

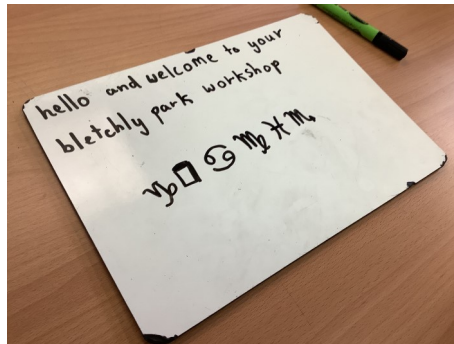
St John's Upper Holloway

February Newsletter 2022

Welcome to the February newsletter. It's been a busy half term so far with lots to celebrate. Here are some of the updates:

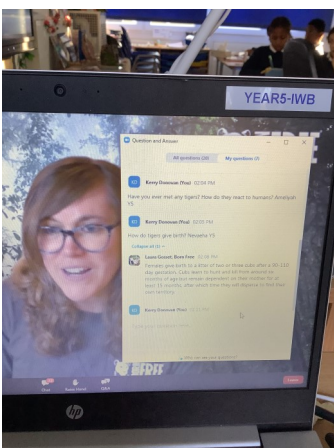
The enigma machine comes to St John's!

Our Year 5 and 6 children were incredibly lucky to have the enigma machine from Bletchley Park brought to their classrooms. This was one of the first significant computers and was used in WWII to send coded messages by the Germans. Alan Turing famously worked with British Intelligence to help crack the code.



Little Wandle phonics and reading

All of our staff spent the INSET day at the start of term being trained on our new core resource for teaching phonics and reading. This is now being used in our daily phonics and reading sessions in Early Years and Key Stage 1 classes and we can already see children making great progress. One of the main changes is that there is an even greater focus on children reading books that are decodable, both in class and at home. This means that children use their understanding of phonic sounds they have learned in class that week to read the words in the book. Children receive a new book every Friday and need to return it the following Wednesday. Can we ask that books are returned promptly each Wednesday in order that they can be sent home with the next group of pupils. If books are lost or damaged, we need to charge parents £5 in order to replace it. You can find out more about how you can support your child with their phonics and reading by visiting the parent section of the Little Wandle website - <https://www.littlewandlelettersandsounds.org.uk/resources/for-parents/> Children will also be bringing home a 'real book' from the library or class reading area that you can share with your child. These are important for developing children's language and love of story.



Born Free foundation webinar



Our Year 5 children took part in a webinar last week with the Born Free Foundation. It was an opportunity to find out about the work they do around the world to save animals and habitats. We also learnt about their youth ambassadors which has inspired many of our children.

Parent questionnaires

A big thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the parent questionnaires. They always provide us with really useful feedback on what is going well and what we can improve further.

A summary of the responses is shown below.

My child is in Year _____	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My child enjoys school	15	9		
The school takes action to ensure my child stays safe, including staying safe online	14	11		
The school informs me about my child's progress (informally and formally e.g. parents evenings or chats after school)	10	13	2	
I feel that my child is making progress at this school	11	12		
The school helps me to support my child's learning through curriculum letters, advice and workshops	8	17	1	
My child receives suitable homework each week to reinforce their learning in class.	8	14	1	1
My child regularly brings books home to read and I feel I can communicate with the teacher about how well my child was able to read the book.	10	13	1	
School staff are approachable and I feel that I can discuss any issues with them.	15	8	2	
The school meets my child's particular needs e.g. medical needs, special needs	8	16		
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour and also celebrates positive behaviour.	9	16		
The school is led and managed effectively	12	12		
The school keeps me informed effectively through newsletters, texts, emails and the school website	13	10		
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	12	13		

It was very encouraging to get such positive feedback overall. Some of the main areas that parents praised were:

- ◇ The school values that focus on kindness, nurture and wellbeing
- ◇ The quality of teaching in the classroom
- ◇ Pupil's and parent's relationships with school staff
- ◇ The increasing range of after school clubs, including sports clubs and homework
- ◇ Communication via Parentmail, newsletters and website

However, there were a few areas that some parents suggested could be improved further including:

- * Signposting where parents can get additional support and advice regarding their child or for broader issues such as accessing local services

- * Varying the homework set so that it isn't all online and provides more opportunities for creative and problem solving tasks
- * Continuing to extend the range of after school clubs
- * Providing greater choice of menu at lunchtime, particularly for children with allergies

What are we doing to start to address these?

- ⇒ Some of you will have already met Peter, our new home– school support worker and it is hoped he can continue to provide advice and guidance to parents regarding how to access services. In the next few weeks he will be planning a series of coffee mornings for parents at drop off time. If you have any areas that you would like him to focus on please let us know.
- ⇒ Homework is often a difficult area to get right for everyone, with each parent having their own view on what it should look like. Last year, we focused on changing from paper-based homework to online in order to reduce the amount of paper and photocopying that we were doing each week. The quality of what was being produced at home was also often quite poor and so we decided to focus more on reinforcing the core skills they were learning in school—reading, spellings and maths fluency. This half term we have also introduced some optional additional homework linked to their topics, such as research or craft based activities. Children can then bring these in to class to share what they have achieved. We will be very interested to see how well this goes and hope it will provide an opportunity for parents to work alongside their children on some enjoyable and creative tasks.
- ⇒ It's been great to see some new clubs and inter school competitions taking off this term. We are hoping to continue to broaden this out to include art, gardening and cookery in the coming term.
- ⇒ As our school lunches are delivered by an external provider (Caterlink) it can be difficult to make the quick changes that we would sometimes hope for. Some supply and staffing issues have also been compounded by the Covid epidemic. I hope that by raising some of the issues at the upcoming schools forums, we can begin to address some of these.

Attendance and punctuality

The table below shows attendance and punctuality for Spring term to date.

	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Attendance %	92.8	91.6	92.3	92.5	95.1	94.1	90.5	89.3
Lates	6	7	7	7	12	5	8	12

Covid and other illnesses are still having a significant impact on our attendance figures but hopefully as term progresses this can improve back towards our target of 96%. Well done to Year 4 for the least number of lates. Being in and settled, ready for the register and first lesson at 9am is very important for your child to have a good start to their day.

Our school home support worker, Peter, will be continuing to contact families where attendance is particularly low to see if there is any support that school can offer.

Covid update

As you will no doubt be aware, Covid cases continue to remain quite high in our local area. For this reason we are continuing to keep sensible precautions in school such as hygiene measures and

increased ventilation in classrooms. Staff are also being asked to wear face coverings if they are in a confined space for any period of time.

There are a number of cases amongst pupils and staff each week and we will continue to inform you about this if it affects your child's class. If your child shows any symptoms of Covid such as a high temperature, cough or loss of taste and smell, can you please take them for a Covid test and let us know the result. Thank you.

Being safe at St John's

Here at St John's, we take safeguarding of children very seriously. If you are aware of any safeguarding concerns or would like to talk to someone, please see Mr Turpin or Mr Welsh.

Upcoming dates

Thursday 10th February—safer internet day assembly in school

Friday 11th February—Year 2 are visiting the Museum of London

Friday 11th February—Year 3 class assembly at 3:00pm (rather than the usual 9:30am)

Friday 11th February—school closes for half term at 3:30pm

Monday 21st February— school reopens to pupils

Monday 28th February—Reading for Pleasure Week starts. More details to follow.



As always, we are here to make your child's experience at school as rewarding and enjoyable as possible. Please come and speak with me in the playground or make a time to meet with me if there are any issues you wish to discuss.

Mr Welsh and the St John's staff team