

Bradworthy Primary Academy
Wednesday 11th September 2024

Dear Parents,

It's great to see everyone safely back after the summer break and as I'm sure you'd guess everyone in school is delighted that our summer break is over!!!

It is lovely to be able to welcome lots of new children and their families – both in our Reception Class and in other classes across the school.

We're all looking forward to a fantastic year in school and I'm quite certain that we'll all have a great time as we get involved in all of the wonderful things we've got planned.

As always we really value the role that everyone has in helping the children to develop and have a great time as they do so, and this most certainly includes you as parents.

As parents you are most certainly a key part of school life which is why we have an "open door" policy – unlike many schools who try to keep parents outside their school buildings at "arms length".

The relationships that we want to develop with you are a huge part in helping children develop and also in keeping them safe and happy in school.

We value your thoughts and opinions and If you ever have anything you would like to talk to us about please feel free to do so, especially if there is a problem, however small issues may seem we want to deal with them straight away so that things never have the chance to fester and grow.

We have proper parent meetings a couple of times each year but you should never feel that you have to wait for these to talk to us – we're always here and very happy to have either a quick "off-the-cuff" chat or to arrange a longer meeting.

School Buildings

Twelve months ago, I said that we were looking forward to getting into our new buildings.

Twelve months later, after an endless stream of ridiculous and often unbelievable delays, I can say that we are now about to get into our new building!!!

We are due to take possession of the keys in the next few days and despite the huge frustrations of the last year or so the key point is that we are finally there and can start to move in

Mud Run

I'm delighted to tell you that our PTA is holding a Mud Run on Sunday 22nd September.

They last held this event two years ago and it really does have to be said that, in addition to raising a huge amount of money for our children, it was also an incredibly fun way to spend a few hours

The course involves crawling, jumping, climbing, slaloming and wading around either a 1km or 2.5km course which has been set up at Little Lophorne, Thornbury.

The courses are suitable for adults and children of all ages, and you are welcome to enter as an individual, family or team.

Entry costs £8 per person with everything taking place from 11.00am.

You can enter online by following this link:

<https://www.evententry.co.uk/marvellous-mud-run>

We are also looking for volunteers to help with things like marshalling the course. Please get in touch if you are able to help with this.

I think you'll be guaranteed an amazing time with every penny raised going to help all of our children have an amazing time in, and out, of school.

Thank you for your support.

Cross Country Running

This year's cross country running season will get underway on Sunday 29th September when the first races take place at Kingsley School in Bideford.

Last year we took a total team of over forty runners from Years Three to Six and it would be great if as many children as possible took part again this year.

Entry will be open to any children who want to take part – regardless of ability.

You'll get more information after the following event has taken place.

As a precursor to this we will be holding our annual inter-house cross country running competition here in school next week. This will give children who didn't run last year a chance to try things out and for the first time we will be allowing children in Year Two to race if they wish.

We are currently looking into the possibility of running on some local fields this year, rather than in school, because this will give better preparation. We'll obviously let you know where we will be running beforehand.

The races will take place on the afternoon of Thursday 19th September from 1.30pm and it would be wonderful if lots of you were able to come along and support the children.

School Uniform

As always, the children were all very smartly dressed in their uniforms on their return to school last week and we would like to thank you for your continued support with this.

Can we remind you that in addition to compulsory items of uniform we also offer sports hoodies and school coats.

The coats, in particular, are exceptionally good value at only £15 each and, having been tested by our Year Six children on Dartmoor in the very worst weather the moor could throw at us, we know that they are also exceptionally good quality too when it comes to things like warmth and waterproofness.

They are not compulsory, however it would be great if as many children as possible had one to wear, especially when out on things like school trips.

This said we have a good number of coats available in school which have been sponsored by Penbode Vets and which can be borrowed where necessary.

Please use the form at the bottom of this letter, or get in touch with the school office, if you would like one.

Can I also remind you that we tried to maximize the use of school field for sport last year. As you can imagine there are long periods of the year where we struggle to use our field because it is so wet.

We think that a good way of getting round this would be to add some sort of studded boot (such as a football boot) to the list of things that children need for sport. They can be picked up pretty cheaply in places like Asda and if having a pair mean more, and better, sports we think it would be money well spent.

We are suggesting that football boots would be a good idea for children in Years One and Two.

For children in Years Three to Six we are strengthening this request a little and saying we would be grateful if you would make sure they've got them.

We have a collection of boots in school which children can borrow where necessary and would like to add to this if possible.

If you've got any old pairs of boots (which are in reasonable condition) which you would like to let us have please send them in – thanks.

School Clubs

Our after-school service has already started and we are delighted to be able to continue to offer this free of charge.

