

Dear Parents,

The last newsletter before Christmas has all the details for our Christmas celebrations and an update on some of the recent events in school.

#### PTA CHRISTMAS FAIR

Please come along and support our PTA Christmas Fair tomorrow from 12 to 2 pm. There will be plenty of stalls, the very popular Secret Santa room, where children can choose and wrap up a secret present for their family, an adult and children's tombola and a grand prize draw amongst many other attractions. We look forward to seeing you there.

#### CHRISTMAS EVENTS

The Infant Nativity Play this year is "The First Christmas" and will be performed to infant parents in the school hall on two afternoons, Tuesday 16th and Wednesday 17th December at 2.00 pm. The dress rehearsal will be performed at 2.00 pm on Monday, 15th December.

As last year, we are inviting parents with babies and young pre-school children to the dress rehearsal and would request that these young children are not brought to the two performances. Thank you.

All the children, both junior and infant will be taking part in our Christmas Carol Concert at St. John's Church on Thursday, 18th December at 11.00 am, with a rehearsal on Wednesday, 17th December at 11.00 am.

As with the infant nativity, this year we are inviting parents with babies and young pre-school children to the rehearsal on Wednesday and would request that these young children are not brought to the Carol Concert on Thursday. There is no need for tickets for any of our Christmas events – just turn up on the day.

#### CHRISTMAS CARDS

Your children may soon be keen to start bringing in Christmas cards for their friends. Please ask them to wait until the LAST WEEK OF TERM when our school postal service starts.

Children should put their cards into the school postbox in the entrance hall, rather than handing them out to their friends.

Please help our Year 3 postmen and women by ensuring that your child puts the name, surname and class of the recipient on the envelope.

#### BOOK FAIR

Thank you all for your generous support for our recent Book Fair. £863.75 worth of books were sold, which gained the school £518.25 in commission. We have spent this on new books for our library, so as well as providing your child with new books to read at home, your support has ensured that they have a wider choice at school as well.

#### CHILDREN IN NEED

Wearing pyjamas in support of Children in Need proved very popular with the children and the School Council raised £242.90. Well done to them for their fundraising efforts and thank you for your support.

#### VISIT TO CHINA

Last week I had a fascinating trip to China. The trip was fully funded by the DCSF, the British Council and their Chinese counterparts. I was one of 110 English headteachers who flew out from Heathrow on Saturday afternoon. We attended an educational conference in Beijing on Monday and then took the 2 hour flight to Shanghai on Tuesday. On Wednesday we attended another conference, with speakers from schools all around the world and then on Thursday came the highlight of the trip – the visit to our partner school, Wuning Road Primary School.

#### The school

Wuning Road takes 1100 children aged from 7 to 12 (younger children go to kindergarten) and there are over 80 members of staff. I arrived at the start of the school day – 8.00 am – to see the morning exercises, an amazing sight with all 1100 children taking part in unison to the accompaniment of military style music.

The school buildings were modern but they were drab with little display work to cheer them up. The weather in Shanghai was similar to here at present, but there was no heating in the school and all the windows stayed open during the day! Teachers spent the day in their coats and the children wore lots of warm layers under their uniform tracksuits.

The school arranged the programme for the day and unfortunately I was only able to observe two lessons. These lessons, and the glimpses I had into other classrooms showed that teaching was extremely formal, perhaps unsurprisingly as the class size was 45+.

The children are exceptionally well disciplined and highly motivated. They are expected to work long and hard. They are required to be in school from 8.00 - 4.30 and then to do one and a half hours homework each day. In many ways I was left with an impression of an education system that we had many years ago: large classes, didactic teaching, science rooms filled with stuffed birds and animals. Yet it was hard not to be impressed with the children's keenness to learn and the high standards that they were achieving in many areas.

In break times, the children were relaxed and chatty, curious to see a western visitor and keen to try out their English.

#### An honoured guest

Throughout the trip I was treated as "an honoured guest". The level of hospitality was extremely generous throughout the visit, with evening 'banquets' being a feature most days. I was thrilled to be asked to have supper at the headteacher's flat – and to help to make the Chinese dumplings we ate later.

#### Overall impressions

When I went I had little idea of what to expect beyond what I had learned from guide books. I found

a country that is undergoing change at an unparalleled rate. In Shanghai the skyline resembles an American cityscape and they have to re-issue the city maps every two months because of the volume of new building. I caught glimpses of old China but that is all they were.

The high level of foreign investment in the city was striking and the sheer number of people and the high density living conditions have left a strong impression. The nation's determination to develop and to 'open up' to the outside world was very clear. After my visit it is very apparent to me why China will become the world's largest economy and why we need to be introducing our children to Chinese culture and language.

The highlight of the trip was spending time with Chinese colleagues, who were not just kind, but fun loving with a rich sense of humour. I have no doubt that we can learn much from each other and hope that there will be opportunities for our Chinese colleagues to visit us here.

#### RESULTS OF AFTER SCHOOL CLUB SURVEY

You may remember that some time ago I asked for your views on providing an after school care club. A relatively low number of responses were received as shown below:

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

I would make regular (at least 3 days a week) use of an after school child care facility based at the school. 10 5 15 7

I feel that it would be a good thing to have after school child care based at the school, even if this means fewer after school activities are available. 7 10 14 6

I would be happy for my child to travel in supervised transport to a local after school child care facility. 7 9 14 7

On the basis of this survey it would seem that there is not currently sufficient demand for an after school care club. However, we will continue to keep the situation under review and will approach parents for their views again in two years' time.

Finally, on behalf of all of us at Dormansland, may I wish you all a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Jane Cowley  
Headteacher

#### REMINDERS

§ Please ensure that you pay any outstanding monies to school next week. Mrs Lowe is particularly

concerned about the amount of outstanding money for swimming. Please remember that unless all those who can pay do so, we are unable to provide swimming or other extra curricular activities.

§ You may have noticed the new parking signs by the school gate in Clinton Hill. Please take note that they do not allow stopping, i.e. dropping children off, in the marked areas.

§ If you bring your dog to school at the beginning or end of the day, please do not leave them tied to a post by the gate. Many young children are nervous of dogs and do not like having to walk past a barking dog on their way into or out of school and the barking can be irritating to our neighbours.