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Dear Parents and Carers

We are fast approaching the last term of this very busy school year and I write to you with information to keep you updated with events at school.

Important: Cashless Office

You will no doubt recall that I wrote to you some time ago to advise parents that we are phasing in a system of online payments. At this time I made it clear that with increasing pressures on the school office Mrs Manuel simply does not have the time to collect, receipt, count, log and bank cash. I understand that St John's has always offered parents the opportunity to make a 'last minute' payment in cash for a school meal, for example, on those days when we have 'one of those mornings'! However, having Mrs Manuel leave the school site to bank cash leaves the office unattended and this means that there is no one available to make or receive emergency calls and to deal with emergency scenarios.

Therefore, I am writing to advise you that from September 2017 the school will no longer take payment for any item in cash. Instead, parents will need to use the online service called 'School Money'. Parents will receive a unique password to be able to log on to School Money and pay for school meals, trips, music tuition and afterschool clubs. For more information, please go to: www.schoolmoney.co.uk

New Trust Attendance Policy

As you know, in the 11 years that I have been the Headteacher of St John's School I have chosen to be the only school leader locally never to fine parents for taking holidays during term time. I am writing now to advise you that this may be about to change.

Wellsway Multi Academy Trust recognises that some of our schools fine parents, and that some do not. Trustees are keen to ensure that a consistent, and fair, policy is implemented across our schools. It is therefore likely that St John's will, I suspect with effect from September 2017, introduce fining for those families that take their children out of school during term time. This will bring St John's in line with other Trust schools.

Should this be the case then it is in fact timely. For the last decade St John's attendance figures have been above both the Bath and North Somerset schools average and significantly above the national average. However, so far this year St John's attendance figure is below the current national and BANES school attendance averages.

I am receiving an increasing number of requests for term time absence – absence that I do not, and should not as the Headteacher of the school, authorise (unless in exceptional or extenuating circumstances). Although these requests are not authorised they still count against the school's overall attendance figure.

At primary school, pupils who miss just 14 days of schooling between the age of 7 and 11 are 25 per cent less likely to achieve the expected standard, or better, in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 6 than those with no, or very little, absence.

With improving school attendance in mind I have included term dates for the 2017-2018 academic year for your information. You will also find these dates on our school website.

School Meals – price increase

The following is a message from Claire Mansri, the Trust's Executive Chef in charge of 'Zest'.

Please be advised that from 1st September 2017 there will be a price increase to the cost of the school meal deal. The current price is £2.00 for a main meal and a dessert.

This will increase to £2.10. There was no price increase in September 2016 but due to the continued pressure on the cost of raw ingredients and increased labour costs, an increase is now unavoidable.

You will probably be aware that our local schools are currently charging £2.40 for a child's meal and have been for some time. This is likely to rise in future as costs increase for all schools. St John's has only been able to maintain the relatively low cost of £2.00 per meal for the last two years because of the efficiencies we have realised having switched the operation of our kitchen to Wellsway Multi Academy Trust's catering company, 'Zest'. Whilst increasing costs is unavoidable I am nevertheless pleased that the price of a school meal at St John's continues to be significantly less than what is charged by other local schools.

For our pupils in receipt of Free School Meals, the increase will be applied to the daily allowance. This will ensure they continue to have access to the main meal and dessert menu.

I ask for your understanding with these price increases and fully appreciate that times are tough. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to ask them and I'll do my best to answer them.

As you are aware, for the ease of parents we have introduced online payments and I would like to take this opportunity to remind you that school dinner money is to be paid in advance.

New Website/Logo

Early in term 6 will see the launch of our brand new website and school logo which will be used on all new correspondence and uniform. More information about these exciting developments will follow after the half term break.

Slipper Day

My thanks to everyone who participated in our recent St John's Slipper Day. Together we raised £187.10 for the charity 'Shelter'. This money has since been received by the charity who has written us a letter by way of thanks. This has been shared with the children in service.

Slideshow

We have recently updated the photograph slideshow in the main office reception. I am sure you will agree that there are some wonderful photos of school life being displayed. Please do have a look next time you come to visit the school office.

Important: Sun cream and water bottles

The weather has taken a turn for the better this week. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to remind parents about the school's policy with regard to sun cream and water bottles.

Sun cream

We would ask that parents apply sun cream before their children come to school. We encourage children to find shade under the trees for a while at playtimes and of course you may decide to ensure that your child/ren wear long sleeved, lightweight tops with a collar and long trousers. We would also advise sending children to school with a sun hat.

Hydration

Whilst under 5's receive milk each day we also encourage all children to drink from our water fountains throughout the day and especially at playtimes. At lunchtime all children receive as much water as they would like and also those having hot meals also often have milk shakes. Children can freely choose to drink from water fountains at playtime and at lunchtime and our infant children once again during their afternoon playtime.

