

**Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2018**  
**St Nicholas CE Primary Academy**  
**Weekly Newsletter**

**Headteacher: Christopher Dale**



Dear Parents and Carers,

Well it's been another very busy week at St Nicholas. The Year 6 children have returned from their activity week at Kingswood and while they would all say they are tired, I hope they had a very good time. I have to congratulate them for being excellent ambassadors for the school. During the week we all had to conquer our own challenges taking part on the climbing wall, zip wire, 3G swing, Jacobs Ladder as well as many other events. The children showed great determination and resilience in their efforts not to mention the support they provided each other. Do see their photos on the schools Twitter page.

We have had the Parent Council visit the school this week and they have again looked at the school dinner and playtime provision. I look forward to their feedback at the next meeting but have been pleased with the initial responses received.

I am also delighted to learn of the recognition received by the Parent Council in a recent article published by ParentKind – a national association for parents (please see attached). They have recognised the hard work and journey of our parent council and everyone involved is to be congratulated. We still however want to move from strength to strength and can only do so with you support – if you have any suggestions or ideas please do contact your class Parent Councillor.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Dale

**Headteacher**

**Lantern Parade**

As you will be aware the children of St Nicholas have the opportunity to prepare their own lanterns for the Lantern Festival on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> December

For the events at school to be successful we need children to bring in one CLEAR, CLEAN, two litre plastic bottle with ALL LABELS REMOVED.

Two after-school workshops will be held on 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> November as well as a full day workshop in school for KS1 children on 4<sup>th</sup> December. These will all be free but we would like the children to bring in the items from home as requested.

A reminder of the dates:

After school sessions

Key Stage 2 wk 1 – Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> Nov - limited to 15 pupils

Key Stage 2 wk 2 – Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> Nov - limited to 15 pupils

Letters will be sent out next week. Places will be allocated on a first come first serve basis.

Key Stage One whole day session will take place on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> December.

**Dates for your diary**

**November**

**Fri 16<sup>th</sup>**

**School Closed**

**Mon 26<sup>th</sup>**

National Height & Weight Measurements  
YR & Y6

**December**

**Sun 1<sup>st</sup>**

Tree of Love Service, St Nicholas Church from 5pm onwards.

**Thurs 6<sup>th</sup>**

St Nicholas Day School Service at St Nicholas Church 9.30am

**St Nicholas House - non-uniform day**

**Mon 10<sup>th</sup>**

Whole School Panto

**Thurs 13<sup>th</sup>**

KS1 Nativity  
Performance at 2.00pm  
Parent Council Forum  
6.30pm

**Fri 14<sup>th</sup>**

KS1 Nativity  
Performance at 9.30am

**Wed 19<sup>th</sup>**

Christmas Jumper Day  
Christmas Lunch Day  
KS2 Christmas Service at St Nicholas Church  
9:30am

**LAST DAY OF TERM**

**Children return to school on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2019**



## Attendance – Every Day Counts

It is essential that your child comes to school on time every day. Learning begins immediately with **Early Morning Work** when the class doors open at 8.35am, when many additional interventions are also scheduled for this time which may include your child.



This term's collective worship focus is:  
**COMPASSION**

Our whole-school attendance this week was **97.2%**.

Class attendance rates this week			
Hedgehog	95.1%	Rowan	95.8%
Squirrel	92.4%	Beech	93.8%
Badger	100%	Birch	98.1%
Otter	100%	Maple	94.9%
Fox	98.2%	Willow	97.7%
Hare	94.9%	Oak	99.6%
Chestnut	96.1%	Elm	97.1%

## Well done this week to

- **Badger & Otter**
- **Oak**

Thank you for realising the importance of sending your child to school every day.

## Reception class 2019

Children born between 1st September 2014 and 31st August 2015 will start school in September 2019. This is not an automatic process; **you need to apply for a Reception place**.

Applications close at midnight on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2019. Applications should be made online at:- [www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/school-places](http://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/school-places)

## Star Award



Star of the week awards went to:

**Hedgehog:** Alexa-Grace M, **Otter:** Rocco V, **Fox:** Lilly M, **Rowan:** Summer H, **Birch:** Holly S, **Willow:** Brody R

**Nicholas Bear was awarded to Beech and Birch classes**

## Poppy appeal

Many thanks to all those who supported the school in raising funds for the Poppy Appeal this year in what was a very special commemorative year marking the end of World War One. The total raised by the school was £280.70. Thank you.

The children at school marked the occasion with their own service of remembrance as well as children and the choir taking part in the civic events over the weekend.



## Year 6 – Kingswood week



**Community Friendsh*h*ip Perseverance Ambition Res*h*pect Trust**

## ParentKind Article

### Parent Council creates a vital link between home and school



#### Key Summary

Having faced a challenging few years, St Nicholas CE Primary Academy decided to set up a Parent Council to create a vital link between home and school. We spoke to the school's Parent Council Chair, Jenny Ross, about why it's been so beneficial.

