

SEPTEMBER

8.9.25



WHITEGATE COFE PRIMARY

Newsletter

Welcome back! We have had a calm and positive start to the new year and it has been lovely to see our six classes settling so smoothly with, for some, new children, and for others, new teachers. We hope that you had some lovely quality family time over the summer break.

Before diving into this first newsletter, you might like to grab a cup of tea or coffee - and perhaps a biscuit or two! This edition includes a few key annual updates, along with some important safety reminders to help ensure a smooth beginning to the term. Your support with these matters is greatly appreciated.

A huge welcome to the 21 new starters who have begun their Whitegate journey in Acorns, along with Saphire who has joined the Y2s and Karina who has joined Y3s. We are really looking forward to getting to know you all. We currently have 149 children enrolled, which reflects a decrease from 165 since 2022. This picture is being seen across the county as birth rates are low. While numbers have dipped, fortunately, we have been able to remain at six classes both last year and this; however, it is looking increasingly likely that we will need to reduce to five next September.

This year, we also welcome Miss Bouckley, who will be joining us very soon. She will be working with Hawthorn throughout this year completing her teacher training.

Curriculum Evenings

As the turn-out for these meetings have historically been low, the decision has been made to combine class presentations this year. Three meetings will be held: one for Acorns; one for KS1 (Rowan and Birch) and one for KS2 (Elder, Hawthorn and Oak). Please see the list of dates at the bottom this newsletter. Please make every effort to attend as these evenings provide important information for the year ahead, as well as giving you the opportunity to ask any questions or raise any concerns that you may have. They also give us the opportunity to just have a catch-up!

Parental Conduct

We are only four days into the school year and already the office staff have had unkind emails and verbal exchanges with several parents. You may notice that we have a 'zero tolerance' poster on the main door to our school and ask that parents are respectful and patient in their manner. Please also remember this when sending any emails or phoning.

I am also aware of the content of many parent chat groups, where unkind things are being said about staff and the school in general. Please be assured that everything that we do here at Whitegate has the safety and wellbeing of all of the children at the forefront and parents need to trust us as professionals.

Toast

A decision was made part-way through last academic year to reduce Acorns, Rowan and Birch toast to half a slice per child. This decision was made for several reasons, including the fact that there was a great deal of waste from many children each day as they were throwing half in the bin.

Toast is an optional and if parents feel that 25p is too much for half a slice, then please do not feel the need to purchase it as we always have free fruit in school.

Uniform and Jewellery

Thank you to all those who are following the uniform policy. The new royal blue polo shirts are looking very smart! Please remember that socks should always be plain, especially on PE days when socks are fully on view.

Please also ensure that you have labelled your children's uniform, especially jumpers and cardigans. Children often take these off during the day and it is already proving difficult to return them to their owners when they have been left around school, as so many are unnamed!

We have a huge stock of pre-loved uniform in school - mainly jumpers and cardigans. If you require any items, please call in at the school office.

Apart from watches and stud earrings, jewellery is not permitted in school. As per our policies, children who cannot take their earrings out are not able to join in with PE. As this subject is part of our core offer and not optional, please refrain from getting your children's ears pierced during the school year. Thank you.

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Parking

As the cobbles on the loop have still not been fixed, it is out of use to everyone except staff and those with blue badges. This afternoon, a few parents used it to turn round or to wait for older children to pick up siblings. Please refrain from doing this.

When parking in the village, please do not park, or drive, on the pavements, across driveways, on double yellow lines or on the zig-zags at the front of school. For everyone's safety, please do not drop your children off on the zigzags either.

Let us all remember the contents of the 'Parking Charter' that the vast majority of you agreed to and signed last academic year. For those who have just joined our Whitegate family, a copy of our 'Parking Charter' will be sent out soon.

Reading Challenge

Well done to all of those children who took part in the summer Reading Challenge ... and thank you to parents for supporting this. This Friday, in our Celebration Worship, we will recognise the efforts of all of those who have taken part, so please remember to send in any certificates or medals that your children have received.