Children can also request to leave the classroom for a quick drink on especially hot days. However, this is at the class teacher's discretion. Children will be asked to wait to leave the classroom for a drink until after the teaching input so as they do not miss key learning points which will have to be repeated to that individual child on their return to class. When this regularly happens children who need extra support to complete their work do not receive it because the teacher's time is taken up with repeating instructions to children who have been out of class. Without careful management of children's toilet and drink breaks teachers do find that their Summer term is largely taken up with a great deal of repeating themselves!

Teachers will also be mindful that for some children multiple visits to the drinking fountain, and toilet, can be a convenient way to 'take time out' from their work. When this occurs, teachers have to make a difficult judgement call

as to when the child last had a drink, or went to the toilet, and base their decision as to whether they allow the child to leave the classroom or not on this knowledge – not an easy thing to do when you have to try to remember the last time that all 30 children left the room and for what purpose – whilst continuing to teach! Please bear this in mind if your child tells you that they have not been allowed to go to the toilet or get a drink – there will be a good reason for it and your child’s class teacher will be happy to explain if you choose to ask them.

Finally, please can I ask that, unless there are sound medical grounds for doing so, infant children do not bring in water bottles and instead that they use the water fountains. The staff and I ensure that, even with the additional bulge year children, all children have plenty of opportunities to remain hydrated throughout the day. We have no room to store water bottles in our infant classrooms as they are set up differently from our junior classrooms (having home corners, sand trays and water trays, for example, each taking up additional valuable space). Class 1D is especially pressed for space. The room was built as an addition to the original building and was not designed for use as a classroom for 30 children. Consequently, it is smaller than all of our other classrooms and is simply not large enough to provide enough flat surface for water bottles. Water bottles unfortunately do not fit into the children’s drawers and we would not place them in drawers any way due to the potential of water damage to the children’s books and other possessions that they choose to bring to school from home. Therefore, we have to store infant water bottles in the cloakrooms, which is, of course, right next to the water fountains that we encourage the children to use! The infants also have prioritised use of the additional water fountain outside of the school’s PE cupboard.

We do not allow water bottles on tables because they are a terrible distraction to learning. Our experience is that some children will constantly drink from them when they should be talking about their work or fiddle with them instead of getting on with the task in hand. Additionally, for large periods of time there is simply not enough room on the tables for water bottles, for example when the classroom is set up for Art, DT and Science lessons. We also find that children who continually drink from the water bottles will then ask to be excused from class to refill their bottles, which takes a long time, and they will also need to make additional visits to the toilet which loses even more valuable learning time.

We allow water bottles in the juniors simply because the junior children do not have as many water fountains available to them as the infants do and because unlike the infants they do not have the additional opportunity to rehydrate during an afternoon playtime.

Science Week

We have had a fantastic time during our Science week this week. Each class has been enjoying learning about the world around them in a variety of fun and exciting ways, both indoor and out (thank goodness for the good weather!). The week has been topped off with each class’s visit to the ‘Explorer Dome’. The Explorer Dome is rather like a giant inflatable igloo that can hold up to 30 children at a time. Our children really enjoyed climbing into the dome and seeing what magic lay inside – and it truly is a magical learning experience! On behalf of myself, the staff and children I would like to take this opportunity to thank our amazing PTA for part funding the Explorer Dome’s visit this week. With school budgets being as tight as they are, we simply couldn’t have afforded to bring in the Explorer Dome without the PTA’s financial support.

School Budget Cuts

Following the announcement of the general election the long awaited national funding formula for schools has been deferred. It is expected that under the national funding formula some schools will receive extra funding and some school will receive less funding. This is to make school funding fairer as schools in some areas of the country receive more funding than schools in other areas. It is not clear which will apply to St John’s *if and when* the new funding formula is introduced by the new government after the general election. What is clear is that as it currently stands St John’s will lose approximately £50,000 from its budget for the 2017-18 academic year. This is the equivalent of the annual salary of one and half experienced teachers or two less experienced teachers. Clearly, such an enormous reduction in funding next year will require me to take some difficult decisions going forward. Unless the cuts in school funding are reversed St John’s School, in line with all schools, will need to reduce its spending and this will impact upon what we can routinely provide for our children. As a Trust school St John’s is better insulated from the cuts than schools that are not in a multi academy trust. This is because the Trust purchases services and resources in bulk for all its schools at a reduced cost leading to efficiencies being derived from economies of scale. However, these savings will not cover a cut of £50,000 from the school’s budget. Should you wish to at this time of general election please do write to your MP and express your concerns – many voices are more likely to be heard.

Children’s Fair

A group of children in Year 5 have asked to hold a charity fund raising event in support of Cancer Research. The fair will take place after school on Tuesday 13th June 2017. If you can, please do come along and support the children’s efforts to raise funds for this worthy charity.

Ben Smith 401 Challenge

We are pleased that Ben Smith will be visiting school to lead an assembly on Anti-Bullying on Tuesday 6th June 2017. Ben, a victim of bullying himself, ran 401 marathons in 401 days to raise awareness of the damage caused by bullying. Once again I would like to thank our very generous PTA for funding Ben's visit to school. More information on Ben's challenge can be found on www.the401challenge.co.uk

School Uniform

With the school office becoming a cashless office in September, the way in which uniform is ordered will be changing. Parents will need to go to the School Trends website to place their order and make payment.

