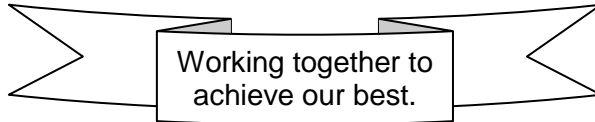




Newsletter

Issue No.14
Date 18th December, 2020
www.firslower.co.uk



Chair of Governors: Gareth Jones
Governors: Adam Campbell, Fran Sherry, Jon Wilson, Louise Haigh, Annette Anderson, Jason Manley, John Ashley and Joanna Milne

Dear parents/carers,

Santa Visits The Firs!

Although everything has been very different this term, it was lovely that, despite the need to alter the normal arrangements, Father Christmas was still able to visit The Firs today and deliver presents to Saplings, Pine and all the children in Year 1-4.





Father Christmas toured the outside of the school with a collection of elf helpers. He made a socially distanced visit to each class with children greeting him either at the door or outside their classroom.



We wish you had been there to see how all the children's eyes lit up when they caught sight of him but we hope that the pictures here and on our website give you a feel for how magical the occasion was.

Annual Star Award

Today in our virtual assembly, we presented The Firs Star Award to Savannah who you'll remember conducted her own amazing fundraising cycle challenge raising a staggering £2075.00 for the PTA. The award is always given to somebody who has made an outstanding contribution in some way to our community and I am sure you will agree with me, that she is a very worthy recipient.

PTA Raffle

Also in our virtual assembly this morning, we drew the raffle in each class and the lucky winners were thrilled to receive a chocolate selection box. The draw caused great excitement and added to the sense of fun today in school.

The office team also participated in the assembly and drew the adult PTA raffle and the 3 winners have been contacted.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the PTA for this, the very inventive virtual craft fair and for providing a book for every child in school. Despite the coronavirus restrictions, our wonderful PTA have still found ways to support the school and its children and we are very grateful.

Welcoming a New Governor

Thank you to the many parents/carers who completed a ballot form. We have processed the ballot papers and we are very pleased to announce that Tom Stean has duly been elected to join the Governing body. We would like to take this opportunity to thank both Angela McGovern and Claire Atkins-Morris for participating and being prepared to support the school in this way. We are always very fortunate in the positive and active support that we receive from our parents.

Free School Meals

All the information has been sent to Central Bedfordshire for the children who are entitled to Free School Meals. Parents will be contacted by Central Bedfordshire by email giving them information about the vouchers they will receive during the Christmas holiday period. Please note this does not include children who on Universal Free School Meals ie have an entitlement to a free meal irrespective of family situation.

Update on requirement for parents to inform the school of any positive Coronavirus Test

'The national guidance indicates that schools are being asked to be available to support track and trace for 6 days following the last school day. CBC has consulted public health colleagues who have secured a process which does not require this length of contact (see [document](#)).'

The essential information from the LA is below:

Date of onset of symptoms (or date of positive test if asymptomatic)	Sat 19 Dec	Sun 20 Dec	Mon 21 Dec or after	Any test result leading to isolation into spring term 21
The Firs Responsibility: If positive case has been our setting	Contact trace for Thursday 17th and Friday 18th Dec (Please email the school)	Contact trace for Friday 18th Dec (Please email the school)	No contact tracing required - case was not in our setting.	Please email The Firs.

Please note - The period of self-isolation changed from 14 to 10 days on 11/12/20. More information including the move to Tier 3 on Saturday can be found on our [Coronavirus web page](#).

Fantastic Y2 Phonic Screening Results

We were obviously concerned, as a result of the learning time lost last year, that the children in Y2 would struggle with the Y1 phonics test postponed from last year. For this reason, we have been giving the children in Y2 a lot of extra support to help them close the gaps in their learning, caused by COVID-19.

I am so pleased to let you know that **97%** of our Y2 children passed the test, which is absolutely phenomenal given the circumstances. I want to take this opportunity to publicly thank all the Y2 staff, Mrs Mercer, the RWI leader and Beverley Lacey who runs the RWI catch up programme, for all their collective hard work and dedication, that has enabled the children to overcome the many obstacles, to make such fantastic progress... well done everyone!

Changes of Staff

We would like to welcome Jenny Ashley to The Firs Team. She will be moving over from The Saplings in January to join Lisa Casey, one of our existing teaching assistants, working in Cedar Class.

We would like to say thank you to Kelly Chung who has been supporting children across the school with their maths. We are pleased that she will be continuing this work next term and in addition, she will be supporting children in Y4.

