

7 September 2009

Dear Parents

I am delighted to welcome your children back for another year at Oakthorpe that promises to be another exciting year of opportunities, fun and achievement. The staff has already planned a school diary packed with events and activities designed to motivate and inspire your children. (I attach the planner to this letter to provide early notice of the events planned so far with the warning that some dates could change and we always look for further opportunities to enrich the curriculum)

As always the school remains busy throughout the holidays with many children enjoying Mr Smiths Club whilst around them builders and decorators work hard to renovate and improve the school buildings. This year as you can see the roof has been replaced (nearly in time for the start of term!). The new Foundation stage garden has been re-turfed and awaits the installation of play equipment. Inside the school has been redecorated and new toilets have been installed between the school halls. In addition we have equipped several classes with new lighting and accessibility features.

STAFF NEWS

I am delighted to congratulate Mrs Murray on her success in gaining Qualified Teacher status and taking up her first teaching position in this school. She started life at Oakthorpe as a pupil. She then became a voluntary parent helper before becoming a Teaching Assistant. Managing a family of three children she passed her degree and then joined our own Teaching Training programme gaining a distinction. I'm sure you will agree she deserves huge congratulations from us all. I hope she continues to have many happy years at Oakthorpe.

At this time of year we always welcome several new members of staff across the school and hopefully you will soon get to know them. We were all sad to see one of our favourite Teaching Assistants Mrs Mel Pakkos leaving the school after ten years. She managed to gain a promotion in a school nearer to her home in Muswell Hill and we all wish her every success. We are delighted to welcome Mrs Kirsten Karamallakis who will assume her responsibilities having worked on a voluntary basis for some time in the school.

I am pleased to say that this year we have been able to maintain the high level of staffing across the school allowing for the individual support for your children and providing even greater flexibility with our approach to small group teaching.

We will also be training 13 school based, full time teachers within our own 2 Schools training programme. These trainees provide tremendous additional support to your children and the programme ensures that we continually reflect on our practice in order to support trainees with the most up-to-date methods. There will be the chance to meet all the staff this week at the Phase meetings with details listed below.

CURRICULUM NEWS

We have studied your questionnaires and are of course delighted that you are overwhelmingly positive with the standards of teaching and learning, and generally with all aspects of school life at Oakthorpe. This does not make us complacent and we have an ambitious programme of school improvement planned this year. We were pleased that 100% of parents were happy with the way children were introduced into the school. We noted that 89% of parents felt queries and concerns were appropriately responded to. Please remember that your child's teacher is available before and after school if a matter requires immediate attention. A longer appointment can be arranged at a mutually convenient time if necessary. Phase leaders are a further point of contact and of course my door is always open if you are still worried or unsure. You (99% of you) clearly feel that Oakthorpe is a welcoming, friendly and accessible school but we are always keen to improve so your comments and suggestions are much valued and appreciated and we always act where we can.

The main curriculum priorities this year include:

- Further improvement in children's writing. (NB last year we recorded our highest results in KS2 SATS and one of the highest overall scores across the borough)
- ICT across the curriculum
- Geography

SCHOOL TRIPS

Another area that received positive reviews in the end of year Parent's and Children's survey is our approach to trips. (93%) Most Parents believe that the additional curriculum events are a real highlight for the children and accept that there will be a cost. Unfortunately the cost of travel in the capital has risen dramatically and usually accounts for the biggest part of the cost. Quite often costs are subsidised by the school and of course we always remind parents that the payment is a **voluntary contribution**.

CURRICULUM LETTERS

Parents will soon receive **Curriculum Letters** for the first term which gives parents curriculum information concerning their children's year group and also suggests ways for parents to help their children. As usual we will be further explaining the schools curriculum and policies in a series of Phase Meetings. Some parents commented in our survey that they did not fully understand the system. Well I would encourage parents to attend and find out how the Phase system affects them.

All Phase Meetings will be held in the Upper Hall. There will be presentations and information about the year ahead with the aim of furthering the home/school partnership. Clearly it is important for parents to attend this meeting. (**Children should NOT attend**)

PHASE MEETINGS

Tuesday 8 September KS2 (Yrs 5 & 6) Phase meeting – 6.30 pm

Wednesday 9 September KS2 - Yrs 3/4 Phase meeting 6.30 pm

Thursday 10 September KS1 Phase Meeting 6.30 pm

ENFIELD IN BLOOM

We are delighted that for the third year running we won BEST SCHOOL GROUNDS Award in the *Enfield in Bloom* Competition with judges considering we had the most attractive school grounds in Enfield.

SCHOOL UNIFORM (*School Shop hours Wednesdays 8.30 to 9.30 am*)

Whilst it is a requirement and school policy we are nonetheless extremely grateful that parents send children in full school uniform. I appreciate that alternative jumpers and polo shirts can be purchased to those sold in school however they are usually a different colour and **certainly not** the same quality. **Please try to help preserve the high standard of school dress by purchasing the correct school uniform.** Please mark all uniform items and equipment clearly. The shop is open on Wednesday morning between 8.30 - 9.30 am. If it is difficult to visit our Uniform Shop, we can send home uniform items once the payment has been forwarded.

Please ensure PE Kits are sent into school (in a marked PE Bag **NOT** carrier bag) and are then only brought home each half term.

TOLMERS CAMP – Year 5 (14-16 September) Year 6 (16-18 September)

The children will be heading off to leafy Hertfordshire for three days camping. The sun always shines on our campers and I know it will be a wonderful experience for them all.

