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Maple Class Newsletter – Autumn Term, 2016

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome to a new school year! I hope that you have had an exciting summer and made the most of the warm weather. It has been wonderful to welcome so many new faces into Maple Class. I am really looking forward to getting to know everybody and to sharing a great year of learning opportunities with you. This newsletter will inform you of the learning and events that will take place between now and Christmas.

I'd like to begin by thanking you all for being so organised during our first few days and for working with our staggered entry. I appreciate that this often means rearrangements in routine for many of you, but it has been a huge success from our point of view – allowing us more time to get to know and settle your children in their first days at school. The children are quickly adjusting to the classroom routines and school rules, and I am incredibly proud of the way that they are taking on their new responsibilities and developing their independence. I would also like to thank you for being so supportive during the morning drop off and allowing the children to enter the cloakroom independently. I understand how difficult it must be to put on a positive face and wave them off if they are feeling a little nervous or teary! I would like to reassure you that within minutes of being in the classroom and sorting out their things, they are always absolutely fine!

Daily Arrangements

As of Monday 12th September, all children in reception have been attending for the full school day – **beginning at 8.50am and ending at 3.15pm**. The children have already shown great independence when entering the classroom and they have quickly adjusted to lining up after the bell and saying goodbye on the playground as the rest of the school do each morning. Please encourage your child to say goodbye before they line up and bring their belongings into the classroom as independently as possible – Mrs Meaney, Miss Mansfield, Mrs Thorne or myself will be there to help with book bags and water bottles etc. In another attempt to avoid crowding in the cloakroom, I will always try to make myself available outside the classroom should you have any questions or messages. I would kindly ask that parents and children do not enter the classroom/cloakroom area in the mornings unless a member of staff is present. If your child needs to use the toilet before the bell, or after you have collected them at the end of the day, they should use the toilets outside the hall.

Please can we also ask that you arrive promptly to collect children at the end of the day as late parents can often unsettle the younger children. Staff will only release a child on to the playground when an adult is there to receive them, so please ensure that we know who is collecting your child at the end of the day. If there are any changes to your usual routine,

please let us know in the morning – we have a blue clip board on the cloakroom door with 'end of day arrangement' slips (or phone/e-mail the office if things change during the day).

Staffing Arrangements

Our usual weekly routine is that Mrs Leonard will teach Monday to Friday. Mrs Meaney, Mrs Thorne and Miss Mansfield will be our teaching assistants and will support the learning in Maple class throughout the week.

On Friday mornings, the children will be taught by Mrs Meaney and Mrs Thorne. Fridays will also include a Music session with Mrs Broadhead (our specialist Music teacher). We are all committed to the care and education of your children and the 'Maple Class Team' meet regularly to plan and discuss children's progress and share information.

Curriculum

We're looking forward to an exciting year ahead! During the first half of term, we will be thinking about ourselves; our likes and dislikes, how we behave and what we believe in. The children will be settling into their new class routines, making friends, and developing their own special place within our school community. We have also had a "Safety Week" where we learnt about people that help us, how to stay safe at home and school, and how to use technology safely. We will be developing our computing skills as we learn basic typing and mouse control.

Later on this term, we will begin our first topic, "*The Egyptians*". During this topic, we will focus on Geography skills; learning about our place in the world, locating countries on a map and making comparisons between Chesterton and Egypt. We will also develop our History skills; looking at how the Ancient Egyptians lived and making comparisons to our own lives.

In Literacy, we will be focussing on letter recognition and formation, before moving on to spelling c-v-c words and writing short labels and captions related to our topic work. We will also be looking at a variety of text types, including stories, postcards, letters and non-fiction texts.

In Maths, we will be working on number skills; counting accurately, recognising, ordering and writing numbers 0 – 20. Later in the term, we will focus on positional and directional language, and we will also be learning how to measure height and length.

