



WHITLEY CHAPEL
First School

Whitley Chapel Church of England First School
Leazes Lane, Steel, Hexham, Northumberland, NE47 0HB
Telephone and Fax: 01434 673294
Email: Admin@whitleyfirst.northumberland.sch.uk

Headteacher: Miss Jenny Morgan

Dear Parents

Wednesday 13th September 2017

Change of date for Harvest Lunch

Andrew has reminded me that the Women's Institute serves a soup lunch every first Friday of the month at the Parish Hall to raise money for community projects. I do not want anybody to have to choose between two lunch venues on 6th October, so we are changing the date of our Harvest lunch to **Friday 13th October** at Whitley Chapel School at 12.00 pm, so if you would like to you can go to both!

Northumbrian Evening Parish Hall Friday 22nd September 7.00 pm

The Northumbrian piper, Helen Capes, who will be playing on the Northumbrian evening to raise money for another SMART board for school, will be coming in to our music lessons on **Friday 15th September** to teach the children a Northumbrian song. We would like to perform it to parents at the end of the school day. Please come in to the hall at **3.10 pm** to hear them sing - we will try to keep it brief so that you can get away on time.

If you would like tickets for the evening on 22nd September, please complete and return the slip at the bottom of this letter. They are £10, including home-made pies for refreshments, and Whitley Chapel school children go free. Come along, and bring your children to help us sing! Tickets will be on sale in the school office until Thursday 21st September. If you can buy them in advance rather than pay on the door, it will help with catering.

Pop up restaurant for School SMART Board fund

Clara Nicholl has very kindly offered to run a pop-up restaurant at the Parish Hall on Friday 24th November to raise more money for the SMART board fund. At the moment the plan is to have two sittings, with some of the older children helping to wait on tables for the first sitting. People would book a table, and bring their own alcohol, and soft drinks would be provided. If you have sampled Clara's cooking before, you will know it will be well worth putting the date in your diaries. We will be giving more details nearer the time.

Attendance

You may have been aware of the topic of attendance cropping up in the national news recently because of the case in the Isle of White where a parent challenged a school about not authorising a holiday in term time. As a Governing Body we continue to respect parents' judgement about absences in term time, and currently have no plans to administer fines for taking children out of school. However, we are accountable to OFSTED, and the number of absences has been creeping up in recent months. The expectation is that children should be able to attend school for a minimum of 96% of the available sessions. This allows for unavoidable absence due to illness. There is no doubt that where children have had frequent absence, their learning definitely suffers. It is difficult for children to maintain steady

progress if their attendance is interrupted. They miss teaching that builds on their previous knowledge, which can result in whole areas of the curriculum being lost, particularly in early reading, where they have new sounds to learn nearly every day, or maths throughout the school where they learn new methods and concepts every week, that lead on to the next steps in learning. It can be very disconcerting to pupils to have to try and catch up on topics where everyone else in the class knows what to do. It is also very disruptive for teachers to have to slot a child in to an activity when that child hasn't completed the previous learning. For this reason we would ask parents to think very seriously before they decide to take children out of school for a holiday during term time. There will always be exceptional cases, and we will consider these on a case by case basis. However, the Governors have made the decision NOT to authorise requests for holidays during term time where attendance has gone below 96%. We would also ask that wherever possible, appointments such as medical, dental or optician's appointments would be made after school. If a child has a hospital appointment that cannot be altered, please could parents bring the letter to school, so we can put a copy in the child's records and show that both we and you take attendance seriously and are doing our best to make sure that the children make the best progress possible. Thank you for your cooperation with this.

Yours sincerely

Miss Jenny Morgan

Northumbrian Evening

Friday 22nd September

7.00 pm Parish Hall

Number of tickets needed: adults children

Name:

Amount enclosed:

Tickets £10.00 Whitley Chapel children go free