Thank you to Beverley Lacey for all the support she has been giving to children in Y4 this term. We are also very pleased to say that from January, she will be working in Y3 as Andrea Stephenson-White will be moving to work in The Saplings full time. Thank you Andrea for all your support in Y1 and Y3 this term.

Jackie Wilson

Jackie Wilson, who teaches one day a week in Willow Class, will be moving on at the end of this term. I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for all her contributions in her time with us. She has worked in a number of classes in her time and I am sure that all the children who she has worked with and her colleagues would want also want to thank her for her efforts and everything she has done in her time at The Firs. We wish her the best of luck in her new school and in her existing work with Bedford College.

Claudia Wallis and Holly Class

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank Claudia Wallis for all her fantastic work for the school, especially this term where her experience in Y1 and the caring manner in which she has set about meeting children's needs has greatly assisted children in making a really happy and positive start back at school in these difficult circumstances.

I know I speak for all her children and her colleagues when I say that everyone will really miss her as she begins her maternity leave in January and we all wish her best wishes as she embarks on this new chapter of her life.

There will be a separate letter for Holly Class early next week, regarding the handover to the new class teacher Jane Fuller, who we know will make a great contribution to the Y1 team from January.

Christmas Festivities

First of all I would like to thank all the staff for organising very enjoyable afternoon activities on our fun day on Monday. I would also like to thank our kitchen team. Both for all their sterling efforts, delivering meals to all the classrooms as well as for producing a fantastic Christmas dinner that was enjoyed by everyone, including me!

Saplings, The First Term in the New Building

I wanted to take this opportunity to congratulate all the children and the staff team in Saplings on completing such a successful first term in their new building. It's so fantastic to see the children enjoying playing in our lovely new building. We are so excited by all the opportunities this presents and we have lots of exciting developments that we will be sharing with parents next term.

End of a very busy term

There hasn't been a term like this before for any of us, where we have tried and succeeded to run the school in the midst of the COVID 19 situation. Many staff and I expect parents, were very anxious about everything at the beginning of term. Children had missed large chunks of their learning in the previous year and we anticipated that there would be further Covid related absences as the autumn term progressed, which of course there were.

The school put in place very carefully thought through procedures and teachers set about implementing a very rigorous process to identify any learning gaps and amend the usual planned activities to ensure that children could close those gaps as quickly as possible.

Staff have worked very hard as a team to ensure that all children's pastoral needs are attended to and that despite the challenges of the situation we are in, every child felt happy and ready to learn. We have been very impressed by the general resilience of our children and the way they have very quickly got back into the good working routines they had before March 2019.

I want to say a huge thank you to all members of that staff team, to our cleaning staff who has worked assiduously to ensure the school is safe, the admin team who have ensured the school keeps running smoothly despite the many challenges and Ady Wadsworth for stepping in as a Relief Site Agent. I want to thank our lunchtime supervisors who have done far more than they would normally do at lunchtime and have made sure that our children's needs are met and that they are well fed and happy. I want to thank the teaching assistants, pre-school practitioners and teachers who have worked with the children skillfully and in a caring way. Finally I want to thank Andrea Stephenson-White and her team for all the efforts they have put in to successfully open our Kids' Club and keep it open, despite the challenges.....what a great team!

Christmas Videos

As you have no doubt heard from your children, staff and children in each area of the school have been working really hard in the last couple of weeks to finalise and record their Christmas song performances.

The children were very excited to record their performances and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mrs Ashby (our one woman camera team!) who has done a sterling effort ensuring all the recordings are successfully made and uploaded to produce the links below. We hope you enjoy them.

Saplings. - <https://youtu.be/scpbJAOLNww>

YR. - <https://youtu.be/afDlxQDlxyM>

Y1. Maple - <https://youtu.be/GxMI7tmjb9Q>

Y1. Holly - <https://youtu.be/NVLJeOT3mbM>

Y2. Beech - <https://youtu.be/wHKj1we-WUw>

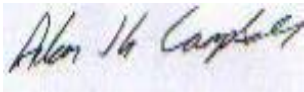
Y2. Cedar - <https://youtu.be/jSzLqYtYf2s>

Y3 - <https://youtu.be/sWUUmvg93Ok>

Y4. Willow - <https://youtu.be/XyajoW6-3OI>

Y4. Oak - https://youtu.be/TONWHdAo_Vk

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adam J G Campbell". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name.

Adam J G Campbell