



Avondale Preparatory School

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Headmaster: Mr Stuart Watson BEd, Dip Tchg

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Dear Parents

I do hope the Christmas period was an enjoyable one for all and that the batteries have been recharged for the New Year ahead. I find it hard to believe that the Spring Term has already crept upon us; this term is a shorter one spread over 11 weeks with an incredible amount going on.

Following the end of the Autumn Term, a number of Years 5 and 6 children participated in Avondale's first Ski trip to Brasov, Romania. The group had superb weather and spent a number of days in the snow, improving their technique and prowess on the slopes. The trip also saw a charitable element to it, with the group shopping for, and distributing, Christmas gifts to those less fortunate in a poor rural village. Our Christmas Shoebox Appeal saw 77 boxes collected, for which we are most grateful; the group were able to hand these in person to recipients, making for an authentic charitable experience. There will be a special assembly at 8:45am on the first day back (Wednesday 3 January) documenting the group's time. A number of children will share their experiences and there will be a 10-minute movie showcasing events, including the distribution of presents; parents are most welcome to attend, especially those considering the trip for next year, as it will give a good insight into what you can expect.

To the term ahead, there is a great deal going on in classroom learning programmes that will be communicated with you in due course. On the first day back there will be a copy of the Spring Term Calendar given out to the eldest child in the family, together with accompanying correspondence that will give you the full picture.

As we start a new term, please find below a number of housekeeping points that I should like to draw your attention to:

Christmas Collections

Congratulations to the Pre- Prep Department who put on two wonderful nativities in the lead up to the end of the Autumn Term and to the Prep Department for a fantastic carol service. Following respective performances, we have been able to hand over £188 to Barnardos and £73 to the church aiding them in their charitable work over the Christmas period.

Staffing and Classroom Allocation

As the year progresses, we continue to see growth in our Early Years Department; in response to this, Mrs Teri Hayward will be returning in a full- time capacity to Little Avondale. The cohort will remain as a class during the bulk of afternoons due to the increase in numbers, with Mondays and Fridays an exception to this arrangement when numbers are smaller; this move will also provide adequate release time for teachers to keep on top of children's assessment. Additionally, Mrs Sheryl Davis will move into a near full-time role, with mornings in our ever- expanding Tots environment, and afternoons in the Year 1 classroom.

Late last term, our Year 6 and Year ¾ classes made a switch to accommodate larger classroom numbers. Mrs Banham's old room has now been refurbished and this will allow additional classroom space for smaller groups in Years ¾ to capitalize in their learning. The next room to be refurbished will be the Year 2 classroom, planned for the second half of the Easter holiday period.

Parking Reminder!

One of my least favourite jobs, but one that I need to do from time to time is car parking attendant! Please may I remind ALL parents that our agreement with the Working Men's Club allows us to park **ONLY** beyond the **yellow line** at the far end of the car park and not in front of the delivery doors. Please may I ask that this understanding is passed onto family members and childminders who may pick up or drop your children off, or for those who may be attending performances at the school.

Every year I get correspondence from the BWMC advising me that they wish to cancel our agreement due to it not being adhered to. With this facility lost, there would undoubtedly be chaos at the school gate! Please consider all parents by parking where we are permitted and walking those extra few steps. **Please also avoid parking in Camilla Close outside the gate or nursery as this prohibits other vehicles from turning and creates traffic congestion.**

Sickness

Tis the season for colds and flu! Please be reminded that should your child be sick, they are required to be kept away from school for a period of 24 hours. This measure is to safeguard both teaching staff and other children.

Hockey Instruction/ Games Lessons

As the winter has finally set in, please may I remind all parents of children in Years 3-6 that the school sweatshirt top and jogging bottoms should be brought into school for all games lessons. We try and venture outside as much as possible and without the correct gear your child may not enjoy the time as much as they would, should they be correctly attired. We also wish to look the part when travelling to other schools for fixtures and it is essential that children have warm clothing for putting on when games have been completed. The Spring Term sees an exhaustive fixture schedule; there are VERY few Wednesdays when children will not be involved in some capacity. There are also a number of 'B' team opportunities for the bulk of children to represent the school.

For boys, the focus for games lessons will shift to tag rugby for the bulk of the term; with more than double the amount of boys to girls in the Prep Department, it is not conducive for hockey to be conducted in games time (even when swimmers depart). For this reason, we have needed to maintain the after school hockey arrangement with Years 3 and 4 boys joining the Prep girls on a Friday, with Years 5 and 6 boys having precedence on Thursday afternoons. Mouth guards are essential, and shin pads are strongly advised.

