**A new Principal for Mereside**

I am pleased to be able to tell you that we have been successful in appointing a new Principal for September. Her name is Mrs Sarah Bamber and she brings a lot of experience to the role, having been a Headteacher for a number of years in a Lancashire school. I hope to be able to introduce her to you before I leave in the summer.

**…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….World Book Day**

Thursday is World Book Day and we are inviting the children to make a hat at home based on a story or story character. The hats will be displayed outside the hall at the end of the day if you would like to come in and view them and see the prizewinners.

On the same day we will be holding our annual poetry competition. All the children have been encouraged to learn a poem and the teachers are choosing the best 5 from their classes to go forward to the competition on Thursday.

All the children will also bring home a World Book Day token that can be exchanged at Asda, Tesco, WH Smith, Waterstones and many other bookesllers for a £1 book, or put towards the cost of a full-price book.

If you would like more information about World Book Day, the website is well worth a look: [www.worldbookday.com](http://www.worldbookday.com)

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**Attendance**

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| Whole year to Feb half term |
| Reception | **93.4%** | Y4 | **95.8%** |
| Y1 | **94.3%** | Y5 | **95.9%** |
| Y2 | **96.0%** | Y6 | **94.9%** |
| Y3 | **94.4%** | Whole school | **94.96%** |

As you can see from the table above, attendance has been low this year. Our whole school target is 96% but you will see that we are well below that at the moment. All the year groups, with the exception of Y2, are below 96%, with Reception being particularly low.

We need your support in tackling the dip in attendance. If your child’s attendance is below 95%, then you will have already received a letter alerting you and offering support if necessary. Can I please ask all parents however to support us by remembering the following:

* If your child is very unwell do not send them to school. However if it’s something minor they often improve quickly so try sending them in- we will always call if a child is ill
* If you are having trouble getting your child in for whatever reason, give us a call. We can often help
* If you get up late please still bring your child in, whatever the time
* Please do not take holidays in term-time. They can only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. If you feel such circumstances apply, please complete a request form well in advance of booking the holiday
* Unauthorised absence (including unauthorised holidays) can lead to a penalty notice. Penalty notices are issued to both parents for each of the children so for instance a family of 2 parents and 3 children can be fined a total of £360
* It is never acceptable to keep your child off school for reasons such as it being their birthday or to go shopping or for a haircut
* We have had an increase this year in unexplained absences. If your child is absent, please let us know why as soon as possible. If we have tried to contact you, please return our call as we will have to keep trying until we get through.

**Many of our children have excellent attendance, well above 96%. We reward those children with certificates and prize draws but understand it’s often their parents who make sure they are here every day and we want to say a thankyou to parents too. From next Monday 5th March all children who are here every day until Thursday 29th March will be entered into a draw for a family prize of an Easter hamper. This will be a prize well worth winning for all the family and if it has a positive impact on our attendance we will repeat it in the future.**

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**ParentPay**

After Easter we will be introducing an online payments system called ParentPay. You will be able to pay Nursery or After School Club fees, and for school meals, through the system. Eventually we will be moving towards a completely cashless system, meaning all parents will be able to pay for school trips etc online, which will be a much easier and more efficient system. We will be holding information sessions for parents before Easter and you will also be able to find out more at Parents’ Evening, Wednesday 14th March.

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**Medication in school**

Most medication prescribed by the doctor can be taken 3 times a day, in which case there is no need to bring it to school. However, if your child has medicine that needs to be taken during the school day and you are unable to come to school to administer it yourself, then we can arrange that for it to be given to your child by a member of staff.

It is very important that you complete and sign a form agreeing for us to administer the medication; also the medication must be in its original packaging with the chemist’s label on. Without both of those we will be unable to give your child any medication.

If your child is in Nursery or Reception, please speak to Mrs Brown or one of the Early Years staff and they will complete the paperwork with you and administer the medication.

If your child is in Y1-6, please speak to the School Office, who will make the necessary arrangements.

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**Healthy Mereside**

There are still places available on the ‘Healthy Mereside’ club which starts Monday 26th February. Don’t worry if you miss the first session, you can still join in. The club is open to all of our families and is run by staff from the Making Changes team. Families taking part will also be able to access FREE unlimited swimming and adults will be able to take part in a free gym session. Call, text or email the Making Changes team to reserve your free place:

Phone: 01253 478194 / 07983 552781 or email: Making.Changes@blackpool.gov.uk

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**Spanish Day**

Thankyou for all your support in sending the children in to school dressed up for Spanish Day. We had a great time and were very pleased with the superb full-page article in The Gazette. If you didn’t see it, check our website as the article can be seen on there.

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**Children’s Centre news**

This week in the Children's Centre we have a theme of "New Life”. There are various events on for younger children and families; call in for more details.

There are still some places left on the Family Maths course. This is a friendly course that lasts until June for all abilities from very basic entry level up to GCSE. This is ideal if you are looking for a job that requires a qualification. The course runs every Friday from 9.30am to 11.30am with a creche available; BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL. Please phone the Children's Centre on 01253 839739.

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| **Important dates****All holiday dates for 2017-18 and 2018-19 are on our website** |
| Monday 26th February  | Healthy Mereside begins |
| Thursday 1st March | World Book Day and Poetry Competition |
| Tuesday 6th March | 5KL performing Macbeth at The Grand Theatre |
| Monday 12th March | Parents’ Evening for 2T only |
| **Wednesday 14th March** | **Parents’ Evening** for all classes EXCEPT 2T and Y6 |
| Wednesday 28th March | Easter Bingo |
| **Wednesday 28th March** | **Easter Bonnets (KS1) and Decorated Eggs / Scenes (KS2) competitions** |
| Thursday 29th March | Break up 2pm for Easter for ONE WEEK |
| Monday 9th April | Return to school 8:45 am |
| w/b 14th May | Y6 SATS week |
| Friday 25th May at 3:15 | Break up for two weeks for half term |
| Monday 11th June at 8:45 | Return to school |
| Friday 20th July at 2pm | Break up for Summer |