

December Newsletter

Dear Parents and Carers,

Once again, the term has passed in a flash and we have just two weeks left!

This autumn term was such an important one for the school as we looked to return school life to a more 'normal' provision, but one that remains safe in terms of limiting the spread of COVID cases. Whilst there have been cases throughout the term, the associated illnesses have continued to be fairly mild and the disruption in school has been managed—largely, to the incredible flexibility of the school staff and the support of the parent/carers community.

We are aware that spring is likely to bring similar challenges but I think we are all continuing to find ways to live with the challenges that this brings.

Christmas at North Wootton Academy

As a school, we are acutely aware of the discussion around the appropriateness of running Christmas events during another time of COVID uncertainty. With over 250 families at the school, it will always be near impossible to find the correct balance for everybody. However, on a weekly basis, the Senior Leaders and I are continually evaluating the 'educational gain' of each new event in comparison to the level of risk it may bring. In all cases, we have tried to ensure those linked to Christmas have been planned as early as they can be (not in November though!) to ensure these have no or little impact on your own festive celebrations either way:

- **Christmas Disco**—Unfortunately, with rising cases in the school at the time, it was impossible to see how this could be run safely in a way that we could control the level of mixing. However, we would hope to try again in the spring term as we do feel it is important for the children to experience 'going out' to the school disco.
- **Christmas Performances**—Both Reception and Year 6 are continuing with their parent performances. In both cases, these are one in a school live events and that steps could be taken to minimise risk. Therefore, we have issued a full-risk assessment (which can be found on the website) to parents/carers to try to ensure families can decide for themselves the level of risk in attending.
- **Pantomime Day (7th December)**— We believe this is a really important Christmas tradition and a great opportunity to watch a live performance. We also aware that for some pupils, the school pantomime may be their only opportunity to enjoy one this year. Again, a risk-assessment is in place for this event with the key factor being that we have purchased three performances this year to ensure the smallest number of pupils attending each time.
- **Christmas Cards**— With the levels of hand sanitization in school, there is less concern around the sharing of items and therefore, we are happy for pupils to bring these if they wish. However, we would ask that they limit them to their class wherever possible as we will not be able to use our House Captain to deliver them around the school as normal.
- **Christmas Lunch/Christmas Jumper Day**— This is an event that we were able to hold last year and so will aim to do the same this year. This will be run in-line with how we are currently completing lunches.
- **Christmas Parties**— Ideally, there will be some in-class celebrations in the last week, perhaps including class discos. However, a decision on the exact format of this has yet to be decided.

The Importance of Reading

Something that has continued to be very apparent this term is the impact that the Lockdown has had upon early reading within the school. As we have highlighted before, early reading skills are possibly the most important element of the lower school's education. It is also the one area of the school in which parents can have the biggest impact due to the huge role that nightly home reading plays in developing fluency in this area.

PTA It was great to begin the process of having the PTA back in the school. Thank you to those parents who have been completing the necessary safeguarding steps. I am sad that we were unable to utilise this within a school disco but I look forward to holding our first event in the spring.

