



Head's

Update

September 2018

KEEPING YOU INFORMED FROM MRS O'CONNOR

Welcome back!

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome back to the new school year, we hope you enjoyed the lovely weather and the summer break. The children are all looking incredibly smart and it was nice to see so many smiling faces coming through the school gates last week.

I would like to take the opportunity to welcome all of our new families who have joined us and look forward to working with you and seeing you at some of our events throughout the year.

Unfortunately, since 2013, the school has been judged by Ofsted as Requiring Improvement, and the KS2 SATs results have been below the National Average so elements of change are necessary in order to ensure the children of Alfred Street receive a Good education. Over the course of the year, I will send out regular Head's Updates in order to inform you of some of the new initiatives that are being put into place to improve outcomes for the children at Alfred Street.

I have been in post as Head teacher since September 2017 and below is a summary of initiatives from the last academic year that we will continue to embed:

New Behaviour System launched:

- Children can earn Dojos (individual reward points) and receive a prize from the reward cabinet when they collect 100, 250 and 400 points
- A new Behaviour Support Assistant has been employed to support children with making good choices and managing their behaviour. She also provides a range of pastoral interventions such as: anger management, developing social skills and building self esteem
- A consequence ladder has been put into place to ensure a fair and consistent approach
- More rewards have been put into place such as for excellent attendance and exemplary behaviour
- There is a focus upon values through our assemblies, Alfo Agreement, award ceremonies and curriculum

Safeguarding:

- All external doors are now locked during the day
- Door releases have been lowered so all children can reach them
- New home time arrangements are in place so that teachers are aware who children have gone home with
- New emergency evacuation procedures in place
- Safer recruitment audit carried out by the Local Authority graded the procedures in place as 'Good'

Curriculum:

- Introduction of Check-ins/Check-out in Maths to ascertain children's prior knowledge/gaps in order to inform teacher's planning and the pitch of the work
- Introduction of Cold Write and Hot Write to inform teacher's planning and to demonstrate progress
- Training and development of reading skills
- Introduction of values and enrichment days— Celebration of Chinese New Year, Diversity Day, Eastern European Day, Royal Family Wedding Day, Science Day
- Introduction of Prime, Advancing and Deep Challenges to ensure progression of skills
- Skills sessions introduced to embed and consolidate learning
- Mind the Gap launched—providing children with the opportunity to revisit gaps in learning
- New spelling curriculum introduced
- New library that encourages a love of reading
- New teacher assessment system introduced to ensure accurate assessment

Other Initiatives:

- Learning environment celebrates children's work and supports learning through Working Walls
- Improved awareness for parents/carers of what the children are learning and experiencing through the half termly Alfo Gazette, Facebook and School App updates
- Introduction of 'optional' Takeaway Homework to consolidate learning in other areas of the curriculum and encourage families to work together on a shared project
- Improved activities for lunchtimes— new fitness equipment, Fun club and Chill out club (offering Just Dance, use of computers, access to the library, colouring and craft activities and board games), new play equipment and play leaders organising games.

We have also kept many of the much loved Alfo traditions such as: working closely with the community, Harvest celebrations, Team Points, Carol Service, Dance Day, Maypole Dancing, Commemorating the Alfo Bombing.

Throughout the course of last year, the Local Authority visited 3 times and spent 2 full days carrying out reviews with two partnership Head teachers from schools within Northamptonshire. They have been incredibly pleased with the progress we have made. Please see comments below:

"This visit was a pleasure. The school has a warmth and a sense of purpose. There is clear evidence of the new initiatives being recently introduced-the staff were welcoming to us as visitors and on-board with the head teacher's vision and ideas. The next step for the senior leadership will be to ensure that everything introduced is having the intended impact and outcomes on the standards throughout the school and that the non-negotiables/consistencies are paying dividends. I very much look forward to being invited back to see the inevitable progress made."

Mark Currell, Partnership Head teacher, 8th November 2017

'Having visited the school a year ago the progress made is clearly evident in the improved consistency of approach to teaching and learning across the school. There are clear expectations through the use of working walls, differentiation using the PAD system and the behaviour standards displayed in all classrooms. The redeveloped library demonstrates the value and status now placed on reading. The children and staff are rightly proud of the improvements they have made so far and recognise the impact of the HT and other leaders in helping them to achieve this.' Julia Alison Partnership Head teacher, 21st March, 2018

Staff are extremely supportive of the new initiatives and have embraced the changes we have made. We all work incredibly hard as a team to improve the experiences and outcomes for the children of Alfred Street. All visitors to the school comment upon how welcoming, caring and nurturing we are, and professionals comment on the progress being made.

However, one recent change has caused some controversy this week, as we have made the decision not to open the school gates this academic year until 8.45am. This change is in order to ensure that we are providing a safe environment for the children of Alfred Street when they are in our care.

As you may be aware, in the past, the children have been allowed to enter the grounds at 8.30am despite the school day not beginning until 8.50am and have been supervised solely by the site supervisor until 8.45am when an additional member of staff has come out on duty. This has been the arrangement for several years, but as a staff we did not feel that this arrangement enabled adequate supervision for a number of reasons. These include the fact that children could easily leave the school grounds undetected; children could be taking photos on their mobile phones, which although were not encouraged, were still brought in; children running around could have accidents; and members of the community could come onto the school grounds whilst the children were playing. All of these potential risks pose as safeguarding concerns and therefore we felt this needed to be changed going forward. We contacted schools locally and many of them informed us that they did not open their gates until 8.40/8.45am and so we have decided to take the same action and will then be in a position to have 4 members of staff supervising the gates and entry into school.