This is complimented each week by a range of clubs which are available for different groups each week. These clubs will all be up and running next week although some specific details are still up in the air.

Monday	Netball (Yrs 5 and 6) Band (Yrs 5 and 6) Climbing * Textiles (Yrs 1 to 4)
Tuesday	Multi-Sports League (KS2) Gardening (Years 1 and 2 before half-term) Gymnastics **
Wednesday	Netball (Yrs 3 and 4) Climbing * Band (Yrs 5 and 6)
Thursday	Wake Boarding (Year Six) Football (Years 5 and 6) Climbing *
Friday	Running (KS2) Climbing *

* We will be organising the children into groups this week on the basis of who wants to climb and on which evening so that the children are clear about what they are doing by the start of next week.

** Gymnastics will be starting next week, however we don't yet know which groups will be running. I'll let you have more information as soon as I possibly can.

In addition to the above we will be shortly starting a running club and a construction club – we'll let you know when.

The Great Bradworthy Bake-Off

As most of you already know every year we hold a baking competition every year in support of Cancer Research.

The competition is open to children from across the school and there are usually around eight different categories. Everyone is invited in for a coffee morning where they can taste the wonderful cakes that have been entered and you'll need a good appetite because last year we had over 140 entries.

You'll get a lot more information closer to the date, however I thought it might be worth giving you the "heads-up" and tell you that this is taking place on the morning of Friday 11th October.

Attendance

I want to start by saying that our levels of attendance here at Bradworthy are very good – they have been consistently better than national averages for many years and we have only a very small number of children who are away from school regularly.

You may already be aware that the government has a clear agenda to improve attendance in schools and I am sure that you will join me in giving the view that regular attendance is absolutely vital if any child is going to maximise their development.

Regular absences, whether avoidable or not, do not help children – in addition to getting behind with their work this can also be very unsettling for them and can make it difficult to form good friendship groups and learn to socialise.

I know that you will agree with us in school when we say how important regular attendance is and also how important it is for children to be in their classes on time.

So far as the government is concerned an attendance of 90% or better is considered appropriate and whilst this sounds high it equates to missing a school day once every two weeks – which when you think about it is quite a lot really.

The government now requires schools to have a named "Attendance Champion" and if we put aside the slightly silly and somewhat patronising title of this role their job will be to engage with you and provide support whenever there is a need so that any issues which affect your children's attendance can be dealt with.

As of the start of the new school year I will be this person, however you are equally free to speak with any member of staff if you wish to.

All of this is perfectly fine, if a little heavy handed in the context that we don't currently have an issue with attendance here at Bradworthy.

There is, however, an issue which we feel quite strongly about here in school and that issue is to do with parents taking their children on holiday during term time.

The government has published statutory guidance which is going to make it very difficult for us to authorise absences in anything other than "exceptional circumstances" (whatever that means) and this will be especially the case if a child's attendance is below 90% for any reason.

Those of you with children already in school will know that our governors and I do not share the view that family holidays during term time are damaging to children's education and that in fact they can be very positive and worthwhile experiences for everyone involved.

- A planned absence can clearly be planned for. This means that the likelihood of children's education being damaged can be minimised and removed – either by parents taking work with them or by a catch up at some other point in the school year.
- Regular absences, with a day here and there being missed most weeks, can be very damaging as can regular lateness at the start of the school day.
- Family life is under huge pressure both in respect of people's mental health and in respect of how expensive things are, and so surely it must go without saying that things like family holidays which ease these pressures must be a good thing.
- Breaks can give children life experiences which can be an enormous part in helping them develop as fully rounded people – especially given the case that we live in an isolated and rural part of the world which is still very “shielded” from the rest of the World – I'm pleased to stay!
- Torridge is one of the poorest and most deprived areas of Britain and the difference in costs between term time breaks and those during school holidays can be huge – last year I saved nearly £300 myself by flying back on a Monday (the first day of a half term) rather than the day before.
- Good attendance is really important, however do we really want to be living in a society where an overbearing “nanny state” thinks it's ok to tell parents what is, and isn't, appropriate for them to do with their children?

In continuing to authorise holidays for children we are going out on a limb and this is something we are still willing to consider doing where necessary and appropriate.

This said we will only be willing to do so under the following conditions:

- No more than ten school days can be authorised in any single school year for any reason.
- Authorisation will only be given if children's attendance is good, which means better than 90%.
- There are good and “exceptional” reasons for the request (which in our view can include things like parents work patterns and very big cost differences).

In all instances you will need to apply for signed authorisation from the school.

Absences that are not authorised will be recorded as unauthorised and if this becomes a regular occurrence and where children's attendance falls below 90% this is likely to become an issue for the Educational Welfare Officer and could, in extreme cases, lead to action such as imposing fines or further legal action.

