

# Emmbrook Junior School Newsletter

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2021 (The last day of the year)

## In this Edition:

- Message from Mr Usher
- Times Tables Rock Stars
- Racial Equity
- Parents' Forum
- Online Safety
- Parent Surveys
- Dates for your diary



## Letters this week:

- Rocksteady Enrolment
- Open Letter from WBC
- Report Consultations
- Key Information Booklet 2021-2022 (Years 3-5 only)
- Return of Library Books
- Changes to Contact Tracing
- Face Masks
- Weather Warning
- School Meals Price Increase

## Message from Mr Usher



The last day of term. At the same time this feels like the longest year of my life, while also feeling like it's gone by in a flash. **I must start by first paying tribute to the fabulous children of Emmbrook Junior School.** They have had to deal with so much this year and they have done so with humour and enthusiasm that is an example to us all.

**I am also incredibly grateful to all the staff** here who have continuously gone above and beyond in the way they have approached everything that has been thrown at them this year.

The admin team, teaching staff, the support staff and the senior leadership team have all performed brilliantly and I am in awe of their continued dedication.

We sadly are saying good bye to 4 members of staff this year. Mr Hewitt is moving to Jennet's Park Primary school where he will continue as a class teacher. Mrs Cooper is retiring and will be spending much more time on the golf course (where I hope to see her occasionally). Miss Crombie is moving to Hampshire with her family and Mrs Newport is returning to her previous career in lettings. We of course thank them for their service to the school and wish them all the best for the future.

**A big shout out to the Governing Board, The Parents' Forum and the PTA** who all give their own time to generously support the school. You help make EJS the amazing place it is.

**Today we say good bye to our amazing year 6 children** – who in many ways have been affected most by the pandemic. We have been able to give them a version of many of their milestones and I'm most pleased they were able to enjoy the trip to Manor Adventure. That is a once in a lifetime milestone that, had we followed advice, may not have happened, but I feel the controls we implemented enabled the children to enjoy the residential with minimal risk. They have still been able to do an end of year production (all be it recorded), had a leavers' assembly (virtually), end of year disco (thanks to the PTA) and enjoyed a sports day and swimming lessons – all of which last year's Y6 children missed out on. I would call that a pretty successful year. We will be adding pictures of this year's sports day, the Y3 trip and cheering Y6 as they leave the playground for the last time on the website or Teams for you to enjoy. **Year 6 children will have access to Teams until the 15<sup>th</sup> of August** – please download any pictures, videos etc before this time.

**Finally, a very big thank you to you, the parents & carers.** This has been a year of challenges for you too (home learning just being one of them) and I have continually been heartened by the glowing support that we receive on a daily basis (some of which we have shared on our website). **Thank you for the kind gifts too!** Please have a wonderful summer with your friends and family and I'll see you all in September for what I hope will be Emmbrook Junior School's best year ever.

**Now time for a drink...**



## Covid-19 Update

We have been asked about plans for the next academic year. We are waiting for the 'Operational Guidance' issued by the government to be updated however we anticipate having the following controls in place from September:

We are a private site and as such we would like to ask that **all parents and carers continue to wear masks during September**, whilst we review the impact on the pandemic numbers from the return to school. Staff will also wear masks or visors when entering or leaving the site. If you are exempt from wearing face coverings for health reasons please wear a badge or lanyard letting staff (and other parents) know.

**Continued hand washing** and use of hand sanitizer; **increased ventilation** around the school by keeping windows and external doors open where safe to do so.

We will continue **with a soft start** but the playground gates will be open from **8:35am to 8:45am**. This is a smaller window but should still mean that parents & carers don't need to queue when dropping off children. We will continue with **pick up times at 3:15pm** with staff bringing each year group out to a different area. Y5 & Y6 parents will continue to be able to give permission for children to walk home alone or meet off site if they wish. Children who wish to wear face coverings will be allowed to do so when in class as long as it doesn't interfere with effective learning.

We will also continue with **children coming into school in their PE kits** on their PE days.

We will of course share more detailed guidance and information in advance of the start of the new academic year.

## Racial Equity – Miss Scales

I am going to start by shamelessly stealing the words of someone else: **“Speaking about race, I get scared. Am I going to say the wrong thing? Am I going to offend someone? Yeah, I probably will say the wrong thing, I’m human. I’m still on this journey. I’m still learning myself. But I’d rather say something and say it not entirely right, than say nothing.”** (Leigh-Anne Pinnock, 2021)

Some of you may have watched Leigh-Anne Pinnock's recent BBC Three documentary titled 'Leigh-Anne: Race, Pop and Power' in which she talks about being the only black girl in her band (Little Mix) and her experience of racism in the UK. Leigh-Anne also touches on colourism - when a lighter-skinned person is favoured over a darker-skinned person due to the shade of their skin. It is a form of prejudice and/or discrimination in which people who share similar ethnicity traits or perceived race are treated differently based on the social implications that come with the cultural meanings that are attached to skin colour. Unlike racial bias, which is usually perpetrated by individuals of one race against those of another, colourism is also frequently observed among members of the same ethnic or racial group.

