

What a pleasure it was to welcome your children back to school last week. May I extend a particular welcome to those families new to Fellside either in Reception or as new starters in other years.

We fully expect your children to settle quickly and enjoy a happy, productive learning experience throughout their time with us. Having visited every classroom a number of times already, that's precisely what's happening throughout the school.

It's been great to hear from the children of their holiday venues and experiences. A five year old described her holiday to California

to Mrs Balkwill. She particularly enjoyed 'France Dance Disco', a west coast city north of Los Angeles! ... Brilliant



Cycling

Good to see over 20 bikes in the shelters each day, rising to around 50 on Wednesdays as our Year Six children are now participating in a pilot programme for on-road cycle training over the next six weeks.

Our Bike-it Officer, James Adamson has presented the school with some maintenance equipment and tools to be kept at school.

We have arranged for James to visit assembly shortly and are planning a fun, off road mountain bike competition for older children in the school grounds for the evening of Wednesday 3rd October. Details to follow.

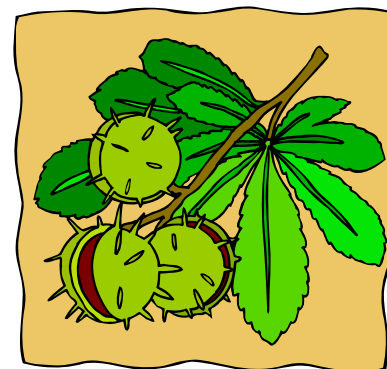
... and talking of 'fun competition' ...

Conkers

The Conker Cup competition is now in its sixth year and with a bumper crop of conkers predicted, this year's contest should attract the usual numbers of entrants—it's open to all from Key Stage Two.

There are a couple of weeks before the competition begins ... plenty of time to collect conkers, and maybe even a competition winner!

As ever children are reminded to take care not to damage trees or themselves when collecting conkers.



MacMillan Coffee Morning

FOF will be holding a MacMillan Coffee Morning on Friday 28th September. A worthy cause which has been well supported in past years.

Parent Questionnaire Feedback

Many thanks to those who completed the questionnaire at the end of last term with over 60 returned, easily enough for us to build a picture of how we are thought of by parents.

Overall this year's results compare favourably with 2003 and 2005. 94% of responses to questions were positive (91% 2005, 80% 2003). Of the individual questions as in previous surveys it is the homework question which attracts some negative response (just 7%). The issue of homework is a tricky one with half of the negative responses indicating too much others too little. What we as a staff will do is endeavour to ensure consistency and appropriate homework for each year group.

Indeed the qualitative information from comments on what we do well and areas for improvement is very useful.

Your comments on the strengths of the school included much about excellent adult/child relationships, approachability of staff, achievement in all aspects, manners, high expectations, leadership, teamwork, common sense of purpose/vision, extra curricular provision, the push for continuous improvement, commitment of staff. There was of course much more but it is clear that a major strength of the school is its 'feel' or ethos. You can be sure we'll do everything to maintain and improve our areas of strength. Thanks for your positive comments.

Your suggested areas for improvement are of great interest to us. Here are some of the aspects of the school you think can be improved and comments on what we have done, are doing or intend to do or in some cases not do and the reasons for this.

Better information on how to support children at home

We have already produced a parents guide to calculation in maths which should be with all families—Reception later this month. We also have plans this term to run workshops on Maths (similar to June 05) and the teaching of reading, particularly phonics. We fully intend to develop our website further to include a Teaching and Learning section with guidance for parents.

More notice for events

Guilty! Not for the first time we've heard this. We are trying but must improve in some areas. In mitigation—lots happens at Fellside and we sometimes take opportunities at short notice e.g. some sports events (better organisation needed for some of these too—though many are not our direct responsibility). We don't have excuses for lots of events—class assemblies, concerts, carol service etc. many of which are planned months in advance—Carol Service 2.00 pm Tuesday 18th December for example! Remember each term we include a termly diary of major events in an edition of Fellside Matters.

Introduce a modern foreign language

This is already scheduled for KS2 from September 08.

Improve security e.g. lock gates

While the safety and security of our children is always our main concern we have to balance the risks against a welcoming and friendly feel (something which attracts much positive comment). Our morning nursery children are collected by parents at 11.30 am and other parents may need to bring or take children to and from school through the day. Other comings and goings through the gates include deliveries, visiting staff for music etc. It's simply unfeasible and I believe not desirable to lock the gates. What we can and do ensure is that access to the building is controlled and we have introduced further improvements this term.

Bullying

You can be sure that when bullying is noticed or reported we take immediate action in line with our policy which is available to all on our website. Similarly if anything hints at racism it is, has been and will be fully investigated and any actions necessary follow our agreed policy.

Homework

As in previous surveys some parents think there's too much, other too little. What is important is that it's age appropriate and that we are consistent and clear about what is expected of each year group. Staff will have discussed homework at a staff meeting before you read this.

Also this term we introduce newly purchased maths games for children from Reception to Year Six.

