



WHYTRIG MIDDLE SCHOOL

One of the Seaton Valley Federation of Schools

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12 February 2021

End of Spring First Half Term

Dear Parent or Carer

We hope you are all well at the end of the Spring First Half Term and ready for the half term break. It has been another six weeks of challenge, effort and endeavour by everyone associated with our school. We thank children for their work in trying circumstances in or out of school and parents for their continued support. We also thank staff for their efforts in ensuring some sort of continuity and 'normality' in this situation, so that learning and progress can continue. Our teachers continue to try new things around the online learning, to see what works well (and what does not) and 'new software update' has become a weekly agenda item at our weekly online staff meeting by our resident tech guru as we look to bring in things that will improve the provision for the children.

Remote Learning

The Google Classroom system appears to continue to work smoothly and the children are in the main, keeping up with their work. As we have stated in previous communications, we review the engagement of all pupils in all subjects across the school each week. Pupils are graded RED (no engagement), AMBER (part engagement) or GREEN (full engagement) in each subject with staff following up on any significant issues in the following week. We have been able to give out some very positive feedback, as well as some things to work on for some pupils. We would particularly like to thank parents and carers who are supporting their children with their work, with some getting really involved which is fantastic. For example, it has been wonderful to see some of the work in Year 7 this week, where parents have been involved in helping to produce the 'vampire sighting' news stories. We managed to share just a small handful in our assembly this morning so that everyone in school knows what good work has been taking place; just the sort of things we love to see and promote in school!

We will not be setting any work or homework over the half term week holiday; pupils, parents and staff deserve a well-earned break. Of course if your child has not been engaging with school work, this time could be used productively to get back on track, as all the work from the beginning of January is always available in Google Classroom. **Scheduled work in Google Classroom and Key Worker/Vulnerable child school provision will resume on Monday 22nd February.**

Laptop Loan Scheme

All of our laptops are now out on loan, but we do have access to data sticks should you need extra internet access. We have also received a substantial monetary donation from **BGL 4 Schools** which will go towards an order of new Chromebooks we have placed, which our children will get to use in due course. Please do let us know though if you are still struggling with ICT access.

FSM Voucher Scheme

FSM students will receive a £30 voucher via the Huggg system for the half term holiday, courtesy of a £15 boost from Northumberland CC. We have had very few issues with the FSM voucher scheme in recent weeks, but if you do have any problems please contact the Finance Office via School Gateway and we will see what we can do to help. If you haven't redeemed your £60 Edenred eCode please ensure you do so before it expires on 19th February. We won't be able to reissue any eCodes after that date.

Covid Testing

Every test which has been conducted in Whytrig for Year 7 and 8 pupils and staff has been negative, which is great news. A reminder to parents/carers that if your child is in school and you wish for them to be tested, then you must complete the required consent form which has been sent out to all those attending school by Mr Donald.

Return to School

As you may be aware, the Government recently announced the 8th March as the **earliest** date that schools might reopen from. We expect to have more information on Monday 22nd February about the return to school but at this moment in time, we are really unsure what it will look like for our school. As soon we know and our plans are in place, we will let you know.

New School Build

As some of you may have seen in the Northumberland Gazette, up to date details have been provided on the funding structure for the SVF new build. Details are as follows: "The final proposal as part of the February 2019 budget process was £21million for new 'state-of-the-art' school buildings in Seaton Delaval for the Seaton Valley Federation. Last year's capital programme indicated that £4.5million would be spent this year - which has not happened as the outline business case is still awaiting approval - followed by £16.9million in 2021-22. The latest programme has upped the total investment to £31.6million, but just £230,000 for the coming year, followed by £15.9million and £15.5million in 2022-23 and 2023-24 respectively". More information will be provided once we know the exact plans and timescales, but the confirmation of funding would appear to be great news.

Finally, as we always do at the end of any half term, we would like to wish you all the best and hope you have an enjoyable and relaxing holiday, if that is possible. When we break up for a holiday, our message to the children is always to stay safe, recharge batteries, do things that you enjoy doing (and be good for parents)! We hope that you are all able to do these things over the next week.

Take care and stay safe!

Yours sincerely

Mr J K Souter
Head of School