

THURNHAM CE INFANT SCHOOL

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Newsletter No 1

“At Thurnham we learn to love and love to learn.”

Dear Parents,

I hope you have had a lovely Summer with your children, and we welcome them all back to school - they all look very smart. We extend a special welcome to our new entrants and their families and hope the children settle in well. We look forward to working with you all over the coming months and getting to know you better!

Apologies for the amount of information in this newsletter, but my first one of the year is always really just a reminder of several things for existing parents and hopefully gives useful information to new parents.

Letters By E-Mail

The vast majority of parents have school letters sent via e-mail. Therefore, if you are a Reception parent and have given us an e-mail address this should be the last newsletter you receive on paper and should have also received it via e-mail.

Please let us know if you did not or we will assume the e-mails are reaching you!

Parents in Year 1 and Year 2 should continue to receive them at the address given last year or on paper if they requested it. If ever in doubt a copy of the newsletter will be on the website.

Safety on Site

- ❖ Please make sure you bring your child right up to school in the morning and wait in the area designated for your year group until the gates are opened at 8.45am.
- ❖ All parents and carers should note that our gates open at 8.45am, 10 minutes before school starts. We provide supervision for your children after they come through the gate. Before that they are your responsibility, so please ensure they are supervised by you on the drive and in the waiting area. Children must not be left unattended to ensure they are safe at all times.
- ❖ Parents should wait outside school not down the path or drive.
- ❖ Scooters should not be ridden within the drive or outside the school (we have had children collide with pedestrians).
- ❖ Please note that the entire site is a non-smoking site; this includes the grounds and the drive.
- ❖ There are end of school waiting areas designated for parents of each year group. These are behind the yellow line for Reception (where the children will follow the green footprints to reach you), the area around the toadstools is for parents in Year 1 and further along from our gate towards Roseacre for Year 2. Parents should not exit through the car park, only along the footpath. Note, Orange class come out the same gate as Reception, the Reception children usually come out first. The rest of Year 1 along with Year 2 will exit via the gate nearer Roseacre.

- ❖ Dogs must not be brought onto the school site or drive. This includes dogs being carried and dogs tied to the school gate while you deliver your child to Roseacre or Thurnham. The one exception is guide dogs or guide dogs in training.
- ❖ If the weather is very wet please do not arrive at 8.30am (or earlier) and expect us to open the school early as the gates only open at 8.45am.
- ❖ The official end of the school day is 3:05pm although organising 30 little people and their things can be challenging and sometimes it can take longer than this. Please note, we seek to prioritise the Reception children coming out first as well as it can take longer to ensure we give the Reception children back to parents safely.

Communication With Staff

There are various ways you can communicate with teaching staff, the best way being either through the contact book or when your child's teacher brings them out at the end of the school day. We politely ask you to try and not see teachers before school - they are often very busy preparing for the day ahead. Before school I am at the school gate as are some of the Teaching Assistants on a rota basis and we are happy to talk to parents or pass on messages.

I know in the 21st century it is very easy to air issues and criticism on social media such as Facebook etc. I ask parents to always speak to the school first and discuss an issue with us rather than doing this. It can be very upsetting and undermining for staff to hear of or read such comments online.

Free School Meals

As you are no doubt aware, all children at Thurnham are eligible for a free school meal. We use flow systems in the Hall to ensure we can get every child served and finished their meal within lunchtime. A key moment will be once Reception begin staying for dinner (who can be slower eaters at first!) so we continue to review our lunchtime set up as we progress through the term. You can of course still send your child with a packed lunch, school dinners are not compulsory. All we ask is that your child keeps to school dinners or packed lunch across the week - only change what your child will have at the beginning of a week.

Pupil Premium Funding

Even though all children can now have a free lunch, parents can still apply for the Pupil Premium funding that can support their child in school in a number of ways and is paid to the school to spend in supporting the pupil.