For more information, you can view our Topic Wheel, which is displayed on the classroom door and on the curriculum area of the website.

Phonics

Phonics is taught across the whole school each morning, Monday to Thursday. The children take part in a 20 minute session, focussing on the reading and spelling of particular letter sounds. The children completed phonics assessments during their first week, which has helped us to group them according to their stage of learning.

Reading and Reading Books

The children should have received a reading diary and I hope that they have already started to share some of their reading books with you at home. Children must bring their reading diary and reading books into school every day, as we read regularly with them in class. We will let you know when we think your child is ready to move on to the next band of books – but if at any stage you are worried about your child's reading, or you feel that they might be ready for the next band, please come and speak to us.

We will prompt the children to change their book every few days, but I would suggest that they read each story with you at least twice, to help build their confidence. In the left column of the diary (where the smiley faces are), there should be a small coloured sticker, indicating which book box the children should choose from. We encourage the children to change their books as and when they are ready, **but please take a maximum of two books at a time or we will run out!** Sharing reading time with your child regularly at home is a valuable opportunity to support them at their stage of reading. This may involve talking about the pictures, encouraging them to read or recognise letters where possible (but don't worry if they can't!), or helping them to work out words using their phonic knowledge. It should also be a time when you can talk about the story and the characters. We would suggest spending about 10 minutes each day sharing the stories, as the "little and often" approach is often the most effective and enjoyable. If you would like any further advice on how to support and encourage your child's reading at home, please have a look at the attached "Helping Your Child with Reading" booklet.

Our reading diaries contain helpful advice and will motivate the children to read on a regular basis. You will notice that as your child reads, they can keep a cumulative count of the number of days that they have read, resulting in a sticker award at certain points throughout the year. When children achieve their reading awards, their efforts will be celebrated in school. Please encourage your child to take good care of their diary, as a replacement would come with a small cost.

Reading Raffle

As a further reward and incentive for regular reading, every child will have the chance to enter our Reading Raffle, which will be drawn each term. When a reading award has been reached (25 nights, 50 nights...etc.), the children will also be given a Reading Raffle ticket. This will give them the chance to win a book prize if they have the winning ticket. There were lots of Maple winners last year so let's see if we can keep

Homework

Homework is intended to allow school and family to work in partnership to promote children's learning and progress by providing opportunities for them to become more independent learners and practice the skills they have learnt at an appropriate level. We also hope that offering a range of activities in advance will make it easier for children to select an activity that will 'fit' around other family activities in any given week.

It is not meant to be a test or too much like hard work – let your child be creative! Hopefully children will find the activities fun rather than a chore! Please help your child to complete homework tasks if they need it, but as far as possible let the work be their own. If you have any comments (e.g. they find something very difficult, or have really enjoyed something) please leave me a note in their homework book. If you don't have chance to complete any homework or your child is not willing one week, please don't worry!

Homework will be posted in the Maple area of the school website on **Friday 23rd September** (If you require a paper copy of the homework activities, please let me know) and a pink homework book will be sent home in your child's book bag.

The homework will be a selection of open-ended, Maths, Literacy and Topic related activities for your child to choose from. We ask that one activity is completed each week and should be **handed in on a Wednesday**. The homework box is located just next to the classroom door. Homework books will be checked and returned on Fridays ready for the next task!

P.E.

P.E. will usually take place on Tuesday afternoons. However, it is essential that children have their P.E. kit in school every day. It would be useful if children could have both trainers and plimsolls in school and appropriate outdoor kit as the weather gets colder. **Please make sure that all kit and uniform is named** – young children really don't recognise their own clothes!

Outdoor Learning

Maple Class will have regular Outdoor Learning sessions throughout the term so that they can really get to grips with the outside; develop problem solving and team skills; physically challenge themselves; explore the natural world and develop their imaginations and creativity. These sessions will take place come rain or shine (or snow!), so it is vital that your child has appropriate clothing in school. We are now fortunate enough to have a class set of "Muddy Suits" (all-in-one waterproofs), so you will no longer need to send in a separate bag of clothes for Outdoor Learning.

