



St Swithun's Half Termly News

Week ending 20th October 2023



Valuing individuals
Aspiring and achieving together in faith

St Swithun's C of E Primary Academy's Vision

Love bears all things

Believes all things

Hopes all things

Endures all things

(1 Corinthians 13:7)



Our Gospel Virtues for Autumn are: THANKFULNESS & TRUST

Our Character Traits for Autumn 2 are: RESPECT & INCLUSION

Dear Parent/Carer,

Welcome to the first St Swithun's Half Termly News of the 2023/24 academic year!

It's been a busy start to the term with lots happening both in the classroom and out of the classroom. Hopefully, you've been following the school story so far on Dojo.

What is 'Character Education' and why are we focusing on this at St Swithun's?

'Character can be defined as a collection of personality traits within our behaviour that shows who we are. This is seen in our integrity, attitudes, moral fibre, disposition, and how we treat those around us.'

I am a firm believer in focusing on the development of the whole child and this is where Character Education comes in. As a school, we maintain a strong focus to improve academic outcomes for all our children, but alongside this, we are also focusing on what makes each child unique. More importantly, we want to give the children opportunities to really understand who they are and what makes them unique, whilst equipping them with additional knowledge and skills to help them navigate through important and sometimes challenging periods in their lives.

Every three weeks we introduce a Character Trait and talk about it with the children in Collective Worship. This is then followed up in the classroom where children are given opportunities to explore further what this could mean for them and how they are able, for example, to demonstrate 'Personal Responsibility' whilst in the classroom, in the playground or at home. Our Character focus sits behind all curriculum subjects and the wider curriculum offer. Along with the Christian and Gospel values, it's at the core of all we do!

Our Character Education also aligns with the Church of England's 'Vision for Education' and therefore we are able to use bible stories for example, as a medium to further explore key character strengths and traits.

Whilst we are in the very early stages of this, I would urge you to talk with your child and explore further the work we are doing with Character development and likewise, if you'd like to know more about it yourselves, please don't hesitate to come and have a chat with myself or any of the staff team.

Thank you for your generous donations during 'Harvest'. We have gathered quite a substantial amount of food which is amazing. We will take the collection to the local food hubs so that members of the Retford community can directly benefit from your kindness.

Already, staff at school have demonstrated their commitment to ensuring that the children get every opportunity to succeed. I saw this in abundance last year, and even though we are only seven weeks in, I am humbled by the actions and dedication of this amazing crew. It's a privilege to work alongside this team!

Please continue to support your children at home through the encouragement of daily reading and helping with any homework tasks or extended activities. We will be looking at planning some more theme days moving forward so please look out for these as we would like you to visit us and be a part of the experiences on offer.

The PTA is well and truly up and running and already has raised funds for the school through a variety of events. We have more events planned for Autumn 2 so please take note when reading the diary dates below. I would like to highlight the amazing work carried so far by the founding members of the PTA and also to welcome the new members who attended the PTA coffee morning the other week. It was exciting listening to the discussions around possible events for the future. If you'd still like to be a part of the PTA, it's not too late. Please just come to the school office and leave your details.

Key Messages

Whole School Attendance – Currently 93%



95%	=	47 LESSONS MISSED EACH YEAR 8 days in total or 1 week and 3 days
90%	=	95 LESSONS MISSED EACH YEAR 16 days in total or 3 weeks and 1 day
85%	=	142 LESSONS MISSED EACH YEAR 24 days in total or 4 weeks and 4 days
80%	=	190 LESSONS MISSED EACH YEAR 32 days in total or 6 weeks and 2 days

ATTENDANCE MATTERS

**WHAT DO YOUR
ATTENDANCE
FIGURES
ACTUALLY MEAN?**

BE SMART BE THERE!

Percentages based on 190 academic days

We have had a good start to the year, with many classes having a large number of children in each day. Most classes are at or around the mid 90% mark when we do the weekly checks, so this is really encouraging. Thank you.

Our Governors continue to look closely at the school attendance and whilst they are pleased with many of the things they hear and see, they are concerned about some of our children who have missed a significant amount of school time, not only last year, but in previous years too. The facts above, highlight clearly the negative impact that not regularly attending school can have on a child. I am truly concerned about some of our children who are not where they could or should be in terms of their age and stage. While sometimes, there are other contributing factors that impact learning, many of the case studies explored by the Governors show that it's the persistent absentees who are the furthest behind in terms of academic progress and personal growth.

I connected with many families last year in terms of their child's attendance and while in some cases there has been improvement, I feel that there is still a long way to go. Please ensure that if your child is fit to do so, they attend school each day.

Uniform

The new school year has started really positively in terms of children wearing the correct uniform. On the whole, it's really good, however, there are still a small number of children coming to school wearing trainers and hoodies that are not part of the school uniform. Please can this be looked at during the half term break. Thank you.

PE kits

Please make sure that your child has a full PE kit in school every Tuesday and on their specific PE days. Overall, I am really pleased with what I am seeing so thank you. At present, there are only a handful of children who do not have the correct kit in school. We are working with parents and carers to remedy this. KS2 children can bring their kit to school on a Monday, leave it in their locker and take it home again on the Friday. As we move into the winter months, children should also bring warmer outer layers such as tracksuit bottoms and a thicker top to put over their white t-shirt.



Jewellery

Earrings - children are permitted to only wear studs and these must be removed for PE and swimming sessions. All other non-essential items of jewellery should remain at home. Watches are permitted but children must understand that they are responsible for their watch so I would urge that they don't wear anything too expensive or something that's deemed to be a family treasure.

PTA

Please see diary dates below for up and coming events.

Class Dojo

Class Dojo is an effective tool that allows instant communication between school and parents and carers. It's great to see so many of you interacting and using this app to its full. However, could I please ask that you think about the times you send staff messages, thinking mainly about their well-being and personal lives outside of school. I feel that in terms of regular interaction between yourselves and members of staff, the hours of **07:45** and **18:00** are more than acceptable and should allow that free flow of information between both parties. I have also asked all staff to respect your well-being and personal lives too. You should not receive messages after **18:00** or before **07:30** unless there is an emergency.

Staff have fed back that since including the above in our Newsletters, the acknowledging of well-being and personal lives has been evident from the vast majority of parents and carers, so thank you for that. It's much appreciated.



6th November – All children return to school

6th November – Newstead Visit to the Bassetlaw Museum

6th to 10th November – UK Parliament Week

8th November – PTA Film Night (EYFS & KS1)

9th November – EYFS Visit to the Bassetlaw Museum

10th November – Remembrance Day Lunch

13th to 17th November – Anti-Bullying Week

15th November – PTA Film Night (KS2)

17th November – ‘Children in Need’ Day

17th November – EYFS Bike ability

22nd & 23rd November – SEN Reviews

1st December – Lantern making day for KS2 children

14th December – Christmas Service at St Saviour’s Church (am) / Lantern Parade (pm)

18th December - KS1 Nativity (pm)

19th December – KS1 Nativity (am)

19th December – Christmas Dinner Day

20th December – EYFS Nativity (am)

22nd December – Last Day of Term

NB: Whilst we will make every effort to keep to the above dates, sometimes events need to be moved. We will inform everyone through class Dojo should this be the case.

Wishing each and every one of you a peaceful and enjoyable half term. Enjoy special time with family and friends. Have a great but safe November 5th and we look forward to welcoming back all the children on Monday 6th November 2023.

Look after yourselves and each other...

Mr. Charly