**During the documentary, Leigh-Anne talks to various female musicians of colour.** I found it upsetting to hear Leigh-Anne discuss the moment when it dawned on her that if she had been a few shades darker, she wouldn't have been in Little Mix. Alexandra Burke was allegedly told that she was too dark for the music industry - and that she should bleach her skin to appear lighter so that she would sell more records. In a separate news article, I read that Raye, who is a mixed-race musician, was told to 'suppress the black in you and embrace the white' – again, to increase her popularity.

After watching the documentary, **I thought back on some experiences with colourism that I have had when travelling or living abroad that didn't make complete sense until now.**

Years ago, I backpacked around Morocco. Moroccans I spoke to were amused that I would sit out in the baking sun, cultivating my tan. When questioned, they said that they avoided the sun as they didn't want their skin to darken. I probed further only to be told that darker-skinned Moroccans were perceived to be those in lesser paid jobs, who worked outside, often doing manual labour. Lighter skinned Moroccans were perceived



to have 'better' jobs inside offices, schools or such like. I remember being taken aback by this notion. To me, as a white skinned woman, to return home from my travels several shades darker was a badge of honour, not something to feel ashamed of.

**Fast-forward to a few years later, when I was living in Chiangmai in Thailand.** I'd run out of deodorant - an absolute necessity in that heat, let me tell you! Imagine my surprise when the roll-on deodorant I bought from the local shop gradually turned my armpits white! It turns out many beauty products in Thailand (deodorant, body lotion, face-cream and so on) contain bleach to lighten the skin. I noticed that many of the Thai women that taught with me at the large Government Primary School I worked at, had extremely light skin which they'd spent years bleaching. I was told that it was a sign of status, beauty and social standing in Thailand to have lighter skin, especially as a woman. The more I talked to my Thai friends about this, the more I understood the extent to which discrimination based on skin tone was being perpetuated by the global beauty industry. A little research into this issue recently has consolidated this. Did you know that sales of skin-lightening products are projected to reach \$8.9 billion by 2024?

Reflecting back on these conversations, **I am painfully aware of the realities of light skin privilege** and some people's desire to be lighter in order to get increased and improved life opportunities. While colourism is not often mentioned as influencing employment outcomes, various academic studies have demonstrated the connection showing the existence of a wage gap linked to skin colour, which widens as the shade of the worker darkens. There is a lot of information about this widely available on the Internet, should you be interested.

My parting message is that that we need to be aware of the existence of skin-tone bias and include this dimension in programmes to reduce racial inequality, ensuring that barriers to equal opportunity for darker-skinned people are also fairly addressed.

## Parents' Forum



### EJS Parents Forum - new members needed!

From September we are looking for new members to join the Forum. The Forum meets for an hour once every half term with the senior leadership team to share the views, issues and compliments raised by parents. The meetings are also an opportunity for the school to gauge the opinion of parents. **We are looking for new members including a Chair and note taker:**

Please contact [ejsparentsforum@gmail.com](mailto:ejsparentsforum@gmail.com) for further details.

## Dates for your Diary

### Autumn Term 2021-22

**1<sup>st</sup> Sept 2021** - Inset Day

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sept 2021** - 1<sup>st</sup> Day of term

**17<sup>th</sup> Sept 2021** – PTA Disco (Years 3&4 6.30pm to 7.45pm, Years 5&6 8.00pm to 9.15pm)

**20<sup>th</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> Sep 2021** – Manor Week (Y6 residential)

**30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2021** – School Photos

**18<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Oct** – Parent consultations

**20<sup>th</sup> Oct 2021** – Flu Vaccinations

**25<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> Oct 2021** - Half Term

**1<sup>st</sup> Nov 2021** – Inset Day

**15<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> Nov** – Assessment Week

**3<sup>rd</sup> Dec 2021** – PTA Christmas Fair & Non-Uniform Day

**10<sup>th</sup> Dec 2021** - Christmas Dinner/Christmas Jumper day

**13<sup>th</sup> Dec & 15<sup>th</sup> Dec** – Y4 Christmas Production

**17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2021** - Last day of term