SECONDARY TRANSFER MEETING (Wednesday 16 September 4.45 -5.45 pm – in Upper hall)

Year 6 parents (**No children please**) should attend in order to gain the necessary information that could help prevent tears later on next year. I appreciate that as children enter their final year in this school parents start to turn their thoughts to the tricky problems of Secondary Transfer. I aim to provide an insight into the process and to offer a little advice in tackling what for many can involve really difficult decisions. (Year 6 will receive information concerning Transfer to Secondary Schools 2010 and The 'Latymer application process')

OUR CURRICULUM (IN SCHOOL) CLUBS – (Years 2 – 6)

Children will be telling you soon about the 4 week clubs programme, which is due to start on Wednesday 23 September. We have tried to provide a variety of wonderful activities, which will widen your children's horizons and introduce them to something new and exciting. As usual we have many new clubs including Foreign Languages; horse riding, different forms of crafts, physical activities and of course all the usual favourites. Obviously we will try to match the children's requests with the club offered but this is not always possible and they may then join their second or third choice. There may be charges for certain clubs e.g. Horse Riding lessons at Trent Park Riding stables

OUT OF SCHOOL CLUBS

In addition to the in-school clubs we run a full programme of before school and after school clubs. Please refer to individual letters. All clubs will start as follows:

Grass Roots Play	Monday 7th September
Helen O'Grady	Wednesday 9th September
Greek School	Saturday 12th September
Gymnastics	Tuesday 15th September
Basketball	Tuesday 15th September
School football	Tuesday 15th September
Dance	Wednesday 16th September
Street dance	Thursday 17th September
ESOL	Monday 28th September (to be confirmed)

ESOL COFFEE MORNING (to be confirmed)

Monday 28 September at 9.30am in the Library

There have been some recent changes to the funding of ESOL and some learners may be liable for fees. A coffee morning will be hosted to give information about the course, including these changes, to potential learners.

HARVEST FESTIVAL – Friday 25 September

Yrs 1/2 - 9.30 am – Yrs 5/6 - 10.45 am

Yes it's that time to 'plough the field and scatter' again. Parents are invited to attend this celebration. Any produce brought into school will be distributed by the Salvation Army. Parents may also nominate local elderly residents who may also benefit from a food hamper.

PEANUTS

Please **do not** send in foods containing peanuts as we have so many children with nut allergies.

OUR SCHOOL DINNERS...

In our recent survey of parents' views, more children seemed to be enjoying school dinners, and everyone seems really happy with the quality and quantity of the meals provided. I must remind parents to check their entitlement to free school meals (FSM). If families are on Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance they will probably qualify for FSM. The relevant forms are available from the Admin Office.

Our catering firm...CATERHOUSE is fully compliant with all aspects of the School Food Trust standards and were two years ahead of 2008 deadline for nutrient based standards. The Caterhouse website enables parents to view each day's menu: Simply type in Oakthorpe Primary School on the menu section. The Website address is www.caterhouse.com.

I would also like to remind you that Caterhouse have increased their dinner money to £1.95 per day (£9.75 a week.)

Sorry to bore you but here are a few further polite reminders:

- Please ensure **all** uniform and equipment is clearly labelled
- Children should bring PE and games equipment to school in an appropriate PE bag (available from the school uniform shop). Please **DO NOT** send kit in carrier bags as these tear and equipment is lost

- Please do NOT allow children to wear jewellery to school. Only stud earrings are permissible for health and safety reasons.
- Please arrange holidays in school holiday time (work missed during term time is really hard to make up and there are awards for children with good attendance)
- Please send in absence notes if your children miss school time through illness and other unavoidable reasons
- Please aim to encourage your children to be punctual. The whistle for the start of the day is blown at 8.50 am
- Children will be marked late after 9.00 am. Continual lateness will result in a visit from Enfield Welfare service.
- Try to avoid driving down Tile Kiln Lane. (It is even busier now that staff are forced to park their cars there...and we now have over 100 members of staff)
- Try to encourage children to complete homework early in the evening and if possible share work with them.

As usual I am optimistic that we will have an excellent year and your children will be safe, secure, achieving good standards and making a positive contribution to school life. If your children experience problems or you have concerns please speak to the class teacher or staff member at the beginning or end of the day and try to get the issue resolved while the problem is a small one. The Phase Leader will always be around for further advice and of course I am available too. We are here to help but your children must be encouraged to let us know if they have a problem.

THE YEAR AHEAD

We aim to keep you up to date with events and activities planned. Our **electronic notice boards** in all playgrounds provide short news items and reminders. We also use **Parentmail** that provide a text and email service for instant reminders for individuals, groups, classes and whole school. Our **website** is a mine of information and we have on-line visitors from around the world. Please check regularly with our online calendar of events and find enclosed our year planner which is accurate now but will of course change as new events and activities are planned.

LIFE CHANNEL

Please take time to see another new initiative to the school ...our playground TV which delivers a community schools network plus an in-school television channel for showing our own films. (Information, events, filmed plays, concerts and events concerning your children and often by your children and featuring your children)

PARENT GOVERNOR VACANCY

A vacancy exists for a parent governor. We really value the contribution made by our Governors and would welcome interest from new or established parents. If you are interested please make an appointment to come in and see me.

Last year was quite a special year with many successes I am sure that with your help we will continue to succeed. I look forward to seeing you all in the near future. Please pop in to see me if there is anything concerning you I do my best to operate an open door policy and will always try to help with your concerns.

Yours sincerely



G Cumner-Price
Headteacher

(N.B. ***PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE*** ..DO NOT DRIVE DOWN TILE KILN LANE UNLESS THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE.)