I am very sorry to have to write in these terms, however this is the world we are now living in, and I hope you will be assured that we will do what we can to keep going as we always have.

A few requests for holidays have already been sent in and where these have been agreed they will be honoured.

Clearly none of the above will have any impact on parents who inform us that their children are ill because illness, obviously, cannot be helped.

Thank you for your support with this.

Dropping off and Picking Up

The official start and finish times for school are:

- Reception through to Year Four – 9.00am and 3.30pm
- Years Five and Six – 8.50am and 3.40pm

These are the times that lessons start each morning so please do what you can to make sure that children are in school in time for these starts, rather than arriving at these times.

This said you are perfectly free to drop off children each morning as early as 8.00am and to collect them as late as 5.30pm each day.

These services are completely free and run off the back of the good will of our staff who are not paid anything extra to support them.

With this in mind, our lives are made much easier if you are able to do the following for us each day:

- Make sure that every child who arrives in school before 8.40am is signed in on the form which is kept by the main door.
This includes children who arrive early on a school bus.
We are happy for children to sign themselves in.
- We understand that things can sometimes change during the day, however wherever possible we would be grateful if children know whether or not they are staying after school at the start of each day when we complete after school lists.
- If children stay after school they must always be signed out when they are collected.
With your permission older children may sign themselves out, however they must tell a member of staff that they are doing this before they leave school.

It is especially important that children who travel on our school buses know what they are doing each morning so that when it comes to putting them on buses each evening, we know exactly what we are doing.

If we are unsure about what to do, we will keep children in school because the prospect of a small child arriving home, to find nobody is in, is not something that anyone wants.

I'm sure that you will agree that it is much better for an adult to be inconvenienced by a trip to school than for a small child to be alone outside their house on a dark winter evening.

If things change during the day, you must make contact with us during the day.

If you send an email or leave a message and don't get a reply, you must assume that it hasn't been read and ring our office and actually speak to someone.

Wherever possible we would be grateful if you would get in touch with us before 3.00pm each day because the last part of the day can be very busy and the phone much less likely to be answered.

Thank you for your help with all of this.

Free School Meals

As you know children in our Reception Class and Years One and Two are entitled to free school meals.

Free school meals are also available to children whose families are in receipt of certain benefits, such as Universal Credit.

This needs to be applied for and this can be done by going online at:
www.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/school-information/schoolmeals/ or by ringing 0345 1551019.

There have been a number of incidences where families who might qualify for free school meals have not applied for them because they don't see the need while their children are younger and getting free meals anyway – which we fully understand.

There are two very good reasons why you should apply, whatever age your child is:

- You could be missing out on hundreds of pounds each year!!!
If you qualify for free school meals because of your circumstances, you will also qualify for holiday payments which come in the form of vouchers which can be freely spent in places like Morrison's. The payment for the Summer Break and the half-term break in June was around £90 per child and this is something you may have missed out on.
- The school receives additional funding for every child who is registered for free school meals and without this we wouldn't be able to work as we currently do.
The number of children on this list has dropped to 47 this year, from the mid-sixties, and is particularly low amongst younger children.

If you think you might qualify, please help yourselves, and your school, by applying now.
If you need any support with this, please get in touch.

Dogs !!!

We're thinking of hiring a snipper and stationing them on the roof of the school overlooking the field.

Why ?

..... because we are being forced to clear up dog poo on a much too regular basis.

Unlike nearly every school in Britain we allow the free use of our grounds by all of our local community and to be fair this usually causes almost no aggravation or problems for us here in school.

This said we are talking about school grounds here – which are used by all of our children including some who are very young, and it really isn't acceptable for them to have to risk getting covered by this.

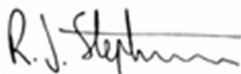
I love dogs as much as anyone, and I really can't understand why owners allow them to do this!!!

Thanks for taking the time to read all of this.

As I said at the start it has been great to see all of the children in school this week.
I hope that they are all as happy to be back, or to have started their new school, as they seem to be.

Please feel free to come and talk to us whenever you wish.

Take Care



Richard (Headteacher Bradworthy Academy)

Bradworthy Primary Academy
Autumn 2024 - School Coat / School Hoodie Order Form

Please return this slip or email your order to info@bradworthy.devon.sch.uk .

School Coats:

Child's Name:	Size:	Please get my child to try a coat on in school to check I've ordered the right size (tick).

Order Size	3/4	5/6	7/8	9/10	11/12	32"	34"	36"	S	M	L
Height (cm)	104	116	128	140	152	158	164	170			
Chest (inches)									37/38	39/40	41/42

Please note that coat sizes are a little on the small side so if you have any doubt go bigger.

School Hoodies:

Child's Name:	Size:	Please check I've ordered the right size in school (tick)

Signed: