



Tuesday 14th December 2021



Dear Parents / Carers

On Friday we 'break up' after what has been another busy and at times challenging term at Eastlea. This letter provides information for the remaining days of this week as well an update on some of the many events which have happened in recent months.

Eastlea Christmas events

Although we had to again make some changes to our Eastlea Christmas events, the vast majority have been able to go ahead – often modified to ensure we have kept everyone safe. Everyone has worked very hard to provide a fun and action-packed Christmas for the children and although we were disappointed to have to cancel both the pantomime and also more recently the visit to St Nicholas' church we felt that these visits just would not have been safe in the current Covid situation.

We still have a few events to come: some more class parties, our Christmas Golden Day on Thursday and our reading of the Christmas story and socially distanced carol singing on the last day of term!

We really missed having an audience to watch the Christmas productions but were very proud of the children who rehearsed and performed with great enthusiasm. This year we were able to do 3 productions with one for each key stage at an appropriate distance in the hall. These have been expertly put together by Miss Betham and can now be viewed on YouTube. A protected URL access code will be shared with parents/carers via Seesaw/Tapestry today – for '**Wriggly Nativity**' (Early Years), '**Prickly Hay**' (KS1 – starring Year 2) and '**Christmas Jigsaw**' (KS2 – starring Year 5).

Charity and Fundraising Support

We have had a number of events this half term and wanted to say **THANK YOU** once again for your generosity and support for each and every one of them...

- **Poppy Appeal** – last month the half term started with our annual support for the Royal British Legion poppy appeal. We have not been informed yet of our fundraising total, but our 'collection container' was fairly heavy when it left school!
- **Enterprise Sponsored events** – all the sponsorship money was collected in last month from each class and the final overall total was **£2671.80**
- **Children In Need** – our traditional 'Pennies for Pudsey' fundraising included class-based coverage of Pudsey pictures with as many coins as possible. We raised **£365.57** for this national charity – which considering 'coins' were quite hard to come by this year is very good indeed!!
- **Virtual Christmas Fair** – on Friday 3rd December, the 'Friends of Eastlea' coordinated a scaled back 'virtual' fair which focused on the raffle and the sale of children's craft bags plus some homemade jars of jam/plants. Once again we were blown away by the response – and the final total raised was **£1150**. Amazing!

End of term awards

- **Reading** – Our 'Music' themed reading challenge which started at the end of September has been very successful and the vast majority of children from across the school have extremely good reading routines each week. The first Bronze awards were presented on 3rd December and so far we have been able to present certificates/bronze award bookmarks to **157** children. These pupils are already starting on their silver bookmark! If your child hasn't yet received the bronze award, it is not too late! Encourage them to keep reading and more certificates will be awarded in the New Year! **Reading in the Christmas holiday counts as one sticker on their 'Music' bookmarks!**
- **Writing** – on 1st December, 'Star Writer' certificates and letters were presented to the children chosen as autumn term writing award winners for their determination, improvement and positive approach shown in writing across the curriculum in their class since September. Well done to them all!

- **Maths** – on 8th December, as well as certificates for the individuals who had been ‘most valuable’ in the latest Times Table Rockstars battle, one child from each class was chosen who had shown real enthusiasm, improvement and determination in class-based maths lessons. These maths awards winners each received a letter and certificate. Congratulations to all our winners!
- **Sports** – Eastlea were announced as the **winners of the Cramlington Year 3 Hoopstarz competition**. 85% of the class can hoop non-stop for 1 minute or longer which is the best overall and they were presented with a trophy at the zoom assembly last week.

Early Years updates

1. We have been asked by county to remind parents of Nursery pupils who will transfer to Reception next year that the **closing date for Reception school admissions is 15th January 2022**. Any children born between 01/09/2017 and 31/08/2018 need to apply for entry to Reception 2022. Parents need to make an application for their child to join Eastlea Reception class in September, even if they already attend our Nursery (and we believe that everyone in this situation has now done so – thank you). Information, handbooks and application forms are available online at: www.northumberland.gov.uk/primaryadmissions
2. We have 6 new starters who are joining our Nursery next term – and will welcome them for either full day or afternoon sessions. These children will start during the first few days of term in January and arrangements for this have been shared with the families concerned.
3. Our Nursery continues to be very popular, so I would advise that if you or someone you know has a pre-school age child and they would like a place at our Eastlea Nursery then it is best to apply as soon as possible, even if it is for some way in advance!

HUGGG ‘Free School Meal’ vouchers for eligible families

This week an order will be placed for the vouchers which can be exchanged for food/clothing at local supermarkets. This will mean that parents of those children eligible for benefit based free school meals will have a link emailed to them which they can activate to generate a gift card for use over the Christmas holidays at a supermarket of their choice. If anyone has any questions about this before the end of term, then please contact me directly in school.

Christmas Golden Day – Thursday 16th December

As I am sure you are aware, everyone who has earned the right to take part in Golden Day is looking forward to Thursday! ‘Flash’ a comedy magician will perform for all the children in socially distanced class groups in the hall for separate key stages during the morning. Each class will also enjoy a McDonalds take away lunchtime meal delivered to their classrooms!

Please remember that the day is a **festive non-uniform day (no charge)** – another chance to wear their Christmas jumpers, Santa hats etc. Appropriate footwear, coats and gloves/scarves will also be needed as breaks/lunchtime and some events are outside.

Brainwaves PE kit

Last week the Eastlea Brainwaves (school council) sent out a letter about a change to the arrangements for wearing PE kit January. Remember, in the spring term we are going to trial a system whereby children come to school dressed in PE kit on their PE days – and this kit includes:

- **Plain** black or navy joggers/sports leggings (these must have no colours, patterns or lettering.)
- White polo shirt or t-shirt
- School sweatshirt (not a hoodie)
- Trainers

For all other days the usual Eastlea uniform should be worn and if your child joins a sports ‘club’ then they will need to bring in PE kit to change into if it is not on one of their PE days – see below:

Class	PE days		Class	PE days
Reception	Wednesday		Year 3	Monday and Tuesday
Year 1	Wednesday		Year 4	Thursday
Year 2	Wednesday		Year 5	Thursday and Friday
			Year 6	Monday and Tuesday

Year 4 swimming – reminder

Swimming starts for pupils in Year 4 in the spring term. The first session is on Monday 10th January and the children will have a one hour session at the pool for 11 weeks in the spring term. The cost of each session is £4.50 per child per week. This price includes the school subsidising the costs of the lesson and the transport. The swimming lessons are part of the KS2 PE curriculum but in order for us to provide this for the children we have to pay for the instructors and the coach transport to get us to the pool at Concordia. In common with the other schools in the Cramlington partnership we therefore have to ask for a £4.50 donation from parents/carers each week. Without these contributions, the lessons will not be able to go ahead in this format. A letter with further information about this has been sent to Year 4 parents.

N.B. We are aware that due to transport issues in the bad weather Year 5 were very disappointed when one session of swimming was cancelled for them last month. Our aim is to reschedule the missed session for the Year 5 class in February (this will be confirmed next term).

IMPORTANT COVID update

As you will appreciate there is a constantly evolving picture as regards the Covid situation both nationally and locally. **THANK YOU for your support with looking out for symptoms, seeking PCR tests when required, maintaining household isolation measures/daily LFD tests when called for and for being prepared to follow our cautious approach to better protect the wider Eastlea community.**

We have been following the Northumberland guidelines since the start of November and this has meant keeping the class bubbles more separate, staff wearing masks in the dining hall (a communal area), returning to virtual assemblies and having indoor clubs separated into class groups. The even stricter 'contingency plans' put in place following a 'spike' in cases in one of our year groups last month proved to be very effective in preventing further spread of infection. Since then, we have been able to return to some outdoor mixing although we have retained the changes to systems which allowed Year 5/Year 6 to enter via the main door and use separate toilet facilities in school.

The latest DfE guidance in response to the government's announcement of Plan B last week is that keeping all schools open is a priority. Many of the measures outlined to support with this are things which we are already doing at Eastlea. We clearly do not know yet what level of restrictions we will be facing when we return to school in January, but it is likely that we will continue with the same systems that have proved to be effective so far and as always are prepared to either increase contingency measures or relax restrictions depending on the latest national/local advice for keeping everyone safe.

Omicron cases

*At the time of writing, we have not yet had to face the consequences of an identified Omicron Covid case at Eastlea. If we do get a POSITIVE case of Covid-19 (Omicron or not), **as from 14th December the advice is that those identified as close contacts who have NO SYMPTOMS and WHO ARE FULLY VACCINATED or children aged 5-18 will be required to undertake daily lateral flow rapid testing for 7 days rather than needing to self-isolate.** Children/staff in this situation will be able to attend school as long as their lateral flow tests results each day are negative and they remain symptom free. If a positive test result is received then a PCR test must be sought and isolation is required pending the outcome. **Anyone over the age of 18 years and 6 months who is not vaccinated, must isolate for the full 10 days if they are a close contact of a positive case.** The information on this is being updated all the time, and there are still further elements of caution built into this new guidance so if/when it happens we will follow the latest advice and inform you of what is required.*

And finally, on a happier note, I would like to wish everyone a 'Merry Christmas'...and don't forget that the pupils break up on Friday for their Christmas holidays with **an early finish at 2pm.**

Have a safe and happy holiday and we will see you all again on **Wednesday 5th January 2022** when we reopen for pupils for the spring term! (Tuesday 4th January is a staff training day).

Yours sincerely,

Miss E Beeston
Head Teacher