The criteria are that the pupil's family must be in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income Based Jobseekers Allowance
- Child Tax Credit (not including Working Tax Credit)
- If the household income is below £16,190
- Guaranteed Element of State Pension Credit

- Asylum Seekers / Proof of support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- An Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Forms are available from the office or apply online at:
<https://www.cloudforedu.org.uk/ofsm/kent>

Coats

Please make sure your child has a coat in school each day, whatever the weather. We often take the children out to play even in fine drizzle so they can stretch their legs and get some fresh air. A light fold-up waterproof is ideal.

Parking - The Most Frequent Complaint!

Every year the most complaints I receive are about dangerous driving around the Landway area and poor parking in particular. I have already had complaints about drive blocking in the Spur Way area. I ask all parents when dropping off to drive carefully and safely around the area and to please not block the driveways of the residents. At times I have also received complaints from residents where parents have become aggressive when challenged about inconsiderate parking, please do consider others. I know our Community Police Officer will be carrying out spot checks and issuing fines where necessary.

New Reception parents please note there should be no parking within the school drive area. If you use the 'Early Risers' facility or are dropping off / picking up at clubs you should not park on the drive either.

Friends Of Thurnham

The Friends Of Thurnham will be holding a coffee morning for new parents on Friday 14th September. Please come if you can 9:00am -10.30am in the school hall as it is an opportunity to meet other new parents. We will also be selling second-hand uniform. If any parents of older children would like to donate uniform for us to sell it is much appreciated.

We also have a Family Fun Day on Saturday 22nd September (more details to follow) and the FOT AGM (with cheese and wine) on Wednesday 26th September (7.30pm) if you would like to join in!! All are welcome.

Authorised Absences

Term time holiday absence is not an automatic right. You need to send a message in the contact book to ask for a holiday permission form well in advance (at least two weeks), or collect a form from the entrance foyer. You will need to explain the exceptional reason for a term time absence. Year 2 parents are reminded that throughout the months of May and June, SATS assessment takes place and Year 2 children must not miss school for any holidays at this time. Similarly, Year 1 have a Phonics Screening in late June (likely to be the week of 10th -14th June) therefore a similar no holiday rule applies. No absence is authorised in September for any child in the school. Please note, most holiday requests are refused.

DFE guidance regarding medical appointments also has implications for your child's attendance record:

We have to mark children attending Doctor or Dentist appointments during school time as Authorised Absence, (meaning they will be marked out for the morning or afternoon session they miss). Please therefore try to make appointments out of school hours. Lateness - We are required to mark children late if they arrive after the gate has shut at 8.55am. Any child arriving very late will get a late mark and an Unauthorised Absence mark for that session. Please continue to make every effort to have children in school before the gate shuts.

I monitor attendance rates and will contact you if we feel your child's absence rate is becoming too high. The Government defines persistent absence as absence above 10% of the year and breaching this can also result in outside agencies becoming involved. Last year we again had one of the highest attendance rates for Maidstone (despite a Winter sickness!), let's keep it that way!

Water Bottles

Children can bring sports top bottles only, to school to have water in class. They need to be filled up with fresh water at home each morning to bring into school. They will come home every night for you to wash and refill. If children run out of water during the day, they can use the water fountains to drink from. Only fresh, still water is acceptable in bottles. Please do not send juice or squash in classroom water bottles - if you do your child will use the water fountain instead.

I'm sure you are all aware how busy the School Office is, so here are a few reminders to help you:

Paperwork to be returned to school - permission slips etc.

Please put all slips into your child's book bag and ask them to give it to the teacher. Book bags are checked daily in Year R and as the children progress through the school they are encouraged to remember to hand things in for themselves. Please try to ensure that your child is fully equipped for their school day i.e. lunch boxes, coats etc. The Office Staff would greatly appreciate your help in this.

Office Hours

Mrs Johnston works a full week in the office with the office manned from 8:20am - 4:15pm (4:10pm on Friday).

Now we have got all that essential information out of the way, I wish you all a good start to the school year - in the next newsletter I will send out some useful dates for your diary. We look forward to working with you.

We appreciate being a parent is the hardest job you will ever do!

Mr. C. K. James
Headteacher