



Diocese of Norwich
Education and
Academies Trust

The Nar Valley Federation of Church Academies

Executive Headteacher: Mrs Anne Neary

Web: www.narvalleyfederation.co.uk

Friday 9th December 2022

Dear Parents,

For the first time this year, yesterday I opened the door to a sparkly car! Whilst the bitter cold can feel a little unwelcome and forgetting that you need an extra 10 minutes to clear the car is a pain, there is something very magical about looking out across the gardens and fields to see the crisp white ground and cobwebs sparkling in the winter sun. For a moment, it appears everything is frozen in time.

I cannot believe that we are just one week away from the end of the first term. I was chatting to a couple of Y6 girls the other day and reflecting on this being their last Christmas in Primary school and them having just 2 terms left with us. Some reminiscing followed of memories both recent and long ago. Christmas has definitely begun. Despite the weather throwing us a curve ball, the Carols around the Tree was a lovely way to begin our festive season. Thank you to all our families who joined us and joined in! Weren't our children brilliant and I particularly enjoyed the dancing from Reception!

A massive thank you must go to the Friends of Castle Acre School for the fantastic Christmas Fayre on Saturday. Families not just from the school but from the village, and surrounding villages, joined us for a morning of stalls, craft activities, games and very delicious refreshments. It was very hard to decide whether the highlight was the alpacas or Father Christmas. I think if we could have combined them, that would have been my son's dream! We would like to thank Father Christmas for taking time out of his very busy schedule to drop in to Castle Acre – as my son has been brave enough to remind me recently, no one is as busy as Father Christmas! It does take a lot of time and effort to put on events like the Fayre which is all done by the Friends volunteering their time. All money raised from stalls run by the school goes to the school which is used to fund many things that benefit the children including coaches for trips, equipment, experiences and much more. In the future, if you have any time to spare then speak to Libby Firth who is the Chair of the Friends committee. Even if it is just once a year, your time would be greatly appreciated.

Theatre trips;

A huge thank you to Sadie and Matt at Westacre theatre for not only bringing two fantastic productions to us for all our children to enjoy, but for supporting Father Christmas to return to us and see all our children in class. Father Christmas said that you were all very good children; well done!

Next week we have Rowan and Whitebeam's Christmas production in the school hall and end with our service at church on Friday afternoon. We look forward to seeing you there, especially as we haven't been able to invite you for the past couple of years.

Tickets - I have been asked by a couple of families whether we are asking people to reserve tickets for the production. We are not, however we have sent out an electronic form to you asking for intended numbers so

that we can set the right number of chairs out. There is a drop down of 3 spaces per family as this should meet most families' requirements. However, if you feel you need more than 3 spaces then pop in and see us to let us know. If you would like to attend both performances, please complete the form twice choosing the other date option and completing it accordingly. Siblings are welcome to attend but we would like to politely remind you that the children performing have very quiet voices.

Christmas Dates

Rowan and Whitebeam Nativity – Monday 12th December 2pm & Tuesday 13th December 6pm (children to arrive at 5:30pm)

Christmas Service – Friday 16th December 1:45pm (in St James' Church)

Christmas Cards

We are happy if the children would like to send their friends a Christmas card this year – the post box is already out. We know that some would rather choose to send just to close friends, just one card to the whole class or choose not to send any cards at all, particularly to be eco-conscious. As a school family, we completely understand and respect your own decisions on Christmas cards.

PE Kits

Please can I remind you that your child needs to have their PE kits in school from Monday to Friday and it needs to include a separate sweatshirt or jumper from their school one. We try and go outside as much as possible, especially the older children, and if they fall over wearing their school one it can become wet or dirty. If your child's kit becomes particularly wet or dirty then we will send it home!

End of Term Individual Attendance

We are working hard to ensure that all children are in school all the time so that they can learn and achieve well. Every week we tell you the class and whole school percentages. However, we know that it is tricky to know whether your child is on track for strong attendance so at the end of next week we will be sending home your child's individual attendance for this term. If your child's attendance is below 95%, we may ask you to come in and meet with us to discuss how we can support you to improve their attendance depending on the circumstances around their low attendance. If you are not invited for a meeting but would like to meet then you are of course welcome to do that. Ultimately we want the children in school all the time (recognising that there will be the odd day here and there where they are genuinely poorly) and we are here to support you in doing that.

Attendance this week/since beginning of term

We have been hit with quite a lot of illness over the last couple of weeks. We know that it is tough when you are feeling a bit under the weather and there will be times when your child is genuinely not well enough to come to school but if they have a bit of a sniffle or a little cough then they can be in school. We will look after them and we will always call you if we feel that they are not well. Let's see if we can hit that 96% target of strong attendance by the end of term!

Oak Class – 91.13%/94.11%

Whitebeam Class – 95.6%/94.12%

Rowan Class – 97.74%/93.43%

Whole School – 94.15%/93.91%

CONGRATULATIONS **ROWAN CLASS** THIS WEEK!