Astonishingly 1 in 8 adults across the world cannot read. We believe that everyone has the right to read and this is why it is so important to read at home. As our homework policy states, 'Children whose reading is not supported by adults at home do not make the same good progress as their peers. Reading impacts on children's achievement in all other subjects.'

Extra-Curricular Clubs

As we settle into the new school year clubs that are run by school staff will not be operating until October (not including any maths booster groups for invited children in Hawthorn and Oak). Mr Parrish's sports clubs start this week and craft club with Mrs Finney starts next week. A reminder that there are a variety of activities taking place in The Ark each week. These are as follows:

These sessions last until 4:15pm and cost £4.50 each. Please book and pay via ParentMail.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Sports and Games	Construction	Clay Modelling	Baking	Movie Night

Monday 6th October is National Mad Hatter Day, so why not celebrate with a special tea party? This takes place in The Ark on this date. Be sure to book your children in for this special occasion as places are limited.

Beginning of the Day

Please note that the gates to the playground do not open until 8:30am so if you are dropping off your child to walk onto the playground by themselves, please do not do so before 8:30am. From 8:30am until the whistle is blown at approximately 8:40am, **there is limited supervision** with one member of staff standing by the pedestrian gate on the bottom playground. On really wet mornings, the children will be advised to go straight to their classrooms. However, if it is damp or drizzling, we will aim to be outdoors. Please send your children suitably dressed for the weather every day. Thank you.

Collection at the End of the Day

Children in Acorns up to, and including Elder, are directly supervised at the end of the day as we complete the hand-over to their adult. The older children in Hawthorn and Oak are able to do this without their class teacher being present; however, they must come back into the classroom if their adult is not on the playground. Children in Hawthorn and Oak are not allowed to leave the playground without an adult unless this has been discussed with me first. Please can you reiterate this message at home. Again, the play equipment is not to be used at the end of the school day. Thank you.

Attendance

Article 28 and 29 of the Rights of the Child ensure children have the right to education no matter who they are and that this education develops their personality and abilities as much as possible. Together, we need to support our children to access their right to education and the opportunities that regular attendance and engagement in their learning provide.

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There are many things that families can do to help our children make the most of what education can offer them. Ensuring that children have enough sleep, maintain healthy routines and focus on what they enjoy about school prior to returning is always a useful start and a good way to maintain motivation as the school year progresses. It may seem that an odd day off school doesn't really matter, but when a child or young person is persistently absent, research tells us that this can impact on their levels of participation, attainment and ultimately their future opportunities. We would ask that, where possible, term time holidays are avoided - whilst we appreciate the impact the cost of living is having on our families, the consequences of missing teaching time can be significant for all learners. **If your child's attendance falls below 95% then school will be in touch to offer support to help with this.**

As per our policy, we ask that where possible medical appointments, including the dentist, are made outside of school hours. If your child is absent due to an appointment, we will need proof of this so that we can keep our registers up-to-date.

Please let us know by 9.30am on the first day of absence the reason for your child's absence. To ensure that your child is safe, it will be necessary for us to contact you by telephone if we have not received confirmation of your child's absence by then.

Lateness

Although occasional lateness due to unforeseen circumstance is understandable please ensure that your child is in the playground when the whistle is blown each day. This allows your child to join friends entering their classroom, enables children to take part in the normal settling-in routines and ensures that they are able to take part in all learning from the very beginning of the day.

Like every school, we monitor attendance and lateness and it may be necessary to be in contact with you to discuss this in order to avoid this becoming routine.

The school day begins at 8:45am. If your child is not on the playground by this time, they will have to enter through the school office and must be accompanied by a parent as you will need to sign them in. To keep children safe, please refrain from dropping your child off on the loop and asking them to walk to the main entrance on their own.

