



OPPORTUNITY WITH DIGNITY

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Dear Parents and Carers,

Now the weather is warmer it's great to see the children enjoying the sunshine whilst playing and learning outside. Many students have already participated in gardening and took benefit from learning at our new horticulture environment in the heart of the school grounds. It is time to fully benefit from the hard work and generosity of Giff Gaff who donated all the raised beds, many plants and the labour of over sixty people to prepare this wonderful learning environment for us. We have also planted six fruit trees with our students to replace those trees that needed to be cleared in order to give space for our new mobile unit. It is very exciting to see if they will be in bloom later this spring.

Our new website is up and running and we are very pleased to have received overwhelmingly positive feedback from it. Please visit the site regularly; in the 'news section' you will find a weekly blog post from the students' activities and learning. The calendar will be regularly updated for your information. The website is aiming to provide you with comprehensive information about the school and your child's learning; if you have any ideas for further developing our website please share your thoughts with us.

As you are aware I am not able to authorise absences for holidays that will take place during term times; a regular and punctual attendance is a legal requirement for pupils registered at schools. Our governors have agreed the use of 'penalty notices' according to the Hertfordshire County Council's Code of Conduct. You will find 'Penalty notice documents' on our website in the 'documents' section. The number of unauthorised absences that may trigger a penalty notice is 15 sessions e.g. 7 and 1/2 days of unauthorised absence in the current and previous term.

Attached to this letter is our new 'Permissions Form'. **Please return the PERMISSIONS FORM to school before our spring break, Friday 1<sup>st</sup> April.** In the future, in the academic year 2016-17 permissions will be asked for annually together with the annual review process.

**CURRICULUM ACTIVITIES:** We are asking your permission to take children out of school for curriculum activities without asking individual permission slips to be filled in each time. Risk assessments are always completed before any trips out and a sufficient staffing ratio is carefully assessed. As a part of our good practice we will always inform you about the trips and when they will take place.

**IMAGE CONSENT:** Please notice that we rigorously follow the Data Protection Act when using images of our students. Photographing and videoing the students is part of our practice to



record their progress at school. When sharing images with the general public, for example, on our website the images tend to relate to day to day events of the school. We are very careful not to have the children's names attached to photographs and when the images of the students are used we abide by the codes outlined in our eSafety and Data Security Policies. Should a child's name appear in the text documents or web blog it will be their first name only. A child's name and photograph will not be used together.

**QUESTIONS:** Please do not hesitate to get in touch with me if you have any questions about the permission form.

In autumn 2016 we will be funded for 75 students and we already have new students enrolled up to our maximum capacity. Planning for autumn class groups will start after the spring break and I will be able to inform you about the next academic year's classes in June.

We are currently recruiting for a Teacher and an Assistant Head Teacher. These interviews will take place on 30<sup>th</sup> March. The growing number of the students means that we will also recruit new lunch time support assistants and learning support assistants. We are also recruiting for a temporary premises assistant as we need more capacity to maintain and develop the school site. The plans for reorganising our school transport area in summer 2016 are in progress; the estimated cost of this project is about £70, 000 - £80, 000. It is a significant investment, but when completed it will make a positive impact on the quality of our students' everyday life, making transport arrangements smoother and quicker.

We will finish this term with a 'Breakspeare's Got Talent' show, celebrating our students' skills and success. During the summer term we will be busy with our Autism Accreditation and International School Project. It will be great to have the students and staff from our German partner school learning with us about the Olympic sports and spirit.

Wishing everyone sunshine for the Easter Break and spring holidays.

Merja