We are working hard this year to ensure that we reach the best attendance we can. **96%** is considered strong attendance and is so important for ensuring that your children learn and achieve well. **95% - considered satisfactory** attendance by the Government and Ofsted as well as us - means not missing any more than ten school days over the whole year.

Donations Request to Develop Forest School Area

We are going to be working on developing a forest school area for all children to enjoy. If you have any of the following items to spare, please could you contact the office or Miss George to arrange bringing them in to support with this? It would be very much appreciated! Items needed are:

Log stumps, planks of wood, metal ware for a mud kitchen, ropes, tarpaulin, milk crates, cable reels and other recyclable materials.

Clubs

We are looking to get some more after school clubs up and running with the aim of offering one every day of the week. If you, or someone you know, feel able to offer some time and help run a club then please come and see us. It could be anything – craft, outdoor learning, games – the options are endless!

Drop off and Pick Up

Just a polite reminder – please can you make sure you park carefully at drop off and pick up. Our bus driver has had a few occasions where he has not been able to park or turn. In the mornings particularly, please leave the bus bay clear. Thank you in advance for your co-operation with this matter.

News from our Classes

Because of the theatre trip taking place this afternoon, we are holding our Celebration Act of Collective Worship on Monday and so will announce certificate winners for each class in next week's newsletter.

Rowan

The Christmas festivities have been non-stop in Rowan class this week! The children have had a lovely week which has been filled with exciting activities, including going to see The Elves and the Shoemaker, which the children loved! On Thursday, we had our final run through of our play before we performed to the school on Friday and we also made our Christmas hats which we wore whilst we ate our delicious Christmas dinner. The children put so much effort into their Christmas hats, they looked fantastic! Rowan class are very excited to get their costumes on and perform their Christmas play in front of adults from home next week, it will be such a lovely way to finish off the year.

Whitebeam

What a fantastic week we have had in Whitebeam Class with lots of exciting things happening. On Wednesday we went to see The Elves and the Shoemaker at West Acre Theatre. It was an amazing experience for the children and they joined in enthusiastically and it was wonderful to see their faces and reactions throughout the performance. We have been busy preparing for our Christmas performance and during a rehearsal on Thursday we had a surprise visitor as Santa popped in to see us and we all loved seeing each other's Christmas jumpers and had a yummy Christmas lunch. We have started to make our clay bricks for our step pyramids and have even more respect now for how the Ancient Egyptians made their pyramids! In maths we continue to work on geometry including repeating patterns along with arithmetic and Tackling Tables and we have been thinking about prediction and retrieval skills in our reading.

Oak

This week, Oak class have been finishing off their playground designs for Design Technology. We have begun to complete some writing based on 'The Christmas Truce' of World War 1, focusing on sequencing the events in order and acting it out through role-play. In maths, we have learned how to find common denominators in fractions so that we can work out the answers to calculations. In our R.E. learning, we researched Mahatma Gandhi and considered how his religious beliefs encouraged him to act in the way that he did. In science we have been learning about food chains and ecosystems as well as some of the threats to those ecosystems. We have been working hard on preparing content for the church service next Friday and all children have enjoyed writing poems and prayers with either a Christmas or a winter's theme. We thoroughly enjoyed watching a dress rehearsal of the Rowan/Whitebeam Nativity play and it was clear that both classes have been working really hard on preparing such a brilliant production. One of our highlights from this week has, of course, been our trip to Westacre Theatre to watch Alice in Winterland. All children behaved beautifully and we had a wonderful afternoon together. We have all been extremely proud of all of the children in Oak class this week as

they have worked hard on learning behaviours and being the best role models that they can be - well done on your hard work!

Message from Executive Headteacher Swaffham Library

Swaffham Open Library: 8am-7pm, The Pightle Swaffham. Anyone who is in need can take 'To Go' bags from the library, which are free bags of sanitary products, essential toiletries, cleaning items and warm bags which will help people as costs rise. You can enter the library using your library card & PIN to enter during unstaffed times. The staffed opening times are Tuesday & Thursday 10am-7pm, Friday 1-7pm and Saturday 10am-4pm. Visit Swaffham Library's What's On pages for more information and booking on www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraries-local-history-and-archives/libraries/whats-on/event-search?location=Swaffham

[Libraries events search - Norfolk County Council](#)

Libraries events search

www.norfolk.gov.uk

or call 01603 774777.

Cold Weather

Please ensure your children have their coats, hats, gloves etc as the weather turns colder. We know the upcoming cold weather could be difficult at home in terms of heating as these are tricky times. Here are some cold weather tips from the British Heart Foundation:

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/medical/beat-the-cold/keeping-warm>

Swaffham Community Fridge;

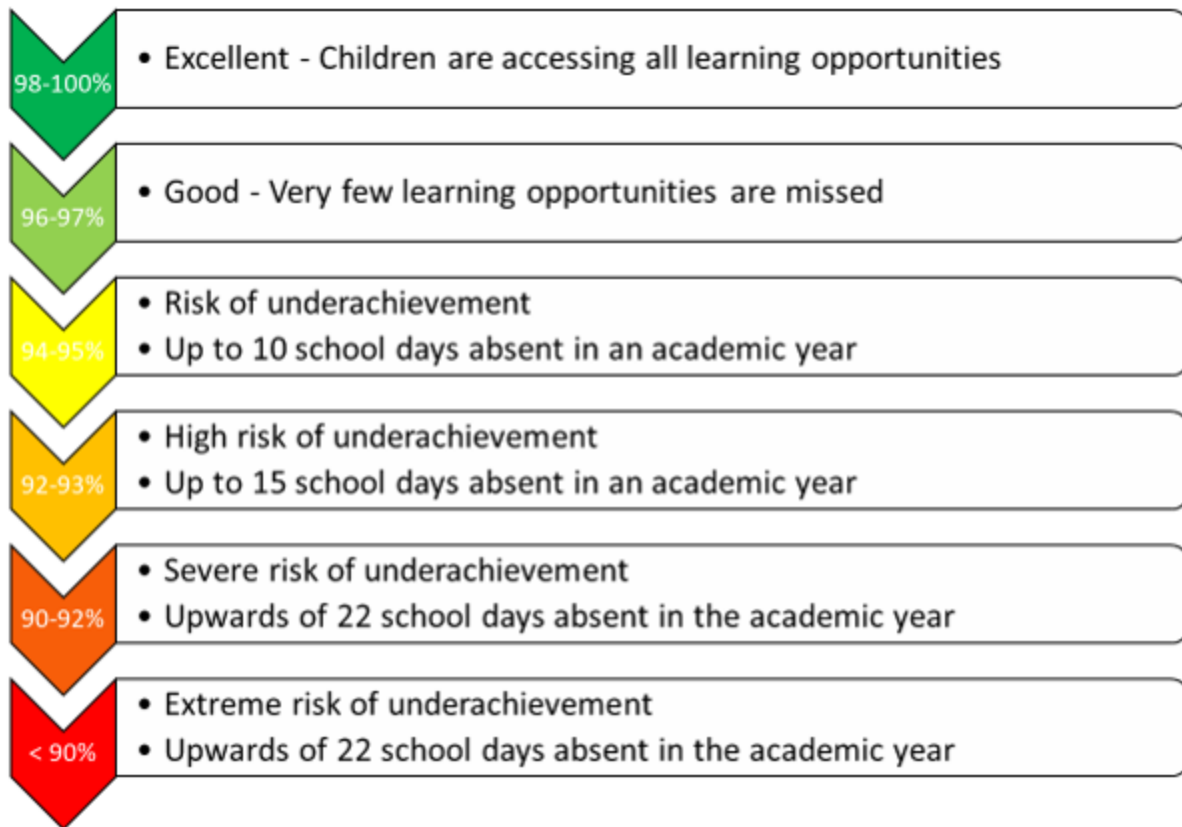
Based in Swaffham Community Centre, this is a drop-in service where you can access food. Here is an extract from their blog;

If you don't already know, the idea of the community fridge is to prevent perfectly edible food from going to landfill. Supermarkets that would otherwise have to dispose of food past its sell by date donate it to us instead and we safely redistribute it to the community.

There still seem to be several misconceptions surrounding the concept, such as the belief that it is a form of food bank and only available to those on a low income or in special need of help. The fridge is open to absolutely anyone in the community. As long as it means food isn't being wasted, we welcome everyone. We also do not require monetary donations, but if you have any spare store cupboard items, we will happily accept suitable food donations to redistribute via the fridge or we will give them to other local agencies that may be in need. We hope this helps clear things up a little and welcome you to pop by and see what's on offer. The community fridge is open at 10am Monday to Friday. Please see Facebook for further details.

Attendance

Thank you for supporting your child's attendance at school every day. We are pleased that most of our children across the Federation are 'green' (see below) and get to access learning opportunities and make strong progress. We have adopted the local authority attendance policy (see attached) and want to remind everyone that the target is 97% - not because we get any praise or issues if the target is achieved or not, but because we know that children who are in school 96% of the time or more have the best advantages in education and we want that for ALL our children.



Christmas Events

I'd just like to say a huge thank you to all our staff, volunteers, Friends' groups and visitors to school who have supported all our really lovely Christmas events. These are the bits of magic that children love so much and schools wouldn't be the same without them, as we found out during the pandemic, and we are incredibly grateful to everyone who is making an effort for our children. I look forward to seeing you at all our events next week!

Thank you as always for your support and remember our door is always open if you need anything, have a query or even an idea.

Emma Spaul and Anne Neary

Head of School
Castle Acre CE Primary Academy

Executive Head Teacher
The Nar Valley Federation of Church Academies
Castle Acre, Narborough and Sporle