Contact

I am very much looking forward to working in partnership with you to ensure that your children reach their full potential. I am aware that for our new children (and parents!) this can be a challenging time, so please remember that I am usually available after school if there's anything you would like to discuss.

Should you need to contact me about any matters arising, you can email me directly by using the following email address: ileo5968@chesterton.oxon.sch.uk.

Please be aware that any messages sent may not be seen until later in the school day or after school. In all cases, I will endeavour to reply to you within three working days. Obviously if the matter is more urgent, for example about attendance or changes to the routine of collecting your child then you should contact the school office or speak to one of the Maple team at the start of the day. Don't think that any query or concern is too small – we would much rather put your mind at rest, than have you worrying.

Events

- **Curriculum Evening:** We would like to welcome you to our **Curriculum Evening on Wednesday 28th September at 6pm**. This is an informal meeting, held in the classroom, where we hope to give you more of an insight into the strategies we use for teaching Literacy, Maths and Phonics in school. There will also be a few ideas about supporting your child's learning at home.
- **Parents Evening:** There will be formal parent / teacher meetings on **Wednesday 16th and Thursday 17th November** to discuss how your child has settled in and their progress so far. Do watch out for further details and appointment slots nearer the time.
- **Christmas Nativity:** All of the children in the Lower School will be taking part in the school Christmas performance at 2pm on the afternoons of **Tuesday 13th and Wednesday 14th of December**. As Maple, Beech and Ash classes are involved in the performance, we anticipate that the hall will be very full and ask that you please only attend one of the performances. More information about tickets will be sent out closer to the time.
- **Class Worship:** You may notice that Maple Class are not leading a Celebration Worship this term. We feel that at this time of year it is important to give the children plenty of time to settle in (and get completely engrossed in learning!). Maple will lead

their first Celebration Worship in the New Year. In the meantime, please have a look at the school website for lots of photos of the children's learning.

- **Other events:** For a full list of events taking place at school this term, please refer to the "What's On" button on the school website.

Reminders

- **Packed Lunches** – please can I remind you that the school requests that packed lunches do not contain nuts – as we do have children in school who have severe allergic reactions to them. We also ask that grapes or cherry tomatoes included in lunch boxes are cut in half to help prevent choking.
- **Snacks** – we provide a variety of fruit/ vegetables for children at morning break, so other snacks aren't necessary. Do let us know if your child has any food allergies or intolerances.
- **Water Bottles** – please make sure children have a water bottle with them every day (separate from any drink in their lunch box) as this allows them to access water as and when they require it. **Water only in these bottles please** (No squash, fruit juice or flavoured water – the children do spill them and they can get very sticky).
- **Hair** – please can you ensure that long hair is tied back. This helps ensure children's safety when using climbing equipment etc. and also curbs the spread of head lice.
- **Absence and sickness** – please let the office know if your child is not attending because they are ill. Also please note that Health Protection Agency guidance states that children should not return to school for 48 hours after the last episode of either sickness or diarrhoea.
- **Maple Outdoor Area** – as this is a very important part of our classroom, activities (e.g. water, vehicles and heavy wooden blocks) are often set up first thing in the morning. I know it's very tempting for younger brothers and sisters – but please can you ensure that they do not play with the classroom resources when you are dropping off / picking up older siblings. Please always ensure you close the gate behind you.
- **Wellingtons, coats, hats, gloves etc.** – as the weather turns colder and wetter please make sure that your child is prepared for outdoor play by providing wellies and a warm, waterproof coat every day. Wellies can be left at school so that they are always available for your child to use. If your child is also bringing in hats, gloves, ear muffs etc. please ensure that they are clearly named!

Here's to an exciting and productive year!

Kind regards,

Mrs Leonard and the Maple Class team