Parent Questionnaire Feedback (Cont'd)

Improve the range of extra curricular activities for Foundation Stage and Key Stage One

Yes, most of our clubs etc. are provided for older children but many are open to those in KS1, gymnastics and Karate for example. We will focus on this and try and provide more for our younger children, though it's fair to say many outside providers offer most for KS2.

Behaviour

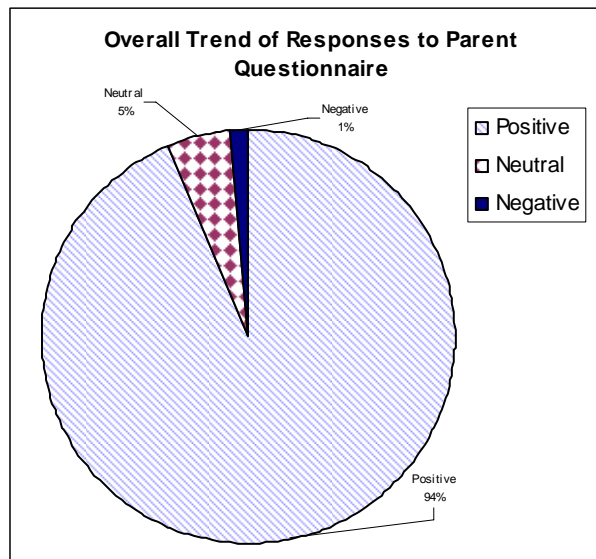
The behaviour of the vast majority of our pupils is exemplary and attracts much positive comment in this survey and elsewhere. Just occasionally the high standards we expect and insist on are not met and for almost all children appropriate reminders and punishment offer a quick, usually long lasting solution.

We are an inclusive school and committed to educating children with a variety of disabilities and issues, which in some cases may impact on their behaviour. All appropriate support is, has been and will be provided for such children. We are determined that the learning of all our children is not compromised by any form of disruption and should the safety of children be in any doubt appropriate action would be taken. Our behaviour policy is available on the website.

As I mentioned earlier behaviour is seen by staff, parents and children as a real strength of this school and anyone who deviates from the norm (i.e. near perfect) is very noticeable.

There is space here to comment on each individual response on questionnaires but you can be sure we've taken note of all comments and by the time you read this, staff will be aware of all issues raised.

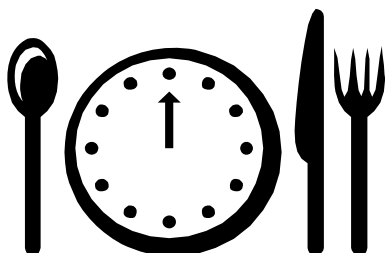
Many thanks.



School Meals Open Day

Two years ago 59 parents took the opportunity to sample a school dinner. We are delighted to be able to repeat this event. On Thursday 16th October you are invited to school to eat from either the standard menu or our recently introduced 'spudbuster' option.

This open day is funded through the Gateshead School Meals Service. Curious about the quality of school meals, want to re-live your childhood lunchtime experience or just likely to be hungry at lunchtime on 16th October? Watch our for an invitation quite soon.



Some Sad News

Claire Gough's partner, Nigel died on Sunday after a relatively short battle with cancer.

I know all of you, particularly those of you with children in Year Five will share our sadness at this news. Claire and Nigel, who got married two weeks ago, have two young boys, Ciaran and Ethan.

Claire remains as positive as anyone could be in these circumstances. Our thoughts are with her and her boys.

Fellside Funclub Update

Fellside's very own Out of School Club is open!

At last, after much planning and hard work by all involved, Fellside Fun Club opened on 4th September! Andrew Clark was first to arrive at the club in the morning and won a box of chocolates as a prize for first person to attend the Club. Hope you shared them with your family Andrew! All of the children have settled well and seem to be enjoying their new Club. Can I thank all parents who attended our open night on the 3rd, it was great to meet so many of the parents and children who will use the Club.

What's happening at the club?

Our theme for the first few weeks will be the Fellside Wall of Fame. The children are making self portraits and frames to put them in. Their next task will be to make their own placemats to use in the Club. Finally to conclude the theme of getting to know each other they will decorate balloons as a way of displaying their birthdates.

If you need information on the club

If you would like any information regarding the club please contact Rachel on 07717314540 or myself, Karen on 07974007091 or pop in and ask Rachel or Anne any questions you may have. Remember if you think you may use the club at some time in the future please complete a registration form as without the children's details on record we cannot allow them to attend. Registration forms are available at the club.

Home for unwanted toys

Lastly, can I make an appeal to the parents of Fellside. It will take a while for us to build up our stock of toys so if anyone has any toys that they do not need we will be happy to give them a home. The toys must show a CE or British Kite Mark otherwise unfortunately we cannot accept them. They should also be in good working order and no parts missing please! Anything requiring batteries we cannot accept. In particular we need a garage, older girls and boys books, jigsaw puzzles, board games, dressy up clothes and small dolls or boys figures (not action men or guns).

As space is limited no larger toys please.

Please give any donations to Rachel or Anne at the Club and not school.



Karen Renner