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Friday 4th September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

The year has got off to a great start in Squirrel Class with all the children enjoying being back after such an unusual break. It is lovely for us to have a full class back as well even though we have new protocols in terms of maintaining class 'bubbles' which involve lunchtimes in the classroom, separate break-times from other classes, no whole school assemblies and a lot of cleaning and handwashing for all. School is definitely a bit different to 'normal' but we are doing our best to maintain our happy school atmosphere despite these important and necessary changes.

Below, I have outlined a few things you need to know in terms of arrangements for Squirrel Class in particular. This year by the way, Squirrel Class is a purely Year 2 class due to the large cohort size.

READING

All children have been given a reading book suitable for their book band colour. We are still waiting for the arrival of new Reading Records so for the time being there is a piece of paper slipped into the front of the book on which to record their reading. We will change the reading book as often as we can – at least once a week, and more often than this we hope. Re-reading the same book a number of times is good for the children's reading progress. Learning a story thoroughly helps them gain familiarity with new words and phrases and deepens understanding. Moving on rapidly is not necessarily considered to be beneficial. So, reading regularly (every day) with an adult, accurately and carefully is one of the most important things in making progress. It is also very important that the story is discussed with the child – this discussion helps them with their understanding and comprehension which is just as important as accurate word reading.

We will try to ensure that all children read with an adult in school at least once a week but it is the regular, focussed input at home that makes the biggest difference – there is no doubt about this. Unfortunately we are not able to have adult reading helper volunteers in the school building at the moment for obvious reasons, which does mean that the children will not have as many opportunities to read with an adult in school as we'd like.

OUTDOOR LEARNING

Squirrel Class will be having outdoor learning sessions on Fridays, starting next week on Friday 11th Sept. For this reason, they can come into school on Fridays in their outdoor clothes. The outdoor sessions may be quite muddy - especially when they play with the mud kitchen etc. We will be learning and practising many outdoor skills as well as using the outdoors to further our core curricular learning objectives (maths and English). The skills and outdoor activities we will be doing are all risk assessed, and no activity will be undertaken unless this is in place. The children, as I'm sure I don't need to tell you, absolutely love these outdoor learning sessions and the benefits are clear to see.

It would be very helpful if children have a pair of wellies in school permanently although I realise that this may be difficult. We have a small stock of spare wellies in school which we can use if a child does not have

suitable footwear in school. Obviously at this time of year and as we move towards colder, wetter weather, a warm waterproof coat is important.

PHONICS SCREENING

As a result of lockdown and the cancellation of primary assessments last term, we are required to do a phonics screening test with all Year 2 children towards the end of this Autumn Term because they all missed the normal Year 1 phonics screening test in June. For this reason we are continuing to do daily phonics teaching with all Year 2 children this term.

HOME LEARNING

There will be specific home learning tasks given to Year 2 children starting in the Spring Term. In the meantime:

Reading: School reading books and any other books you read with your children at home. For school book reading please initial and date your child's reading record whenever you listen to your child read.

Number work: Counting forwards and backwards to 20 then 50; being able to say what number is 10 more or 10 less than any given number; counting forwards and backwards in twos on even numbers; learning times tables such as the 2's, 5's and 10's – this is all ongoing homework for the Autumn term.

PE

PE and sports will again take place on a Wednesday morning with Adriano. ALL children should come into school wearing PE kit on Wednesdays for these sessions which are an important part of their curricular learning. The kit should consist of:

- Indoor footwear (daps)
- Outdoor footwear (trainers)
- Dark blue or black shorts/sports trousers
- White sports t-shirt
- Hoodie or sports sweatshirt

Please do not send in any team strips or team logo shirts/shorts.

Please DO make sure that all items of clothing including footwear is clearly name-labelled.

LABELLING CLOTHING

PLEASE make sure that all items of clothing your child wears/brings into school is clearly labelled PARTICULARLY SWEATSHIRTS – it makes such a difference. This includes coats and footwear.

SNACKS AND WATER

We are asking all children to bring in their own water bottle each day which will be sent home each day for washing and refilling. If you would like your child to have a small healthy snack at morning break, please send them in with something. Please do not send in sweets.

Please do get in touch via email (address at top) with any concerns or questions you may have – I'm always happy to help.

Andy Pullen

(Class Teacher and Chief Squirrel)