Uniform

Our uniform shop shall be open for any necessary purchases on Mondays and Fridays from 8:30am-9:30am, led by Mrs Sam Wallace or by appointment with Mrs Lister. We are very proud of our uniform; please may I take this opportunity to remind you that only Avondale uniform is permitted to be worn at school; this includes gloves. As a polite reminder all children from Nursery upwards should arrive and depart school wearing the school cap or hat. School beanies may be worn at school only. Fleeeces/ rain jackets should be worn over the top of blazers in cold weather conditions.

From time to time, we have items of uniform that go missing, or items that are misplaced! Should this happen to your child please may we kindly ask that contact is made with your child's teacher and NOT the school office. Items that are named usually find their way back to the correct party quickly. It is a very frustrating experience for all concerned should items not be named. In this respect, please may we ask for items that have been purchased from the Thrift Shop to have previous names taken out of garments and for them to be renamed with YOUR child's name.

Birthdays!

Everyone loves a good Birthday Party and invitations to the like are something that schools generally stay well clear of. However, as a polite request, please may we ask that every effort be made in considering your invitation list so as not to exclude any one individual. Whilst we recognise it as very much a 'home' decision, this can very much affect children within school.

French Trip (Years 5 and 6) and Hooke Court (Years 3 and 4)

It is at the end of this term when respective trips for Years 3-6 would normally take place. It is with regret, however, that we have elected not to proceed with the French Trip this year in view of safety concerns over possible terrorist activity. This decision was not an easy one to make; we have considered differing views from parents in last year's questionnaire and consulted with other schools who run similar trips, all of which have elected to pause their involvement until there is more stability. Likewise, we would have liked to visit the Houses of Parliament again this year, but have elected to postpone this until the next academic year.

With smaller numbers in Years 3 and 4 this year, it has not been possible to proceed with our annual residential trip to Hooke Court in Dorset. Miss Barrington is in the process of considering an alternative for extending classroom learning programmes, which may (or may not) involve an overnight stay.

Recognising Success

At this time of year, it is always difficult knowing just how to play things- we congratulate those children who have been successful in achieving the necessary marks for places to respective Grammar Schools whilst we empathise with those children who came close, but missed out. I feel it appropriate to mention that Avondale had 4/7 children achieve 11+ success this year. Congratulations to the following children: Edward Rawlins, Ellen Button, Jonty and Matthew Ivess- Mash. We had a number of near misses (by one, and four marks, respectively). All children should be commended for their maturity in dealing with disappointment and in sharing their empathy with others. I feel it appropriate to recognise that all Avondale children are success stories and entry into selective schools is not the measure of such success; the overwhelming majority who go onto other schools often find themselves in top sets for the core subjects.

Separate Calendar Letter

All Spring Term activities are communicated in the calendar letter and will come into force from Thursday 4th January. Please may we kindly ask for the permission letter to be returned to school promptly; some clubs have limits to the amount of participants and priority will be given to children whose forms are returned first. By the beginning of the second week back, all up- to- date information regarding school events can be found on our website. Please be advised that ALL children in the Prep Department (Years 3-6) are required after school on Tuesdays as they prepare for the end of term production, 'Oliver'. This is a free club and will allow far less learning time taken away from the school day. Consequently, there will be no school choir (for this term only).

Adverse Weather Plan

As the colder weather is now well and truly upon us, the likelihood of our Adverse Weather Plan coming into effect becomes a distinct possibility with the onset of snow. Please find the plan attached for your reference.

Pick- ups at the End of the School Day and School Security

Please be reminded that children leaving at 4:30pm, following an after school activity, need to be signed out with Mrs Lister in the school office. Children, after this time, report back to the ASCC team and need to be signed out with them.

From time to time, your child may be collected by another parent at the end of the school day. Please may we politely ask that if your child is going home with someone else, that this is communicated with the school office to avoid any confusion. Furthermore, please be reminded that the blue gate beside Little Avondale will be locked from 3:30pm in the winter months. Should ASCC venture outside (as the term progresses) it will be opened to allow easy access. Entry to the school when the gate is locked is via the school front door. Our remaining Tots join ASCC from 3:30pm and access for these parents should be made via the front door also. Please may I politely point out that security is a joint effort- when collecting your child from ASCC (who will predominantly be in the library during the colder months), the front door MUST be locked when you exit the building; due to the group's location, we are unable to monitor this. I point this out, as there have been a number of occasions when the group have returned to the dining room at the end of the school day to find the door unlocked, or in some cases, wide open!

There will undoubtedly be further things that come to light in the weeks ahead. Please refer to the whiteboard at the gate entrance for changes to programmes and up- coming events. This is put out daily and documents any club cancellations that we know about in advance. Short- notice cancellations due to inclement weather will be communicated via text message as usual.

Best wishes for another successful term.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Watson