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Dear Parents,

Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> December 2015

### **Federation Newsletter – December Edition**

A very warm welcome to the festive edition of the monthly federation newsletter and, as always, it's been an incredibly busy time since last we published in November. The primary emphasis has to be placed upon Christmas and the many, many different activities that have been undertaken at both schools but hopefully I will be able to find some room for a few little indicators of exciting development for the spring term as well but more on this later.

#### **Staffing**

As you will all be aware, Mrs. Casswell is retiring at the end of this term after 19 years of amazing service to the schools within our federation. I have previously paid tribute to her work but feel it is appropriate to do so again. As Bursar, there are quite simply no aspects of her work that do not impact on the efficiency and success of our schools. Without adequate finance in place and strategic planning so that we can afford initiatives in the future, our schools would not be able to operate. Both of our schools are on a very firm financial footing and this gives us the capacity and confidence for us to be able to carry out our work with the children. I know just how much you all value the efforts we make to keep class sizes small but this would not be possible if the budgets were not managed in such a way as to make this possible. So, today, we can say our goodbyes and wish Mrs. Casswell an enjoyable and very well-deserved retirement!

Also, we welcome back Miss Ivatt to the teaching staff at Lutton St. Nicholas from her maternity leave after the birth of her daughter Delilah. She will initially be returning to teach Class 2 on a Monday and a Tuesday but after the February half-term, she will transfer into Class 1, as this is where she was teaching before her maternity leave. I am sure you will all wish to join with me in welcoming her back and we can all look forward to the children benefiting from her outstanding teaching skills. Exciting times indeed!

And finally, I bring you the extremely good news that Mrs. Carla Matson has now been appointed to the role of Administrative Assistant having successfully completed her apprenticeship with Peterborough College. She has made a very significant impact since starting with us in November and being interviewed for a job is never easy. As always, she passed with flying colours and I am now delighted to be able to welcome her to the permanent staff team of the federation.

#### **Aladdin, Scrooge, It's a Baby and the Landlord's Cat**

A huge note of thanks to you all for the excellent attendance at our Christmas productions this year. I am pretty sure we had record numbers at all of our showings and the enthusiasm with which you greeted the children, sang along and became involved very much demonstrated the success of all the shows. While I really enjoy working with the children in this way, I also feel it is important to point out the ways in which they rise to the challenges we set them. First and foremost, there is the level of challenge in terms of singing, dancing and acting. Our children have an amazing capacity to learn so many lines and the already strong choral traditions make the teaching of the songs a pleasure. Finally, we also like to manage the amount of time we spend working on the plays and we limit this to three weeks, usually in the afternoons. In this way, the curriculum can still be taught and the learning that

takes place through the productions becomes part of enrichment. These activities are the golden moments that the children remember the most from their schooling and I am sure that you, as parents, will also take many happy memories with you over the last couple of weeks.

As an aside, we have managed to raise a few pennies for a number of good causes, as follows:

- Great Ormond Street Hospital: £225.26
- FOGS Raffle: £156.50
- FOLS Raffle: £317.00

As always, your generosity knows no bounds and I thank you, once again, for the amazing support you have given to the children at both of our schools at this time.

### **New Websites**

In January, our schools will be commanding a new online presence with updated and modern websites that I am hoping will become the first point of contact for all parents. In time, there will be different sections and also the provision of age-appropriate curriculum guidance to support your child's learning home. I am also looking at how we can collect your feedback more easily as this is how we can ensure that the services we provide match precisely what you want. At the beginning of the new term, I will be publishing access details and I hope that you will welcome what we have tried to create.

### **Longtown Outdoor Education Centre**

At the beginning of December, it was my pleasure to take our Year 6 children down to Herefordshire for their annual residential. This is a new venue for our schools but one that I have taken children to on numerous occasions before when I was working in Northamptonshire. The weather was incredibly kind to us in terms of temperature but the wind blew and the rains came down just about every day! This did not, however, dampen our spirits, and the children followed a very challenging progression of activities including caving, gorge walking, climbing, centre challenges, orienteering, night-walking and tunnelling. Amazingly, all of our children completed every challenge that was set and it was great to see the amount of learning that had taken place in such a short amount of time. The current Year 5 children can now look forward to next year because I am happy to be able to announce that Longtown will become our destination for all Year 6 residentials going forward. Finally, a quick note for the pupils in Year 4; I am currently working with 2 providers of residential education in Northamptonshire and I fully expect the 3 day, 2 night residential to go ahead in March or April; please look out for further details soon.

### **Christmas Fayres at Gedney and Lutton**

Thank you to the many, many people who supported our Christmas Fayres this year. Attendance was very brisk and I know how much parents were impressed with the variety of stalls and games on offer. At Gedney, we managed to raise a total of £347.36 while at Lutton, the total was £350.00. Thank you once again.

### **And Finally....**

Our schools close today to children, but staff will all be in tomorrow for a training day. We reopen at the normal time on **Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January** and I shall look forward to welcoming you all back. In the meantime, on behalf of the children, governors and staff, I would like to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy, peaceful New Year.

Yours sincerely,

**Mr. L. Whitney - Head Teacher**

Gedney Church End and Lutton St. Nicholas Federated Primary Schools