

6th September 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

Autumn Term Update 1

Welcome back to the start of the new academic year. It was lovely on Monday to see the pupils return enthusiastically to their new classes and in the case of our Year 3s, to their new school. It promises to be a great year.

I try to avoid copious newsletters, opting instead for a few termly updates, with my weekly blogs providing more timely information on a regular basis. More about these later. At the start of the year, however, it is worth taking time to remind you or update you on some key school practice.

Class Expectations

In the coming days, the class teachers will send home a letter outlining the class expectations for this year. It will cover aspects of class life including homework, trips and visits, as well as some of the topics the pupils will cover. Coupled with more detailed information relating to the curriculum which is already on the school website, you should have a good understanding of the year ahead.

A copy of each of these letters will also be placed on the school website in the curriculum section. Our aim is to try and reduce the number of times you have to say, 'We didn't know,' but as the teachers will highlight, if you are ever unsure, please do come in and ask.

School Lunches

School lunches seemed to work very well yesterday. As a reminder, if your child would like a school lunch, then these can be ordered and paid for through School Grid. Details are on the school website. If your child is ever off school, please remember to cancel the lunch for that day, as you may still be charged if this isn't done.

What are we getting up to in school?

We try to keep you updated with what the pupils are doing in class and on trips via our very active twitter feed (@whitehilljunior). This is a secure feed meaning only people we allow to follow can read the tweets and see the photos.

We have seen that many Year 3 parents have already asked to follow us and we are working through the requests, getting them approved. If you think you have asked to follow us but are not yet seeing the tweets, please do feel free to get in touch with the school office and we can hopefully put family names to twitter names.

One of the best ways to see what we have been getting up to each week and to get an overview of the following week is through my weekly blog. Every Friday afternoon, I will send a link home to my latest blog which will be on the school website. These are a light-hearted look at what I get up to each week and also what some of the pupils have been doing.

Uniform

The pupils all looked so smart when they arrived at school. Thank you for this. Our Friends' Association do have a stock of quality 'pre-loved' uniform if you ever needed anything. Please feel free to contact Mrs Lanni or Mrs Granger in the school office with any uniform related questions.

Building Works

Over the summer break, Mr Waluk has been very busy getting the school ready for a new year. The dining room floor was varnished and polished again and the school hall was given a fresh coat of paint.

In addition, we have had builders in for the entire holiday replacing the two toilet blocks in the school. These look lovely and because of their design will hopefully stay nice for many years to come. There are automatic flushers on the toilets as well as automatic taps. Most importantly for the pupils, the locks on the doors are far more robust. There is a little bit of work left in order to finish off the project but they are fully operational.

Attendance

Attendance at Whitehill has remained very good, even over the last year. That being said, guidance from the government and the local authority is going to make it even harder for schools to authorise absences. I am expected to monitor attendances / absences closely and report those which fall below certain levels. I will write to families where a pupil's attendance is beginning to cause concern so that we can work together to encourage them to be in school. I am required to remind you that a fixed penalty notice may be issued where a pupil has more than 15 half days of unauthorised absence in a term.

Music Lessons

We have had a few enquiries relating to music lessons at the start of the term but we do not handle any aspect of peripatetic lessons at all. Any enquiries relating to individual lessons should be directed straight to Herts Music Service (<https://www.hertsmusicservice.org.uk/>). The only exception is with piano lessons, in which case, please contact the school office and we will direct you to the right person.

Calendar

The school calendar for the year is almost finalised. All dates are put on the calendar on the school website. Do have a look in the coming days for events that may be relevant to you. We will also contact you directly about an event which requires you to do something, for example our consultation evenings, the first of which are in the week before October half term.

Everyone at Whitehill is looking forward to the year ahead, particularly given the disruption of the previous three years. I will be keeping a very close eye on the significant strains on our budgets due to the cost of energy and general cost of living pressures and will be doing my best to ensure that these do not impact upon the pupils' learning and opportunities in school. It is going to be difficult, but you know I will do my very best.

Communication is key to everything we do. If you have any questions at all, please do come and ask. My admin team, Mrs Lanni and Mrs Granger, in the school office are more than happy to help you. You can pop in, phone them or email (admin@whitehill.herts.sch.uk) and they will try and help. I am usually on the playground every morning before school for a quick question or even a chat about football or musical theatre! Do feel free to come and say 'hello' if you see me looking a bit lonely.

As teachers will have told you themselves, the best way to find out about something happening in class is to talk with them in the first instance. They are usually free at the start and end of the day or if you feel a little longer may be needed, feel free to arrange a separate meeting.

Best wishes,



Steve Mills
Headteacher