In 2014, following an Ofsted inspection, St Nicholas was graded inadequate and in the lowest 10% nationally. Staff turnover was high and the school suffered from low parental engagement. Since the appointment of the current head, Mr Dale, in September 2015, the school has been working hard to change this outcome.

"As a former pupil, St Nicholas is a school that's close to my heart," says Jenny. "Two of my children attend the school and my third child will be joining them soon."

Jenny is passionate about children's welfare and education, having worked as a Family Support Officer in the local children's centre. She's on track to begin training as a teacher next September, and was keen to support the school in any way she could.

#### Parental engagement

"Mr Dale wanted to create a school where parents would feel included in decisions about their children's education," Jenny recalls. "Having successfully implemented a Parent Council at his previous school, Mr Dale believed that we could do the same at St Nicholas, to bring home and school together in a hugely positive way."

Jenny said that the idea for a Parent Council was initially met with some scepticism in terms of how it would benefit the school "We arranged some low key advertising via the school newsletter and spoke to a number of parents," she explains. "Once they understood that it would enable them to have a voice, the question eventually changed from 'What is it?' to 'How can I be a part of it?'"

#### Establishing a Parent Council

As well as drawing on the experience of the head, the school found lots of help about setting up a Parent Council from Parentkind "The online help was easy to follow and we realised the importance of consulting with - and involving - parents, governors and staff. There was also lots of information about things to consider and the need to really think about what you want a Parent Council to achieve for your school.

"In the early days, although we were united in wanting to help the school somehow, I think our meetings were too formal - and it was more difficult for members of the Council to speak up," Jenny recalls. "Numbers were low and we felt that we weren't reaching as many parents as we had hoped."

**Community Friendship Perseverance Ambition Respect Trust**

## Parentkind training

Recognising that the Parent Council had hit something of a stumbling block, the head suggested attending a Parentkind training course aimed specifically at parental engagement "The course was absolutely what I needed," says Jenny. "Since the training I have felt empowered and even more supported to develop our Council. In under a year, we have gone from having no Parent Council to a dedicated group that supports the school across 14 classes, from reception to year 6."

## Communication

One of the main messages that Jenny took from the Parentkind training was that communication is key "Soon afterwards we increased communication to staff and parents about the Council and word soon began to spread about how it could support them. "Our meetings are more relaxed and less formal to encourage whole-group participation. We now have two signage boards in school, which give us a greater presence. They're a really useful way of removing the 'mystery' and explaining who we are and what we do."

## Links to partner schools

Jenny says that another benefit of attending the Parentkind training course was to create links with other schools "It was a great opportunity to meet with other school representatives and we have since developed a partnership link with a school in Surrey, which is similar in size to St Nicholas. Our note-taker, Suzie Guest, and I visited the school and we are looking to set up a reciprocal visit in the near future, to share ideas and support each other. We have also had two other schools within the multi-academy trust interested in knowing how the group operates."

## The Future

Jenny says that the Parent Council has been really successful in giving parents a voice "Sometimes parents don't feel comfortable taking concerns to teachers, either because they lack the confidence or feel that their concern isn't significant enough. We're a way to bridge the gap and provide that vital link between parents and school. Some suggestions, such as changes to the pen license policy, have changed following feedback from parents." Jenny tells us that there are discussions within school to start a new 'Friends of St Nicholas/PTFA' and also to join the Parent Governors, which all stems from the successful Parent Council group.

Jenny says "St Nicholas has had a difficult journey but the school is turning that around. Our Parent Council has proven that positive relationships help everyone and that wellbeing within the school is inevitably increased."



- A pro-active parental voice comprising a strong group of 17 committed parents across 14 classes, from a position of having very low parental engagement
- Partnership working with a school in Surrey and three schools in Kent. All keen to hear about the Council and how it's becoming such a success
- Canterbury Christ Church University have asked Chair, Jenny Ross, to deliver a presentation to the University in May 2019 on the success of the Parent Council
- The Parent Council is branching out into other areas of the school, to help strengthen relationships further. Jenny is currently in the process of supporting another council member to re-launch the PTFA (which had previously been folded) and at least one other member is applying to be a parent governor
- Strong links within the school - with teachers, parents and children. The Council is now a secure part of the school that draws a lot of proactive interest.

"Since we established St Nicholas's Parent Council in 2017 the benefits have been extremely positive. Perhaps the greatest achievement has been in creating strong, positive lines of communication between parents and the school in a meaningful way. Since attending the Parentkind training course I have felt empowered to develop our Parent Council further and have enjoyed seeing it develop from a new idea into a large positive group." Jenny Ross, Chair