Furthermore, as I am sure you have heard on the news, there have been major cuts to school budgets. The school is no longer in a financial position to provide safe, free childcare to what could potentially be 240 children (at full capacity) in the form of 'before school provision' as the school day does not begin until 8.50am which has not changed. As our school day is approximately 15 minutes longer than other Primary, Infant and Junior settings, I am unable to direct teachers until 8.45am due to teacher's pay and conditions, work-life balance and wellbeing. It is a common misconception that teacher's work 9am-3.30pm. The school day may be shorter than an office day, but teachers and leaders spend many hours before school, after school, at the weekends and during the holidays, planning, marking, assessing and carrying out school improvement. In an average week a teacher plans 20 one hour lessons and can mark up to 480 books. A study carried out by the National Union for Teachers found the average working week for a teacher was 54.4 hours. It would also be unfair for me to expect my teachers to work longer than their colleagues locally (the majority of local schools close between 3.00pm and 3.25pm). Furthermore, the budget that the school does receive will be spent on improving the experiences for the children within the school day.

We do not have an obligation to provide any 'before school provision' but we appreciate that there is a need by parents and have tried to put provision in place but this does come at a cost to parents rather than the school as it is a 'before school' provision. We have offered two different types of provision to try to be accommodating. Breakfast club runs from 8.00-8.45am at a cost of £2 a day which is used by a number of children whose parents/carers have to be at work before the start of the school day. We also realise that as a Junior School, we are in a unique position as Infant age siblings are not able to be part of our school, and as such, we have said that our pupils with infant age siblings can attend the Early Morning Club at 8.30 am for free to enable parents time to get younger siblings to their setting. We have extended this provision to the rest of the school for Early Morning Club for a cost of 50p per day. The school does not make any profit from the provision; the money collected pays for the staff to supervise the children and provide activities. We also appreciate that parents/carers have siblings at other schools like many families so perhaps it would be worth investigating what provision they provide for 'before school' care if the options we are providing are not suitable.

Parents have a responsibility and a duty of care to ensure that their children are safe before the start of school (8.50am) and after the end of the school day (3.35pm). This is the same with all schools across the country. If you do not feel you can provide adequate supervision for your child/children and you feel that they are unsafe, then you will need to make arrangements to ensure that their safety whilst in your care. We have put options into place and there are other providers locally that offer a service.

It is not my intention to cause any upset, but I have a duty of care to ensure the safety of children when in my care. As a school, we wanted to be open and give our perspective. Please do not feel that we do not care because this certainly is not the case. We too are in a difficult position. I appreciate that the situation may not be ideal and most schools across the country face similar difficulties in the morning. We ask that parents/carers take responsibility for the safety of their

children before school by providing adequate supervision and ensuring their children behave sensibly and respectfully. We also ask that you do not send your children any earlier than necessary. As the front of the school may be more congested for a few minutes each morning, it may be worth waiting with your child on Alfred Street, or John Street, which has less traffic and pedestrians. The alleyway is also free from traffic and could potentially be a safer option if you are waiting with your children. Please do not block the carpark entrance and be mindful of other pedestrians. This week we will trial leaving the gates open until 8.55am and closing the register at 9.00am to allow a bigger time frame for you to drop your children off. If you are in a position to drop later than 8.45am there are currently less children coming in at 8.50am and this would certainly be helpful.

If you do have an exceptional circumstance, please speak to the school office who may be able to help you explore options.

Finally, I would ask that you refrain from making negative comments about the school on social media, as it is disrespectful and hurtful to members of staff who work incredibly hard for your children and we are all very proud of our school. If you have a formal complaint, please follow our complaints procedure which can be found on our school website. Thank you to those many parents who have continued to support the school.

We look forward to sharing with you throughout the course of the year all of the additional initiatives that we have planned. Below are a list of key dates for your diary for the Autumn Term. Look out for the first edition of the Alfo Gazette at the end of the half term where we will celebrate with you our news and achievements for the term.

Kind regards

Mrs O'Connor

Head teacher

Autumn 1 Dates:

More details of the events will follow in separate communication nearer the time

Monday 17th September—Ukulele lessons start in Year 3

Friday 21st September—Jeans for Genes Day

Tuesday 25th September—Braiswick Photographers in school (sibling and individual photos)

Friday 28th September—Macmillan Coffee Morning

Wednesday 3rd October—Memorial Day to commemorate the bombing of the school in 1940

Thursday 4th October—National Poetry Day

Monday 8th October—School Nurse in optional Flu Nasal spray for Years 3, 4 and 5

Wednesday 10th October—Whole School Theatre Production of Peter Pan

Wednesday 17th October—Harvest Festival

Monday 22nd October— Half Term

Monday 29th October—Training Day

Tuesday 30th October—Children back to school—Black History Day

Wednesday 7th November 4-8pm and Thursday 8th November 4-6pm —Parents' Evenings

Friday 23rd November—Choir performing at the Mission Church

Friday 30th November— Diversity Day, Celebrating St Andrew's Day

Wednesday 12th December—Whole School trip to see Cinderella on Ice in Milton Keynes

Details of Christmas events will be shared after half term