School Dinners and Packed Lunches

If your child has a school lunch, please remember to order this at home as we do not have time to do this each day. School lunches are free for all children in Acorns, Rowan and Birch. For those in KS2, **please ensure that your online payments are up-to-date at all times.** If you have any difficulties paying online or with the payments themselves, please let us know straight away so that we can assist. If you still have an outstanding balance from last academic year, this needs paying as a matter of urgency. Thank you.

A child in our school has a severe allergic reaction to peanuts/nuts. This allergic reaction (anaphylactic shock) can occur through ingestion of peanut/nut products, cross contamination and breathing peanuts in the air. Since this condition can be life-threatening, we are asking for your help in minimising the risk to this child by:

- a) Avoiding giving children peanuts in school lunches
- b) Avoiding giving peanut butter sandwiches, other spreads containing nuts such as Nutella and snacks/bars containing nuts or labelled "may contain nut traces" in school lunches.
- c) Asking children not to share their lunches.

The advice for school packed lunches is that sweets, chocolate and crisps should be avoided. For lunchbox ideas and recipes please look at the NHS website: <https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes/>

Communication

As previously communicated, we are no longer using X (Twitter) to share photos of the children's learning and wider experiences in school. We are currently looking into alternatives. Thank you for your patience while we investigate this. If you have any suggestions, please do not hesitate to let us know. Thank you.

Autumn Fair

As usual, the children in Oak class will be organising and running our annual autumn fair. This will take place on Thursday 23rd October in the afternoon - more details to follow. So that we can be super organised, can we ask for donations of toys, games and bric-a-brac please.

The fair finishes at 4pm, so an advance warning to those in Oak who will need to stay until approximately 4:15pm to complete the clear-up.

School Reports/Assessment

Informal assessment is part of everyday teaching and learning, whilst more formal periodic standardised tests in mathematics and English help us to check that our children are making the progress that we would expect. In addition to this, the following statutory tests are undertaken:

- Children in Acorns will complete a baseline assessment in the next couple of weeks;
- Rowan children will complete a phonics check in June (plus any children in Birch who didn't pass last year);
- Y4s complete an online multiplication check in June;
- Y6s complete SATs in reading, spelling, grammar and punctuation, along with mathematics in May. Writing is teacher assessed based on a number of pieces of independent work that take place throughout the year.

All assessments, whether informal or formal, help teachers to identify areas of learning that are strengths or indicate gaps in knowledge (at both class and individual child level). This year, we will be trialling a new reporting schedule to parents, providing a written report in the spring term, rather than the summer and then following this up with a parent consultation meeting towards the end of the year. We are hoping that by doing this, you will feel better informed as to the progress and attainment of your child, as well as how you can support them in their learning at home. Children in Acorns and Y6 will still receive an end-of-year written report.

Homework

As already mentioned, reading at home four times each week is crucial. If children are not able to do this, then we will ensure that they catch-up at break or lunch-time. (We will also ensure that they get some time to run around in the fresh air too!)

Children need to know their multiplication tables by the end of Y4, hence the statutory test. This is vital as they are not able to access the Y5 and Y6 mathematics curriculum without this knowledge. For this reason, those children who have access to Times Table Rock Stars (TTRS) must complete activities several times a week as part of their homework. We are raising the profile of this during the academic year and more information will be available very soon.

Thank you for your anticipated support in all of these matters. If you have any questions or would like to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to get in touch. Thank you in advance for your continued partnership.

Every blessing,

C Mackenzie

Key Dates

Tuesday 16th September	6pm	KS1 Curriculum Evening in the hall
Thursday 18th September	All day	Oak's Islam Workshop
Tuesday 23rd September	6pm	KS2 Curriculum Evening in the hall
Thursday 25th September	6pm	Acorns Curriculum Evening
Friday 26th September	9:30am - 11:30am	MacMillan Coffee Morning hosted by Y6 (Individual class times to be confirmed)
Friday 26th September	TBC	School Disco
Wednesday 1st October	12:30pm	Senior Friends Lunch
Friday 10th October	8am	Family Breakfast
Thursday 23rd October	1:30pm - 4pm	Autumn Fair