

Dear Families,

Welcome back everyone. Happy new year, if I haven't see you already to say it. It was a snowy and very cold start to the year last week but we enjoyed playing in the snow and kept warm. The children had the option of staying inside with me at lunch time, if they wanted to, and most of them did.

We continued where we left of in phonics with Phase Three week 2, learning the GPC 'y', 'z', 'zz', 'qu' and 'ch'. This week we learned 'sh', 'th' – the voiced version, as in 'feather', 'this' and 'that', and the same grapheme 'th' making a different phoneme because you say it unvoiced, as in the end of 'moth', 'thumb' and 'thistle', the last GPC for this week was 'ng', usually found at the end of words such as 'ring'. I put this information on the homework sheets, so I hope it helped you support the children (it is a bit confusing at first). Some of the children still find it hard to articulate 'th' (in either form) but please discourage them from taking the easy option by saying 'v' or 'f' instead, which causes many problems in their writing. We talked about 'digraphs', which just means two letters making one sound and there are lots more to learn in the coming weeks, as well as new tricky words. There will be a slight slowing of pace from next week because we will only be learning two new GPC each week. Next week it is the 'ai' (as in 'snail') and 'ee' (as in 'cheese'). When I teach any digraph I refer to the letters with their names (how we say them in the alphabet) to hopefully reduce confusion. However, I was surprised how many of the children still can't identify letters by their 'name'. Consequently, we are doing a lot more work on alphabet letter recognition and I have asked the children to practise at home by saying letter names as they look at the alphabet strip on the back of their phonics cards. Once they know how to recite the alphabet in order (most of them can if they start at the beginning) please make it trickier by randomly choosing letters for them to name. They must pay close attention to each letter individually so they can then identify it in isolation. On their alphabet strip it shows both the upper case and lower case letters and they need to identify both, understanding that they both share a name and have the same sound. The exception to this is tricky word 'l' which says its name when not part of a word. Because we are only learning two GPC next week the homework will look a little different.

In our White Rose maths last week we were thinking about mass and capacity by comparing weight and estimating quantities. This week we have started learning the numbers 6, 7, and 8 in more depth, representing these numbers in different ways and thinking about the composition of each. We are also thinking about 'one more', 'one less'. This phase of White Rose Maths (Growing 6, 7 and 8) will last for two weeks and next week we will also introduce doubles, making pairs and odd and even numbers.

In RE we have been learning about the events that followed Jesus' birth and linking the school's Christian values to the Nativity story, as well as beginning to learn the meaning of each one. The Harewood School Christian Values featured in our Nativity story and are: hope, honesty, forgiveness, courage and community. We will continue to use the Nativity star, which was on stage during our performance, to help us remember these values (the children enjoy turning the lights on each point).

Mrs Jarvis has given me the following information about her music lessons: *We have started our new topic for this half term on Musical Stories. We talked about how stories can be told in different ways through music. We listened to the lyrics and melody of the 'Teddy Bear's Picnic'. We talked about how the lyrics told a story and discussed any tricky words. We then used some teddies to put movement to the song trying really hard to keep in time with the music. The children listened and changed their movements to reflect the changes in tempo, pitch and dynamics in the piece.*

*This week we listened to the classical piece and narrated story of 'Peter and the Wolf' by Prokofiev. We looked at each of the main characters in the story and listened to their theme tunes. We explored how the characters are represented through the instrument choice and the way the theme is played. The children gave their opinions on whether they thought Prokofiev was successful in his choices! We played a game to see if we could recognise the theme tunes just by listening to them. We talked about how the addition of character themes played throughout the story telling made the story more exciting and brought it to life.*

Our PSHE and PSED theme for this half term is Say no to bullying and Going for goals. We have started by thinking about what we are good at and how we are all similar in some ways but still completely unique and special. We have also been sharing the children's show and tell about things they did over the Christmas holidays and also thought about how different families might have different traditions around this time of year. Over the coming weeks we will be thinking about how much we have learned and all the things we can do now that we couldn't when we were younger. In the coming weeks the children will be learning more about not giving up when things get tough and setting a small goal for themselves, which they will then work towards.

The children looked super snuggly just now as I took them in and settled them down for the slumber party. Thank you for supporting the event and to the PTA helpers for doing all the hard work. I wish I was able to stay and watch the film with them.

Have a lovely weekend. Kind regards from Mrs Watts.