As from the Summer Term, we will be providing the online calendar and a paper copy will also be sent home.

We are currently scheduling in our events for the Summer Term, and will let you have these as soon as possible. In the meantime, please note the proposed dates for this year's Sports Day, although these are provisional at this stage:

Sports Day: Friday, 22nd June

Reserve Sports Day: Tuesday, 26th June

Please note that the Edwards House Production, which has traditionally taken place in the Spring Term, will take place at the end of the Summer Term this year. The provisional dates for the two afternoon performances are Wednesday, 4th and Thursday, 5th July. Due to the lack of availability of the Memorial Hall, we regret that it will not be possible to put on an evening performance.

Consequently, the Edwards House Music and Drama Concerts which normally take place in the Summer Term will now take place at the end of this term instead of the Production. These will take place on Tuesday, 27th March and Thursday, 29th March.