**ARCHBISHOP RUNCIE CHURCH of ENGLAND (VA) FIRST SCHOOL**

**Year 4 Spring 1 Newsletter 10th January 2020**

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome back to school after the Christmas break and a Happy New Year to you! I hope that it was a restful and enjoyable holiday for all of you.

Firstly, how could I start this letter off without a shout out to the children’s amazing Nativity performances?! They made us so proud and I hope you all enjoyed it as much as we at the school did. There were few dry eyes in the house! Thank you, as ever, for your incredible support throughout, including those of you who let the children stay late, or learnt lines at home, or simply put up with the endless singing of songs (they were awfully catchy!).

Similarly in the spirit of reflection, last term’s achievements were not just of the dramatic variety: starting with the trip to Beamish (including a Victorian lesson by a teacher far stricter than I am..!), the children’s historical knowledge about how schooling and expectations of what it was to be a child in the past often astounded. Their analysis of Narnia, and their creative writing that went with it, was so often exemplary – I often tell the children how I like to brag to other teachers about their books, and they continue to make me proud in that regard!! There is not enough space to list every highlight, be that their gymnastics routines (see Seesaw if you’ve not seen them already!) to their understanding of Hinduism, but, as ever, the class continue to exceed every expectation put upon them. Unsurprisingly, I am excited for the upcoming term.

This term, our topic is a Geography-focused one on modern day Greece, which sets us up very nicely for Spring 2’s Ancient Greece topic. This is fulfilling the curriculum objective of studying a European country, but will also involve them looking at the complex interplay between physical and human geography. We will begin by looking at where Greece is located, along with the usual array of mapwork that goes with that, but we will build this up to how the location affects how humans live there. The end point is for the children to understand why Greece is such a popular tourist destination and the effect this has on the country: there will be plenty of blissful, idyllic Greek island pictures to get us through the dark January days!! In terms of how you may help, please feel free to send us in any holiday pictures if you have been there, both in recent times and further in the past, or have family members who’ve visited speak to your child. Any books on Greek geography or modern day Greece would be appreciated also (just to borrow!).

At the end of the unit, as we always wrap up the term with Art or Design and Technology, we will be building upon Autumn 1’s DT topic of seasonality by looking at healthy eating, and specifically looking at Greek food. If the children are willing, they’ll be able to try some and consider making a well-balanced, healthy Greek meal. Eating some Greek food from the supermarket, like feta cheese, olives, tzatziki, baklava etc. and thinking about *why* they are Greek and how they differ from other cuisines would also be helpful, although not essential.

In English, we will be looking initially at a range of non-fiction texts, mainly in relation to our Greece topic – this includes maps for tourists, atlases, travelogues and so on, with the children writing a non-chronological report about where Greece is located early on in the term, followed by some work on classic fables at the end of term, which will form a good base for contrasting with Greek myths after half-term.

Maths-wise, thank you as ever for your support with Times Table Rock Stars. As stated in the meetings at the start of the year, we need to begin preparing for the government-mandated times table test in June - something that will creep up on us very quickly! Times tables are, ultimately, something that simply have to be learnt by rote and TTRS is fantastic in that it turns something potentially very dull into something the children enjoy. Please do keep the children doing this regularly.

In terms of in class, this term is initially about perimeter and area, which allows a good consolidation of the four operations from Autumn, followed by my personal favourite Maths topic, fractions. Seeing 2D, rectilinear shapes in everyday life is something you can discuss with the children in passing, thinking about how perimeter and area could be calculated. As I type this (at home), I am looking out across the street to the house opposite and looking at the rectangular face of the front of the house, the square shape of the window and so on and so forth. Similarly, fractions can be seen throughout life: the most fundamental thing for any child to understand with fractions is the link with multiplication and division – forming simple groups, with anything from toys to Shreddies, and discussing how many equal parts of a whole there are is a principle that, once understood, can be used very deeply in Year 4 and beyond.

In terms of the timetable, we will be reverting back to the normal PE slot of Friday afternoons for the full lesson, and a short session on Wednesday afternoons plus the Golden Mile where possible. Please could you ensure that PE kits and trainers are in every day. From Tuesday 21st January, the Newcastle Music Service will be teaching the children ukulele as they had in Year 3 last year. Additionally, as I stated in last term’s letter, we now have approval to visit Gosforth Central Middle School’s IT suite, so we will be popping over there a few times across the Spring terms when the timetable allows, which should be very exciting.

As ever, reading at home is crucial and may I ask for them to read to an adult as often as possible, daily in an ideal world but of course I understand that this is not always possible! Asking as many questions as possible to check their understanding of the text is a great way to ensure that books are at the right level for your child. Alongside this, homework will continue to be set every Thursday – I only ever ask that homework is attempted, not necessarily completed, so there are no concerns if your child cannot manage all of it, especially if I set homework as pre-learning before we engage with the topic in class! I have had quite a few children coming to me worried that they did not finish all of it and every time my answer has been ‘That’s fine!’! Please ensure you mark the work with the answers at the back.

Lastly, spellings will continue to be set for a Thursday test but may I please ask for your own close attention to the children when it comes to spelling. I can only set a certain amount per week and it is natural that children will forget certain ones over time so please continue to practise previous spellings.

My go to recommendation to any families interested in finding out more about anything curriculum-wise is [www.theschoolrun.co.uk](http://www.theschoolrun.co.uk) which has not only all the spelling rules the children have to learn by the end of Years 3 and 4 but also all of the curriculum areas that are focused upon in Year 4.

If you have any questions or queries, please do not hesitate to catch me at the end of the school day. You can also email me at jonathan.booth@archbishop.newcastle.sch.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Booth