Mrs Manuel will then collate and send the orders to School Trends on the 15th of each month, and any uniform ordered will then be delivered to school and distributed by the end of each month. More information will follow.

However if you would like to order new school uniform for September, please place your order by Thursday 25th June 2017 to ensure delivery by the end of term. Order forms can be obtained from Mrs Manuel in the school office.

As is the norm with businesses, School Trends have made an annual increase to the retail price of their uniform which unfortunately means that there is a slight price increase. We have kept the increase to an absolute minimum and still believe that our prices provide good quality uniform at a very competitive price.

Year 6 SATs Week Breakfast a Big Hit

In previous years the school has provided children in Year 6 with a hot breakfast to celebrate the end of SATs week. However this year SATs Breakfast Club was held all week courtesy of Zest Catering, the Trusts own in-house catering team. The children thoroughly enjoyed their breakfast every day, culminating in a hot breakfast on the Thursday morning to celebrate the end of their tests.

Patronal Festival – Fish and Chips!

The school will be holding its annual St John's Patronal festival on Tuesday 20th June 2017, (11:00 – 14:00). You will probably recall from previous years that the clergy from St John's Church hold an outdoor service followed by a picnic and games on the school playing field led by children from Year 6. As part of the celebration, parent/carers and grandparents are most welcome to attend the closing service at 13:45. The children are then free to go home with you at 14:00 as a Patronal Festival treat! Please note that only children that are taken home with a parent/carer will be allowed to leave school.

Any children that remain at school and will be supervised as usual until 15:15. ***Please collect your child from their classroom and ensure that their teacher is aware that he or she is leaving with you.*** Thank you.

As part of the celebration the school kitchen will cook fish and chips with an ice lolly for desert and a bottle of water. The hot picnic meal will be provided at the usual cost of £2.00. My staff will provide additional water for all children as usual.

PTA Summer Fair

Our very generous PTA are busily organising this year's Summer Fair which is to be held on Saturday 1st July 2017, 12:00-1400. Please put the date in your diary and come along and help support them (and us!). The money raised will help your children.

Yours sincerely

Dr M R Cottrell

Headteacher, St John's Church of England Primary School

Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Director of Primary, Wellsway Multi Academy Trust

National Leader of Education



Key Dates and Reminders:

The following are the remaining key dates for your diaries for Term 6. Parents will receive letters giving details of specific trips and events for your child's class in due course.

May 2017	
Friday 26th	Fraser Portraits Class photos Explorer Dome End of Term 5
June 2017	
Monday 5th	Term 6 starts
Tuesday 6 th	Ben Smith 401 Challenge Assembly
Thursday 8th	YR 2017 New Parents Open Evening [18:00 – 19:00]
Friday 9th	YR visit to WSM Y5 Group One Cycling Proficiency starts
Monday 12th	Odd Day – ‘Our World’ Y6 First Aid Course
Tuesday 13th	Y4 Viking Visitor Y5 fundraising fair in support of Cancer Research
Thursday 15th	Y3 ‘Safety in Medicines’ with School Nurse
Monday 19th	Y6 Kwik Cricket Tournament at Keynsham Cricket Club
Tuesday 20th	Patronal Festival
Wednesday 21st	Sports Day
Friday 23rd	Reserve Sports Day
w/c Monday 26th	Y6 Residential visit to Fairthorne Manor
Wednesday 28th	Y5 Athletics Festival at Wellsway
Friday 30th	Reception Class Service
July 2017	
Saturday 1st	PTA Summer Fair [12:00-14:00]
Thursday 6th	Y2 Pirate Visit to The Matthew (Please note new date) Y4 Class Service Y6 Secondary School Transition day at Wellsway, Oldfield, St Gregory's
Friday 7th	Y6 Secondary School Transition day at Broadlands Swimming Gala
Tuesday 11th	Y2 Class Service
Friday 14th	Reports published
Wednesday 19th	Y6 Class Service
Thursday 20th	End of Term 6
Friday 21st	INSET Day 6

Term Dates 2017 – 2018

Term 1

Start: Friday 1st September 2017
Finish: Friday 20th October 2017

INSET Day

**Friday 1st September 2017 and
Monday 4th September 2017**

Term 2

Start: Monday 30th October 2017
Finish: Friday 15th December 2017

Monday 30th October 2017

Term 3

Start: Tuesday 2nd January 2018
Finish: Friday 9th February 2018

Friday 9th February 2018

Term 4

Start: Monday 19th February 2018
Finish: Friday 23rd March 2018

Monday 19th February 2018

Term 5

Start: Monday 9th April 2018
Finish: Friday 25th May 2018

Monday 25th May 2018

Term 6

Start: Monday 4th June 2018
Finish: Monday 23rd July 2018

Monday 23rd July 2018